

Citizen Review Panel

STATE OF ALASKA



Long Range Plan 2020-2025



Note from the Chair

The Citizen Review Panel is proud to present its first ever Long Range Strategic Plan covering the years of 2020 to 2025. This plan outlines the priorities for Citizen Review Panel over the next five years, and will serve as a guiding document for CRP activities.

A successful child protective system and the activities of the Citizen Review Panel depend on prioritizing relationships built on trust and a collaborative spirit. Fostering, maintaining, and honoring the integrity of relationships continues to be critical to the activities of the Panel. The enduring priorities established in 2020-2025 Long Range Strategic Plan emphasize the importance of community, and take seriously the role that all community members play to ensure the health and well-being of Alaska's children.



JP Ouellette

Alaska's families from all walks of life deserve compassion and support. The Citizen Review Panel strives to give both to the families, stakeholders, and community members that engage with the Panel. Our vision is that this strategic plan will serve both to communicate our priorities to all interested stakeholders and as a guide for Panel activities over the next five years.

JP Ouellette
Chair, Citizen Review Panel

Acknowledgements

In summer 2019, the following Citizen Review Panel members developed the Long Range Plan 2020-2025:

JP Ouellette (Chair)	Anchorage
Sonya Hull (Vice Chair)	Wasilla
Cameron Adams	Anchorage
Lucinda Alexie	Bethel
Wendy Barrett	Anchorage
Amanda Hansen	Anchorage
Mariah Seater	Anchorage
Bettyann Steciw	Anchor Point
Joshua Stein	Utqiagvik
Rebecca Vale	Anchorage
Patricia Williams	Fairbanks

Contact:
Alaska CRP Coordinator
880 H Street, Suite 106
Anchorage, AK 99501
Email: admin@crpalaska.org
crpalaska.org

About the Panel

AUTHORITY

The Alaska Citizen Review Panel can be referenced either as “the CRP” or “the Panel.” The CRP is federally mandated through the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA); Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003. The CRP is also mandated through Alaska Statute Sec. 47.14.205.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the Panel is voluntary and is expected to represent the diversity of the state. The Panel selects its own members through a formal recruitment and application process. Members elect a Chair and Vice Chair from the membership. While members are expected to serve for at least two years, there are no stipulated term limits.

MISSION

The Alaska Citizen Review Panel (the Panel) will review the practices, procedures, and policies of the Office of Children’s Services (OCS) and evaluate the same for compliance with federal and state laws, and the state plan. The Panel will make recommendations based on its findings to ensure the safety and the well-being of Alaska’s children.

Principal Functions of the Panel

The Panel has three principal functions– evaluation, public outreach and advocacy.

EVALUATION

The Panel will evaluate OCS compliance with federal and state laws, examining policies and procedures for consistent statewide implementation while still being responsive to the diversity of needs across the state. The CRP shall evaluate the extent to which OCS is effectively discharging its child protection responsibilities under: The State Plan submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under 42 U.S.C. 5106a(b); Child Protection Standards under federal and state laws. The Panel may identify other criteria important to ensuring the protection of children, including the level and efficiency of coordination of foster care and adoption programs in the state. The Panel focuses on systemic issues. Individual cases or particular unique situations will not be reviewed by the Panel.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The Panel will identify and implement means to gather feedback on procedures and practices in delivering child protection services in Alaska. Information thus collected will be utilized in its evaluation function as specified above.

ADVOCACY

The Panel will conduct appropriate actions that will help improve the child protection services system in Alaska.

2020-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS

The Citizen Review Panel began a long range planning process in June 2019 in an effort to annually align consistent panel activity with the long term interests and capacity of the CRP.

The Panel continued the strategic planning process in August 2019 by identifying concrete actions to be implemented over the next five years. Through facilitation and collaborative discussion, panel members created a strategic plan which provides guidance for Panel activities emphasizing the relationship building which has been critical for the Citizen Review Panel’s successes.

2020-2025 Strategic Plan Enduring Priorities

The following enduring priorities are established by the Alaska Citizen Review Panel.

				
Reciprocal Engagement	Public Outreach	Collaborative Relationship with OCS	CRP Education and Development	Healthy CPS System

These priorities were identified by reflecting on past and current work of the CRP, the history and role of the CRP in Alaska’s child welfare system, and what initiatives should be incorporated into CRP activities to best support Alaska’s families.

A description of these priorities follows, and is not listed in any order of significance.

RECIPROCAL ENGAGEMENT

A significant portion of the Citizen Review Panel’s current activity involves annual site visits to communities within each of the five OCS regions. The nature of these visits involves panel members meeting with OCS supervisors and front line workers, agency partners, tribal child welfare programs, family support agencies, school district stakeholders, and, when possible, foster parents and households that have had cases with OCS.

It is the intent of the Citizen Review Panel to not just gather information from stakeholders and produce a static report, but to share information gathered with community stakeholders, legislative bodies, as well as other interested entities. Reciprocal engagement with communities should be conducted with a focus on identifying and encouraging the implementation of solutions to these challenges.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The Alaska Citizen Review Panel is a mechanism for meaningful public participation in child protection policy and practice. With public outreach as a principal CRP function, the Panel is an opportunity for Alaska’s residents to engage in a public process to assist Alaska’s child protection system in being more responsive to needs at the community and statewide levels. In order to be a relevant resource in communities across the state new and more robust techniques of public outreach should be identified and implemented over the next five years.

