

**04 / 02 / 16**

**PRESENTATION:**

**ALASKA**

**CITIZEN**

**REVIEW PANEL**

<TARGET><BILL></BILL><SUBJECT>04-02-16 PRESENTATION  
ALASKA CITIZEN REVIEW  
PANEL</SUBJECT><COMM>HHSS29</COMM></TARGET>



## Alaska Citizen Review Panel

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*The Alaska Citizen Review Panel evaluates the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child protection agencies for effectiveness in discharging their child protection responsibilities. The Panel is mandated through CAPTA 1997 (P.L. 104-235), and enacted through AS 47.14.205.*

April 2, 2016

Honorable Representative Paul Seaton, Chair;  
Members  
House Health & Social Services Committee  
Alaska House of Representative

Dear Rep. Seaton, and Members,

Alaska Citizen Review Panel is mandated to evaluate the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child protection service agencies, and conduct public outreach to inform its work. All members are volunteers, selected through a structured recruitment process. Minimal staff support is provided through a contract managed by the Office of Children Services (OCS). I am pleased to inform you that the Panel accomplished its tasks during the year 2014-2015, and made six recommendations addressing various components of OCS. All recommendations were accepted by OCS, and several changes were initiated in response.

Please note that the Panel begins its work in August/September of each year and completes its work by June of the subsequent year. An annual report of its activities and recommendations is released by June 30 each year/ OCS submits its written response to each recommendation by December 31 of that year. This document includes a brief summary of the following:

- Panel's recommendations and OCS' response for the year 2014-2015;
- Panel's goals for the year 2015-2016;
- Continuing review of key indicators;
- Changes to Panel's operations.

Due to a severe and unplanned 18% reduction of its FY 2016 budget, the Panel is unable to travel to Juneau for an in-person presentation. This reduction will severely limit the Panel's ability to continue its independent, unbiased, and constructive review of policies and practices that affect some of Alaska's most vulnerable children. Alaska CRP is widely respected for its work in Alaska, and is increasingly being recognized as a model for other CRPs across the nation.

Thank you for your attention and support of the Panel's work.

Sincerely,

Diwakar Vadapalli  
Chair

## **Panel's recommendations and OCS response - 2014-2015:**

The Panel completed three site visits that included numerous interviews with OCS personnel and staff and leaders of several partner organizations and state agencies. After reviewing several components of OCS policies and examining practices through the year, the Panel made six recommendations. Outcome measures and evaluation is the central theme of most recommendations. The Panel agrees with OCS that many aspects of OCS operations are driven by continuing crises. However, the Panel recommends that OCS specify outcomes measures and assess its progress in a more structured manner. This, we believe, will allow better monitoring and improves chances of success. Each recommendation and corresponding response from OCS are summarized below:

*Recommendation 1:* OCS continue to implement the Panel's 2013-2014 recommendations on intake policy.

*OCS Response:* OCS is implementing all recommendations of the panel with the exception of the suggestion of uniform online reporting form. While OCS acknowledges the benefits, creating a universal form to meet the diverse needs of reporting agencies and ensuring the confidentiality of reports appear to be considerable challenges. All other recommendations are said to be on track and will be implemented in full following the hiring of a manager of the new and centralized intake system.

*Recommendation 2:* OCS constitute an internal task force to specifically focus on in-home service model. This task force should be tasked with operationalizing Strategy 2.A.2 of the 2015-2019 CFSP.

- In collaboration with local service providers, assess the existing in-home model as it exists in each region.
- Identify additional, more specific outcomes with respect to Strategy 2.A.2 of the 2015-2019 CFSP.

*OCS Response:* OCS acknowledged the identified challenges and shortcomings of the current in-home services model, but plans to persist with the current model in the near future with a significant role for tribal partners.

*Recommendation 3:* OCS address the root cause of the Initial Assessment (IA) backlog:

- Identify the nature of cases that are due past 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, and 120 days.
- Revisit the Differential Response process and examine its fit to the current situation.

*OCS Response:* An OCS internal committee is working on modifying the Initial Assessment program, and a pilot is planned for implementation during the first quarter of 2016. This revised program is expected to not only reduce the processing time and backlog, but also enhance child safety.

*Recommendation 4:* Improve efforts to recruit and retain resource families across the state:

- Identify, and advertise through appropriate channels, a clear message on the approximate numbers of resource families needed.
- Identify outcome measures and track success of recruitment and retention efforts.



OCS Response: OCS reports that it is working closely with Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF) to enhance its mechanisms to track the success of recruiting and enlisting resource families.

