



ALASKA CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL

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Chair, Alaska Citizen Review Panel

Committee on Health and Social Services
Alaska House of Representatives

March 21, 2017



PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Quick overview
- Goals and recommendations from 2015-2016
- Goals for 2016-2017
- Recent developments in Panel's work



HISTORY

- Congressional Mandate in 1996
- Established in May 2002
- State Statute (HB 53) in 2005
 - Budget: \$64,300
- OCS contracted with a private consulting firm to provide staff support to CRP
- Current annual budget is \$100,000
- Members are all volunteers: 1500-2000 hours of volunteer work each year.



FUNCTIONS - MANDATES

Federal Mandate (42 U.S.C. § 5106a.(c)):

- Examine the *policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child protection agencies* and *evaluate* the extent to which these agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities
- Conduct *public outreach* both to assess the impact of current policies and procedures, and to solicit public comment on the panel's recommendations.

State Mandate (AS 47.14.205):

“The CRP shall examine the policies, procedures, and practices of State and local agencies and where appropriate, specific cases, *to evaluate* the extent to which State and local child protection system agencies are effectively discharging their protection responsibilities.”



PRIMARY FUNCTIONS

Central focus

- Policies, procedures, and practices of OCS

Review/Evaluate (from statute):

- States' CAPTA Plan
- Child protection standards
- And any other criteria that the Panel considers important

Conduct public outreach (from statute):

- Assess the impact of OCS policies, procedures, and practices on children and families
- This assessment should inform its review function

Advocate for (from congressional record):

- Relevant changes based on its review



CENTRAL PURPOSE

- Congress created CRPs to help child protection systems be more responsive to community needs.
- A CRP is a mechanism for public participation in child protection.
- It should facilitate robust and meaningful participation by citizens in diverse roles.
- Those diverse roles will be performing the three functions.



OCS – MISSION

“Works in *partnership with families and communities* to support the well-being of Alaska’s children and youth. Services will enhance families’ capacities to give their children a healthy start, to provide them with safe and permanent homes, to maintain cultural connections, and to help them realize their potential.”

- OCS Website



OCS - SIGNIFICANCE

“With the exception of the criminal justice system, which may take one’s money, one’s freedom and, in some states, one’s life, it is difficult to imagine a more fear-inspiring authority than the power to take away a person’s children.”

- Alaska Ombudsman, 2012 Investigative Report



FUNCTIONS – WHAT CRP DOES NOT DO

- Comment on proposed or pending legislation
- Get involved in individual cases, contract, or situations
- Micromanage OCS operations
- Program evaluation
- Lobby



CRP – A STATUTORY INSTITUTION

The CRP is an institution, with a statutory role and responsibility.

It is an organization of the state.

It facilitates citizen participation.

It must cultivate a critical, but constructive lens.

It exists to help OCS.

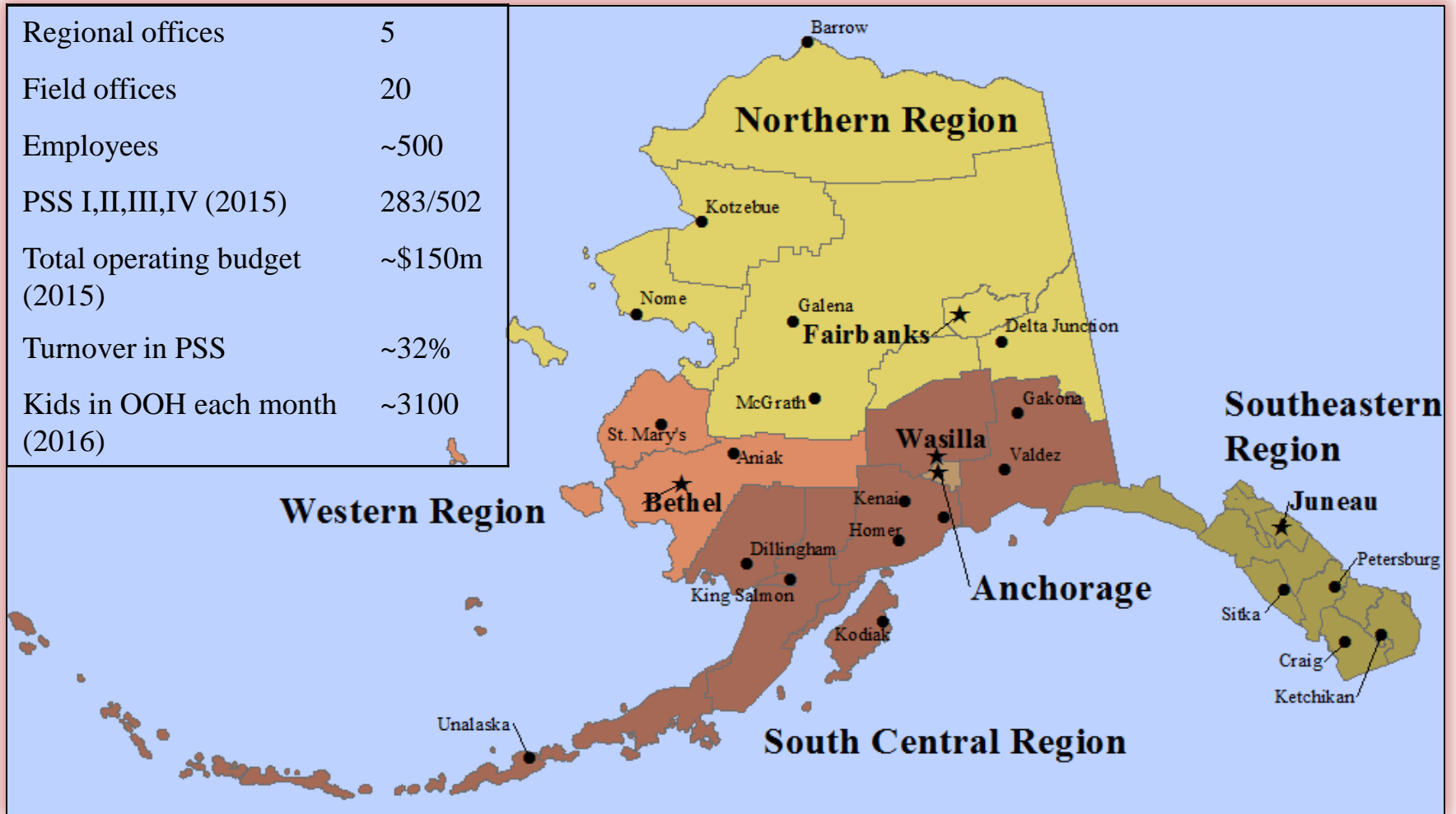
Its success depends on its relationship with OCS.