Public outreach methods should be refined to be culturally responsive to the needs and wants of families, support systems, partner agencies and communities throughout Alaska. The variety of means of public outreach conducted by the panel should include both passive mechanisms (website) and active mechanisms (site visits, stakeholder meetings, community events) that are accessible to panelists statewide and year-round.



COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH OCS

The State of Alaska’s Office of Children’s Services mission states that “The Office of Children’s Services 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.” The Citizen Review Panel recognizes the shared elements of the OCS mission with the work of the CRP.

Research published by the National Citizen Review Panel (Jones, 2015) emphasizes the importance of seeking and maintaining a healthy relationship between a state CRP and child welfare agency.

“Citizen Review Panels and child welfare agencies share responsibility for creating a healthy relationship with each other. While it is in the best interests of both child welfare and CRPs to work together towards the shared goals of achieving safety, permanency and well-being for children, building and maintaining the healthy relationship required to do so is not always easy.”

The Alaska CRP recognizes that to best support Alaska’s children and families that are navigating the child welfare system, the CRP needs to foster and maintain a relationship with OCS. This includes developing relationships with both individual leaders and staff, to create an institutional understanding of the shared priority of supporting families and protecting Alaska’s children.



CRP EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

For the Citizen Review Panel to conduct effective and impactful work it is tantamount that the panelists are aware of industry best practices, relevant legislation and public policy topics at the state and federal levels, and share this knowledge with fellow panel members and community stakeholders.

The CRP recognizes the value of existing resources at both the state and national level and seeks to include expertise from these resources in panel discussion, activity, and recommendations.

Individual panelists are encouraged to pursue their own subjects of interest and share information gleaned with their fellow members of the panel. The panel may instruct the CRP Coordinator to research topics of interest.








HEALTHY CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES SYSTEM

To support the Office of Children’s Services in becoming a more functional and impactful child protective services system the Citizen Review Panel recognizes that the entire system, not just case management, needs to be studied and supported.

To ensure that Alaska’s children receive the protection, support and quality of case management they deserve, OCS employees need a workplace that is a sustainable and supportive environment. Some areas to be explored across the state include, but are not limited to: Day to day worker wellness, the rate of employee turnover, and community relationships for workers.

Alaska CRP Long Range Plan 2020-2025

Enduring priorities	Year					Actions
	1	2	3	4	5	
 <p>Reciprocal Engagement</p>	█					Engage with ICWA Workers
	█					Engage with foster parents
	█					Engage with school nurses/counselors
	█					Engage with alternative schools
	█					Engage with Tribal Courts
	█					Engage with Resource Family Advisory Board
	█					Identify and engage with reunified families
		█				Share reunified success stories, identify champions who helped families
		█				Expand site visit list to alternative schools, key family services tribal leaders
			█			Review child deaths that have OCS involvement
			█			Establish calendar of tribal gatherings
			█			Expand list of key stakeholders in each region
			█			Create written fact sheet prior to each site visit
				█		CRP provides written feedback to each agency visited
					█	Increase CRP research for site visits
				█	Ongoing, structured conversation with OCS regarding site visits	
 <p>Public Outreach</p>	█					Purchase and use CRP name tags/lanyards
	█					Consistently update of CRP fact sheet
	█					Specify target audiences to increase public familiarity with CRP
	█					Document current public outreach activities
		█				CRP has a presence at tribal gatherings, including AFN
		█				Create and practice a standard CRP presentation
		█				CRP included in more multi-disciplinary meetings and conferences
		█				CRP has a presence at Rural Providers Conference
			█			CRP website includes helpful info for agencies
			█			CRP information shared in other organization/agency newsletters
			█			Increased focus on regional diversity of the CRP membership
				█		Public radio presentation
					█	Every community knows the CRP

Enduring priorities	Year					Actions
	1	2	3	4	5	
 <p>Collaborative Relationship with OCS</p>						Begin offering food to OCS offices when possible
						CRP begins promoting foster care recruitment
						Work with OCS to improve ease of access to relevant data
						Solicit worker and supervisor input during site visits
						Document lessons learned in Annual Report
						Identify small potential improvements to OCS workspaces
						CRP is turned to more by OCS for help
						CRP honors and acknowledges foster parents
						Minimize OCS supervisor apprehension regarding CRP site visits
						OCS workers look forward to CRP site visits
						CRP best practices on collaborative approaches formalized
						Focus on pre-site visit briefings
						Increased CRP understanding of regional dynamics to inform input to OCS
 <p>CRP Education and Development</p>						Identify annual trainings for CRP members
						Review Alaska CAPTA Plan
						Increase CRP awareness of OCS Policy & Procedures
						ANCSA 101 Training for CRP members
						CRP is aware of the number of open for service and in custody cases
						Identify Alaska Native tribal system training for CRP members
						Panel to continue education about Alaska tribal systems & ICWA
						CRP officer elections, policies and procedures finalized
						CRP member terms updated
 <p>Healthy CPS System</p>						Continue to assess OCS worker onboarding and training
						Consider how to monitor worker wellness
						Advocate for more support for parents and foster parents
						Gather worker comments on workplace wellness during site visits
						Explore improved methods for “open for services” accountability and case management
						Explore ways to improve OCS and community partner communication
						Identify policies and models that focus on prevention of removal
						Assess current OCS in-home services offered
						Promote supportive mentorship for workers
						Worker connections to the community are prioritized
						Maintain high level of training standards for new and existing OCS workers
						Be the conduit for sharing OCS worker wellness success stories
						Public recognition of outstanding OCS workers
					Celebrate successes more often	



CRP Alaska

LONG RANGE PLAN 2020-2025