Recommendation 5: Improve the survey instruments and reporting of results on various surveys that OCS QA unit conducts to assess important components of OCS operations.

OCS Response: CRP is collaborating with OCS to revise and conduct its 2016 staff survey. Graduate students from UAA's College of Business and Public Policy are conducting the survey. Survey results will be released by mid-May.

Recommendation 6: Adopt a method to identify, measure, and assess various components of workload of frontline workers.

OCS Response: OCS is working on multiple fronts to more effectively manage workload. This continues to be a concern with the recent phenomenal increases in the number of reports of harm and the numbers of children in care.

### **Panel's goals for the year 2015-2016:**

The Panel's work plan for this year identified four goals:

Goal 1: Explore the evolving relationships between Tribal organizations and Office of Children Services (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.

Goals 1, 3, and 4 examine different components of OCS operations. Policies pertaining to these components are reviewed; and practices are examined through interviews and focus group discussions during the five planned site visits to OCS regional and field offices.

Through Goal 2, the Panel is examining its own policies and practices to be more efficient and effective.

### **Continuing review:**

In addition to the goals each year, the Panel continues to review few key indicators each year. These include the turnover rates among the frontline workers, quality assurance indicators of field and regional offices, backlog of initial assessments, budget, and proposed changes to practice.

### **Changes to Panel's operations:**

The Panel's self-examination and review continue on three fronts:

Internal processes and structure: Many processes have been streamlined in the last couple of years. Templates were developed for many standard processes. The Panel is currently examining its recently adopted 'operational guidelines' to make necessary revisions.



*Relationships with OCS and other stakeholders:* The Panel continues to maintain a critical but constructive perspective in its work. Relationship with OCS is built on respect, and recognition of mutual roles and responsibilities. The Panel also recognizes the overlapping responsibilities of many other review mechanisms in Alaska, and continues to build relationships to avoid duplication of efforts.

*Public outreach:* This is an integral part of the Panel's mandate. However, the Panel recognizes its responsibility as not only to collect public input to inform its review but also to inform the public of its work and contribute towards raising awareness of the acute challenges of child protection in Alaska.





# ALASKA CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL

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**Annual Update**

**Alaska House Committee on Health and Social Services**

Dr. Diwakar Vadapalli  
Chair

Dana Hallett  
Vice Chair

Juneau, AK

April 4, 2016



# PRESENTATION OUTLINE

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



# WHAT DOES CRP DO?

## 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, and

## 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

## Evaluate against:

- States' CAPTA Plan – 2015-2019 Child and Family Services Plan
- Child protection standards
- And any other criteria that the Panel considers important

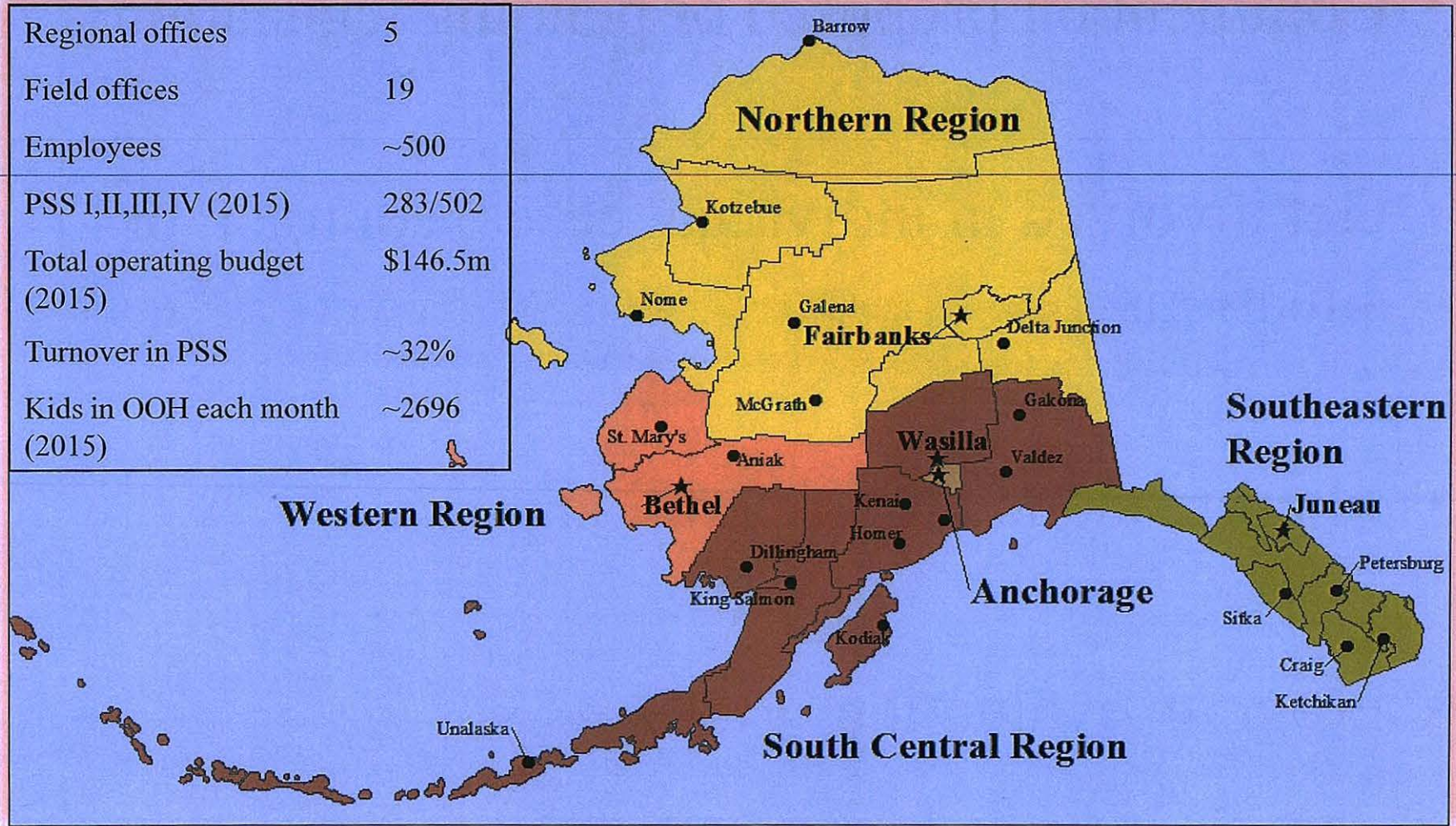
## Conduct public outreach to:

- Gather public input in conducting its duties (review)
- Inform public about various policies and procedures of CPS system to improve awareness



# OCS OFFICES

Regional offices	5
Field offices	19
Employees	~500
PSS I,II,III,IV (2015)	283/502
Total operating budget (2015)	\$146.5m
Turnover in PSS	~32%
Kids in OOH each month (2015)	~2696





## WHAT CRP DOES NOT DO

- Comment on proposed or pending legislation

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- Get involved in individual cases, contract, or situations
- Micromanage OCS operations
- Program evaluation
- Lobby



## WORK DURING 2014-2015

- 6 Goals
- 3 site visits – numerous interviews

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- 12 Monthly CRP meetings
- 11 Meetings with OCS leadership
- Presentations to:
  - AK House HSS Committee
  - BIA Providers Conference
  - CJA Task Force
  - OCS Leadership Summit
- Attended the CRP National Conference



# RECOMMENDATION 1: INTAKE POLICY

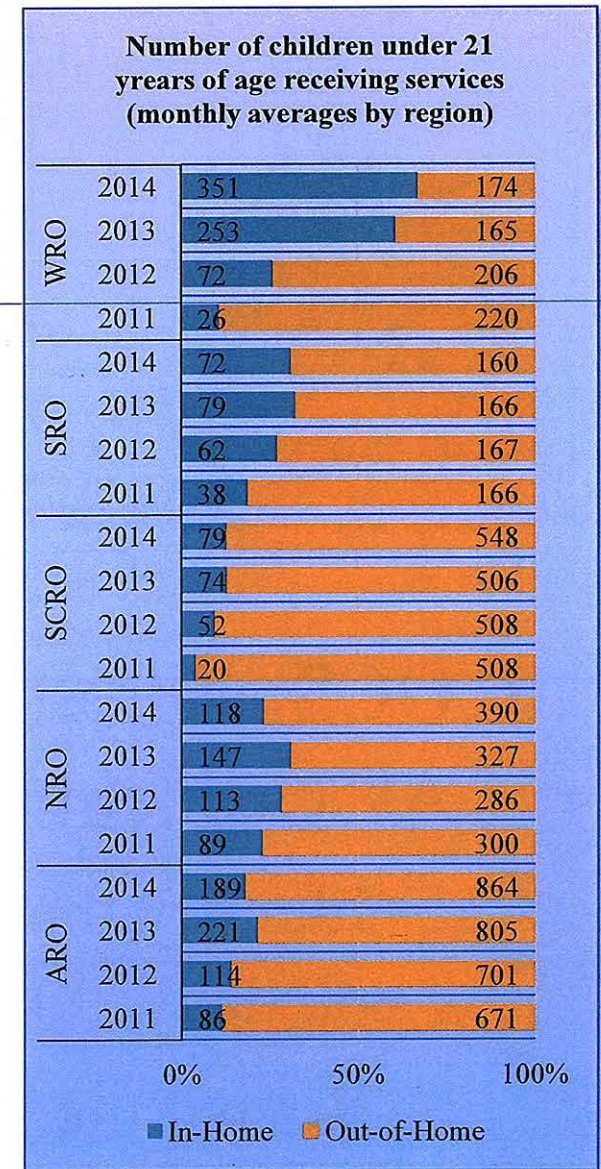
- OCS make several changes to its intake policy
  - Create and support several reporting methods
  - Change to opt-out of receiving follow up on the case
  - Uniformly implement the current pilot project of having a supervisor reviewing cases after 10 screened-out PSRs
  - Periodically send a list of screened out PSRs to the local field office