It has a delicate relationship with OCS.



OCS OFFICES

Regional offices	5
Field offices	20
Employees	~500
PSS I,II,III,IV (2015)	283/502
Total operating budget (2015)	~\$150m
Turnover in PSS	~32%
Kids in OOH each month (2016)	~3100





CRP'S ANNUAL CALENDAR

2015-2016 CALENDAR

Panel Quarterly Meetings	Meetings with OCS	Site visits	Other
Sep 26-27, 2015			
Oct 6, 2015		Oct 28-30, 2015 NRO	
	Nov 10, 2015		
Dec 1, 2015	Dec 8, 2015		
	Jan 12, 2016	Jan 11-15, 2016 ARO	
	Feb 9, 2016	Feb 24-27, 2016 SRO	
Mar 1, 2016	Mar 8, 2016		
	April 12, 2016		Apr 2, 2016 Presentation to the legislature
	May 10, 2016	May 12-13, 2016 WRO	Jun 6-9, 2016 CRP National Conference
Jun 7, 2016			
Jun 11-12, 2015			

2015-2016 PRESENTATIONS TO THE PANEL

Month	Person	Title
Dec 2015	Tammy Wilson	Alaska House Representative, District 3, North Pole



WORK DURING 2015-2016

- 4 Goals
- 4 site visits – numerous interviews
- 4 Monthly CRP quarterly public meetings
- 7 Meetings with OCS leadership
- Presentations to:
 - AK House HSS Committee
 - BIA Providers Conference
 - Alaska Court Improvement Project
- Conducted the OCS Staff Survey
- Attended the CRP National Conference



GOALS 2015-2016

- GOAL 1: Explore the evolving relationships between Tribal organizations and OCS.
- GOAL 2: Strengthen Panel's skills and organizational policies and capacities.
- GOAL 3: Determine whether current and former foster parents' and agency partners' experiences align with OCS' foster care policies.
- GOAL 4: Evaluate the efficacy and effectiveness of the new administrative review process



RECOMMENDATION 1:

OCS-Tribal relationships

Consider assigning the CRP a significant role in implementing various priority areas of “Transforming Child Welfare Outcomes for Alaska Native Children: Strategic Plan 2016-2020”. With its statutory authority, CRP will be an asset for OCS in implementing this strategic plan.



RECOMMENDATION 2:

OCS-Tribal relationships

Tribal State Collaboration Group (TSCG) should consider a dialogue with the leaders of Alaska Native for-profit corporations to garner their support and any resources they may be able to leverage to enhance child protection services.



RECOMMENDATION 3:

CRP Structure and Functions

The enterprise of CRP should be evaluated by an external entity to assess its effectiveness, with particular attention to:

- A. Internal structure and process of CRP in order to improve efficiency.
- B. CRP-OCS statutory relationship in order to ensure clear roles and responsibilities.



RECOMMENDATION 4:

OCS build on CRP's survey effort

- A. View training of frontline workers as a longer enterprise that extends beyond SKILS, and evaluate the entire enterprise for effectiveness.
- B. Include special sections in the annual staff survey, focusing on a topic of interest, and repeat this periodically every two or three years.
- C. Identify other similar survey efforts that OCS conducts, and leverage resources from external entities such as CRP to conduct them.



RECOMMENDATION 5:

CRP as a mechanism for public participation

OCS should work with CRP to strengthen CRP's ability as a robust mechanism for public participation, and rely on it to improve public awareness of the nature and content of OCS work.



GOALS FOR 2016-2017

- **GOAL 1 (*Retained*):** Explore the evolving relationships between Tribal organizations and Office of Children Services (OCS).
- **Goal 2:** Review the implementation of the OCS grievance policy.
- **Goal 3:** Develop and disseminate public awareness materials on OCS' Intake and IA processes.
- **Goal 4 (*Retained*):** Evaluate the efficacy and effectiveness of the new administrative review process.



GRAND JURY INVESTIGATION

- CRP is required by statute to continue the review
- It is an extensive review.
- Next steps:
 - Compiling all materials for panel review
 - Identifying key issues
 - Action plan for this review by June 30
 - Identifying overlap between CRP and the Ombudsman's Office to avoid duplication of effort
 - Conduct the review



ANTICIPATED CHANGES IN CRP OPERATION

- Reorientation of CRP as a public participation mechanism
 - Discussions began early fall
 - A tentative three-year timeline
 - Elements will include
 - Participatory evaluation
 - A systems focus
 - Robust recruitment and retention strategy
 - Data-driven review and outreach
 - Collaborative and constructive

16TH NATIONAL CRP CONFERENCE

MAY 10-12, 2017

ANCHORAGE, AK

CUDDY HALL

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ANCHORAGE

HOSTED BY

