



OCS Monthly Teleconference
October 20, 2020 – 12PM to 1PM
Call In Number: 1-888-601-5515 no pin

Meeting Notes

Attendees

CRP: Cameron Adams (Vice Chair), Patty Williams (Secretary), Lucinda Alexie

OCS: Travis Erickson and Kim Guay

State Ombudsman Office: Denise Duff

Coordinator: Denali Daniels and Logan Daniels-Engevold

- ***Call to order; read rules and conduct of the meeting – Coordinator***
 - Coordinator reviewed agenda.
- ***CRP Update – Vice Chair Adams***
 - Vice Chair Adams reviewed the quarterly meeting actions:
 - New officer positions in the CRP of the Chair (Hull), Vice Chair (Adams), and Secretary (Williams) as well as the expectations of panel members in the new policies and procedures.
 - Draft workplan approved and will be posted on the CRP website soon.
 - Coordinator will finalize internal sections of the P&Ps with a focus on the recruitment tools and the process of adding new members to the CRP. A more detailed manual to help guide new members into the CRP following the steps outlined in the P&Ps.
 - It was decided that a thorough walk thru of the 2020-2021 workplan, and a review of the OCS response to the 2019-2020 CRP Recommendations will occur at the November 2020 monthly teleconference.
- ***“Open for services” accountability and case management discussion***

CRP is looking to gain a better understanding of what “open for services” means. In response to this request the following discussion was offered:

- Open for services is the middle ground after an investigation has been completed and the child is deemed to be high risk but still safe at the moment and before OCS has to intervene legally and take custody of the child.
- It is in this gray zone that a family can be open for services which is more accurately in-house services.
- This is rare as the cases tend to quickly progress past this point and into an OCS legal battle and because families must volunteer for the services provided by being open for services. This is incredibly rare seeing as many families do not want to work with OCS.
- The bulk of OCS services are around cases that need immediate intervention and that leaves extraordinarily little resources to deal with open for services cases. OCS is looking to add more resources in this area, but it is a challenge.
- Families must be on the cusp of care for OCS services for them to be designated for open for services. It is rare that they can be assisted before they move on into OCS care where the child must be removed.

Question: Does OCS do any referring for open for services cases?

- Yes, those cases are passed on to ask for referrals from community resources. However, open for services cases are not through the legal system so parents have to volunteer to work with OCS which is rare.
- Is there a continuum of care where case workers continue to contact families after they refer them to another service?
- Depends on the case worker and if they have time to do the follow up work as well as the severity of the situation that has been reported.

Question: Do all case workers get open for services cases?

- Yes, it is on a case by case basis and there are no current specialists, so they are just added to a standard case worker.
- It is difficult to keep these specialty case workers staffed. Many of these cases are unopened due to OCS capacity to take on voluntary cases due to them being slammed with legally mandated cases.

- Open for services has long been a dream and desire and at the peak there were many resources to make it happen which was funded through multiple grants. There were also specialists who worked on these cases only. Many open for services cases work better in theory than in practice.
- Almost all of the families OCS works with are involuntary and many are not interested in taking our suggestions and at that point the child has to be taken.
- The Bureau of Indian Affairs put out regulations that states that OCS is not allowed to separate parents from children without legal action. This complicates things for Alaska Native families.
- The time limit to see results for open for services cases is short and OCS does not see an impact this far down stream. For open for services cases to work they need to be addressed much farther upstream. The state pushes for prevention but it is secondary prevention to try and mitigate the damage not to prevent it from happening to begin with.
- The state is starting to look at risk factors such as first-time mothers, history of substance abuse, etc. to offer services instead of cases that are referred to OCS due to neglect or abuse. This would yield much better results.
- Funding is spread to different services to ensure that there are resources for those families and OCS is trying to move more to prevention and it will take time but working with tribes and early child intervention programs is helping to move in the right direction.
- Pairing prevention services with crisis intervention services will mean that crisis services will always take priority and going down the path that we are is not the best recipe for success.
- Decisions that are being made at the federal level with other cases in other states are much less severe then what OCS is dealing with in Alaska and this makes it hard to plead the case that Alaska needs special services.
- Alaska is almost always at the bottom when it comes to child wellbeing.
- Other panel business - Questions?
 - A question was raised surrounding if people liked the teleconference line or if it would be better to use Zoom?

- Points were made that Zoom is much nicer because of the video feed and ability to share a screen but not everyone across Alaska has access to internet and the Zoom call in feature can be complicated.
 - No decision has been made yet to change from the teleconference style of meeting.
- Public comment**
 - No public comment
- Adjourn – Chair
 - Meeting adjourned at 12:50 p.m.