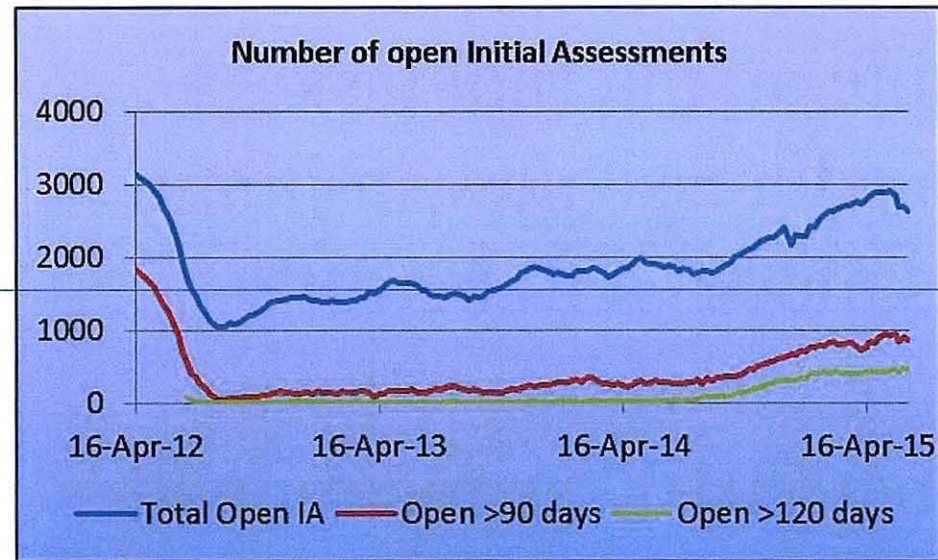
## RECOMMENDATION 2: IN-HOME SERVICES

- Constitute an internal task force to address “new in-home services model will be fully implemented with fidelity by December 2016” as mentioned in the 2015-2019 CFSP.
  - Assess the existing in-home model in each region
  - Identify additional, more specific measurable outcomes





## RECOMMENDATION 3: IA BACKLOG



- OCS address the root cause of the Initial Assessment (IA) backlog:
  - Identify the nature of cases that are due past 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, and 120 days.
  - Revisit the Differential Response process and examine its fit to the current situation.



## RECOMMENDATION 4: FOSTER CARE

Regional Office	Licensing staff		Monthly average number of children under 21 in foster care (2014)	Status of foster homes or foster groups homes as of 3/3/2015	
	Supervisors	Specialists		Waiting to be licensed	Licensed
ARO	2	9	898	63	463
SCRO	2	6	556	72	399
SRO	1	2	164	21	131
NRO	1	4	404	44	169
WRO	1	3	192	26	94

- Clear need must be communicated
  - Identify, and advertise through appropriate channels, a clear message on the approximate numbers of resource families needed.
  - Identify outcome measures and track success of recruitment and retention efforts.



## RECOMMENDATION 5: EMPLOYEE SURVEYS

- Improve the survey instruments and reporting of results on various surveys that OCS QA unit conducts to assess important components of OCS operations.
  - This was primarily focused on OCS employee survey.
  - CRP suggested several changes to the survey instrument and the way results are reported.



## RECOMMENDATION 6: WORKLOAD

- Adopt a method to identify, measure, and assess various components of workload of frontline workers.
  - Two workload studies (2006 and 2012) recommended that OCS measure workers' workload on a regular basis.
  - Everyone is overworked, and overwhelmed, leading to more than 30% turnover for the last ten years.



## ADDITIONAL WORK

- Site visit reports are published on the CRP website
  - A copy of each site visit report is submitted to this Committee.
- A survey report of all select ICWA personnel from various tribal entities is conducted every year for the last three years.
  - Local child protection is a multi-institutional system
  - They rate their local child protection at 6/10 (10 being the best)
- We attended the National Conference



## NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2017

- In recognition of Alaska CRP's national presence:

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The National CRP Conference will be held in Alaska in 2017. Dates and venue are yet to be determined.

We are seeking sponsorships and partnerships, and support in hosting this event.



## GOALS FOR 2015-2016

- **GOAL 1:** Explore the evolving relationships between Tribal organizations and and Office of Children Services (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.



## CHANGES IN CRP OPERATION

- 2014-2015
  - Adopted operational guidelines
  - Adopted work plan
  - Panel meetings are now public
  - Most CRP documents are public
  - Panel website accepts public comments
- Planned in the future
  - Public Outreach Plan

# THANK YOU!

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**For more information**  
**[www.crpalaska.org](http://www.crpalaska.org)**

## Taneeka Hansen

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**From:** Alaska CRP Coordinator <admin@crpalaska.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 23, 2016 1:54 PM  
**Subject:** 2016 ICWA and Tribal Personnel Survey Report  
**Categories:** Taneeka

### Alaska Citizen Review Panel - 2016 ICWA and Tribal Personnel Survey Report

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Second year in a row, a group of ICWA workers and other tribal personnel indicated that child protection in Alaska's communities involves multiple institutions. Local ICWA offices, local school, clinic, and public safety are all important components of their local child protection along with the state's Office of Children Services (OCS). They rated the local child protection at 6 out of 10, almost the same rating as last year. These are among the findings from a survey of a group of ICWA workers and other tribal child protection personnel that attended a presentation by the Alaska Citizen Review Panel at the annual BIA Providers' Conference. Key findings from the report are:

- Local child protection services (CPS) system is not a single-institution system. Most respondents identified at least two different institutions. Majority of them identified local ICWA office and the OCS as constituents of local CPS system. More importantly, local school, clinic, and public safety are also identified as important components of the local CPS system, indicating the need for a structured, multi-institutional approach to child protection at a local level.
- The overall mean rating of the local CPS system, as defined by respondents in their respective communities, was 6 on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the worst and 10 being the best). This rating differed by region, with respondents from Northern and Southcentral regions scoring above the overall average, and Western and Southeast regions scoring below the average.
- Respondents that identified four institutions as part of their local CPS system rated their local CPS system highest. In general, respondents who identified fewer institutions as part of their local CPS systems also rated their local CPS system at a lower level.
- While Tribal State Collaborative Group (TSCG) has been instrumental in many key developments to foster and improve relationships between tribes and OCS, respondents of this survey did not feel very involved in TSCG. Almost 40% of the respondents were unfamiliar with TSCG, more than 60% never participated nor are participating in TSCG, and almost 70% felt that TSCG can be improved in some ways.
- While Initial Assessment (IA) is an important step in a child protection case case, majority of the respondents did not feel they interacted with the OCS workers frequently during IA. While respondents indicated that they interact most frequently on Administrative Reviews and Relative Search, these interactions are not always collaborative.

The full report can be accessed at <http://crpalaska.org/>. Please contact Ellen Ganley ([ellen@iialaska.com](mailto:ellen@iialaska.com)) for any further questions.

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**Alaska Citizen Review Panel**

*The Alaska Citizen Review Panel evaluates the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child protection agencies for effectiveness in discharging their child protection responsibilities. The Panel is mandated through CAPTA 1997 (P.L. 104-235), and enacted through AS 47.14.205. For more information visit [www.crpalaska.org](http://www.crpalaska.org).*

# **LOCAL CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM IN ALASKA'S COMMUNITIES**

## **RESULTS FROM A SURVEY OF ICWA PERSONNEL**



### **Alaska Citizen Review Panel**

212 Front Street, Suite 100, Fairbanks, AK 99701

March 2016

*Alaska Citizen Review Panel evaluates the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child protection agencies for effectiveness in discharging their child protection responsibilities. The Panel is mandated through CAPTA 1997 (P.L. 104-235), and enacted through AS 47.14.205.*

## **Acknowledgements**

The Citizen Review Panel thanks all the respondents for their informed opinion on various topics. The Panel thanks Ms. Gloria Gorman, Regional Social Worker with the Division of Human Services of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Alaska Region, for inviting the Panel to present at the 25th Annual BIA Providers' Conference, and for facilitating the survey.

## **Acronyms used in this report**

ARO	Anchorage Regional Office
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
CINA	Child in Need of Aid
CPS	Child Protection Services
CRP	Alaska Citizen Review Panel
IA	Initial Assessment
ICWA	Indian Child Welfare Act
IL	Independent Living
NRO	Northern Regional Office
OCS	Office of Children Services
SCRO	South Central Regional Office
SERO	Southeast Regional Office
TPR	Termination of Parental Rights
TSCG	Tribal State Collaboration Group
VSA	Voluntary Services Agreement
WRO	Western Regional Office



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## Introduction

The Division of Human Services of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Alaska Region organizes the Human Services sessions as part of the annual BIA Tribal Providers' Conference, held in Anchorage. As part of its 'public outreach' mandate, Alaska Citizen Review Panel (CRP) presented an overview of its activities for the year (2014-2015) on December 1-3, 2015 to the attendees of these sessions. These sessions are attended by more than a hundred representatives of the social services or child welfare services divisions/departments of various Alaska Native communities and/or entities from across Alaska. Many of them are Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) workers, while others are affiliated with the tribal ICWA programs in one or more ways.

Past observations by the Alaska CRP identified the challenges in OCS-ICWA worker relationship at the community level, and recommended over the years that this relationship be better defined and structured. To further explore the working relationships between frontline OCS workers and community level ICWA workers, the CRP began surveying ICWA personnel attending this conference each year since 2013. Moreover, in light of the recent encouraging developments of new Title IV-E agreements between OCS and few tribal entities, the CRP's 2015-2016 Annual Work Plan identified "understanding the evolving OCS-Tribal relationships" as one of its goals for the year. In light of this goal, the 2015 survey asked specific questions about Tribal State Collaboration Group (TSCG), a state-wide group that existed for 22 years, in addition to the questions about local OCS-tribal relationships.

## Key Findings

- Local child protection services (CPS) system is not a single-institution system. Most respondents identified at least two different institutions. Majority of them identified local ICWA office and the OCS as constituents of local CPS system.
- Local school, clinic, and public safety are also identified as important components of the local CPS system.
- The overall rating of the local CPS system, as defined by respondents in their respective communities, was 5.99 on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the worst and 10 being the best). This rating differed by region, with respondents from Northern and Southcentral regions scoring above the overall average, and Western and Southeast regions scoring below the average.
- Respondents that identified four institutions as part of their local CPS system rated their local CPS system highest. In general, respondents who identified fewer institutions as part of their local CPS systems also rated their local CPS system at a lower level.
- While Tribal State Collaborative Group (TSCG) has been instrumental in many key developments to foster and improve relationships between tribes and OCS, respondents of this survey did not feel very involved in TSCG. Almost 40% of the respondents were unfamiliar with TSCG, more than 60% never participated nor are participating in TSCG, and almost 70% felt that TSCG can be improved in some ways.
- While Initial Assessment (IA) is an important step in a Child in Need of Aid (CINA) case, majority of the respondents did not feel they interacted frequently with OCS workers during IA. While respondents indicated that they interact most frequently on Administrative Reviews and Relative Search, these interactions are not always collaborative.



## **Purpose of the survey**

The CRP is mandated to evaluate the extent to which state and local child protection system agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities, and to conduct public outreach to inform that effort. Therefore, CRP is interested in understanding the child protection needs and available services in communities across the state. This knowledge will inform the Panel's work. This survey was designed to collect information and opinions from social service leaders, administrators, and workers of various Alaska Native tribes and tribal entities in the state on three primary topics:

1. What constitutes the child protection systems in various communities?
2. How effective is this local child protection system, according to the respondents?
3. How can we describe the working relationships between local Tribal ICWA personnel and OCS frontline workers?

While the number of respondents on the survey is sizeable, it is not representative of the state's tribal child protection personnel. Therefore, results presented here must be interpreted with caution. This report is meant to inform the discussion on ways to strengthen local child protection, and improve the working relationships between ICWA workers and OCS workers.

## **Methods**

### Data collection

Data for this report were collected through a survey conducted during the Human Services sessions at the BIA Tribal Providers' Conference. Individuals could respond to the survey using a clicker or on paper. One hundred clickers were distributed among the attendees at the session. Remaining attendees used paper version of the survey. Each question was displayed on a screen and respondents used their clickers to indicate their answers, and could see the collective response to the question immediately. This collective response did not include responses from those that used paper surveys. Data from clicker responses were recorded into a database and compiled into a dataset for analysis. All completed paper surveys were collected at the end of the session. Data from paper surveys were compiled and appended to the data from clickers.

### Sample

The BIA Social Services sessions at the Providers Conference are open to all interested in child welfare related topics, and diverse professional and personal backgrounds are represented among the audience. There were a total of 117 responses from among those attending the CRP presentation. However, 12 respondents did not answer many of the questions on the survey and were eliminated from analysis. Findings presented here are from 105 responses (95 clicker responses and 10 paper responses). This is a sample obtained through convenience. This is not a representative sample, and generalization of these results is not possible. However, findings presented here are generally informative.

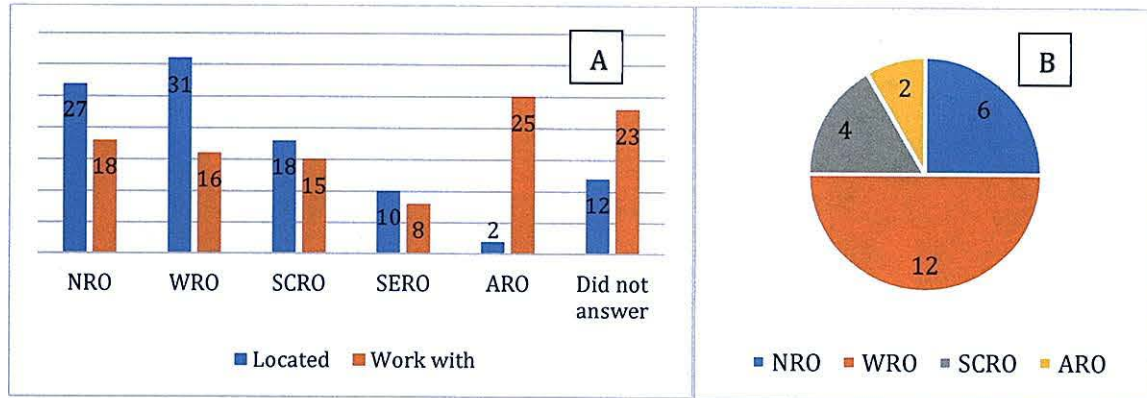
Among the 105 respondents, approximately half were employed as ICWA workers for their respective Tribes or Tribal entities. The other half were Tribal representatives or employees or otherwise related to Tribal ICWA enterprise. Five respondents did not answer the question.

OCS provides services through its five regional offices and serves communities in each region primarily through its regional and field offices in that region. However, Tribal ICWA services are



available by membership in a Tribe, not by jurisdictional boundary. Since tribal members are eligible for services from their tribe regardless of their residential location, tribes often serve members across multiple OCS regions. Panel A in Figure 1 shows the location of respondents' communities by OCS region, and the regional offices with which they most frequently work. More than half of the respondents were from communities located in the remote rural regions of the state.

Figure 1: Location of respondents' communities and OCS regions with which they work most frequently (Panel A); Respondents that live in various OCS regions but work most frequently with ARO (Panel B).



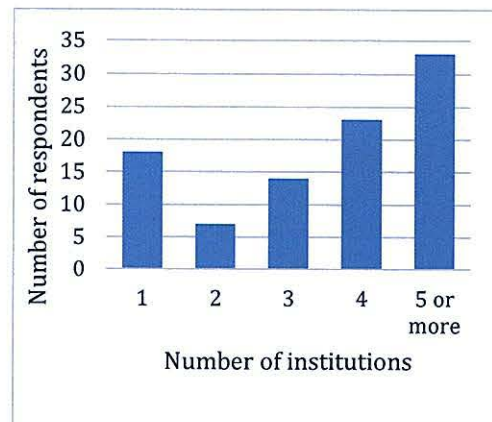
Many children and families from remote areas of the state migrate to Anchorage for various reasons. In addition, majority of critical services for children and families affected by child maltreatment are available in Anchorage relative to any other region in the state. Therefore, a number of tribes work directly with OCS workers in the Anchorage Region. A quarter of the respondents work with Anchorage region while only two respondents live in the region. Panel B in Figure 1 shows the number of respondents located in various regions that work most frequently with Anchorage region. None of the 10 respondents from SERO said they work most frequently with ARO. Twelve out of 27 respondents located in WRO said they most frequently work with ARO.

## Results and discussion

### *Constitution of local CPS system*

Each Alaskan community has its unique combination of institutions and resources to meet the needs of child protection. While OCS is mandated to respond to reports of harm and provide services to children and families across the state, each tribe has the ability to define their services, service population, mode of service delivery, and service boundary. Consequently, each Tribe relies on multiple institutions to meet their child protection needs.

Figure 2: Number of institutions comprising local CPS system.



Respondents to this survey overwhelmingly indicate the multi-institutional enterprise. Most respondents (56 out of 93) indicated that their local child protection system is comprised of four or more institutions (Figure 2). Local ICWA office and OCS are the most important institutions in the local child protection system in most communities represented in the sample. Out of the 105 that answered this question, local ICWA was identified by 83% and OCS by 67% as part of their local child protection system (Figure 3).

The 2014 version of this survey included only the bottom six options in Figure 3 as components of the local child protection system. However, respondents could identify additional institutions as part of an open ended question. Courts, school, clinic, and public safety were most frequently identified. The 2015 version of the survey included these options. As evident from Figure 3, all four institutions are perceived as important institutions in child protection at a local level. In fact, school, clinic, and public safety are the most identified after local ICWA and OCS, showing the need for close institutional relationships between these entities at a local level for effective child protection services in Alaska’s communities.

**Rating of local CPS system**

Respondents rated child protection in their communities on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest. Overall, 99 respondents answered this question, and the mean rating is 5.99, marginally lower than the 6.1 reported in 2014. Mean rating varied among regions. Respondents from SCRO rated their local child protection systems to be above the average at 6.33 while respondents from the Southeastern region rated their communities well below average.

The lower part of Table 1 shows the perceived mean rating of local child protection among communities by the number of entities identified as part of their local child protection system. While the differences are small, it is noteworthy that the mean rating peaks with communities that reported 4 entities as part of their local child protection system. Among these communities, local ICWA office, OCS, school, and public safety, in that order, were the most identified institutions as part of local child protection. In 2014, communities that identified only one entity as comprising their local child protection system had the highest perceived mean ranking of their local child protection system.

Figure 3: Types of institutions comprising local child protection systems at a community level; 2014 and 2015.

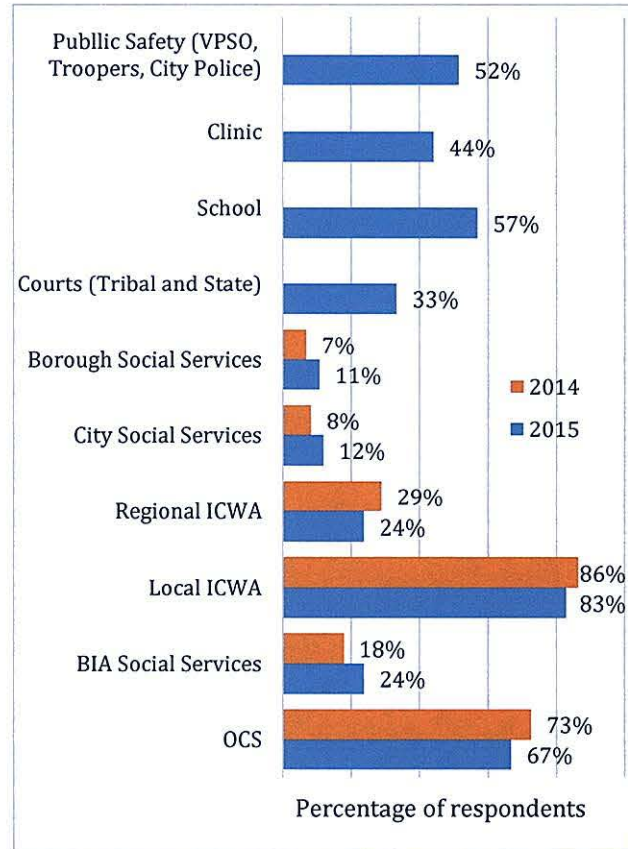


Table 1: Mean rating (on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being worst and 10 being best) of local child protection system (categories with less than five respondents are not reported).

		<i>Mean Rating</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>
<i>OCS Region</i>	Overall	5.99	99
	Norther Region	6.20	27
	Western Region	5.93	29
	Southcentral Region	6.33	14
	Southeastern Region	4.80	8
<i>Number of institutions identified as part of the local child protection system</i>	None	3.71	10
	One	6.00	18
	Two	6.00	7
	Three	6.14	14
	Four	6.41	23
	Five or more*	6.12	33

\* Mean ratings for communities that identified six, seven, eight, nine, and ten entities as part of their local child protection system were inconsistent. They were all combined into one category (five or more).

### ***OCS-Tribal Relationships***

Tribal-OCS relationships have been of high importance in Alaska’s child protection for several decades, and evolved in the context of a complex set of laws and regulations over land claims and sovereignty. While the capacity of either the OCS or any tribal entity to serve children and families in need is heavily dependent on available budgetary resources, assigned and assumed jurisdictional boundaries overlap in complex ways. This overlap continues to create several challenges.

#### ***Tribal State Collaboration Group (TSCG)***

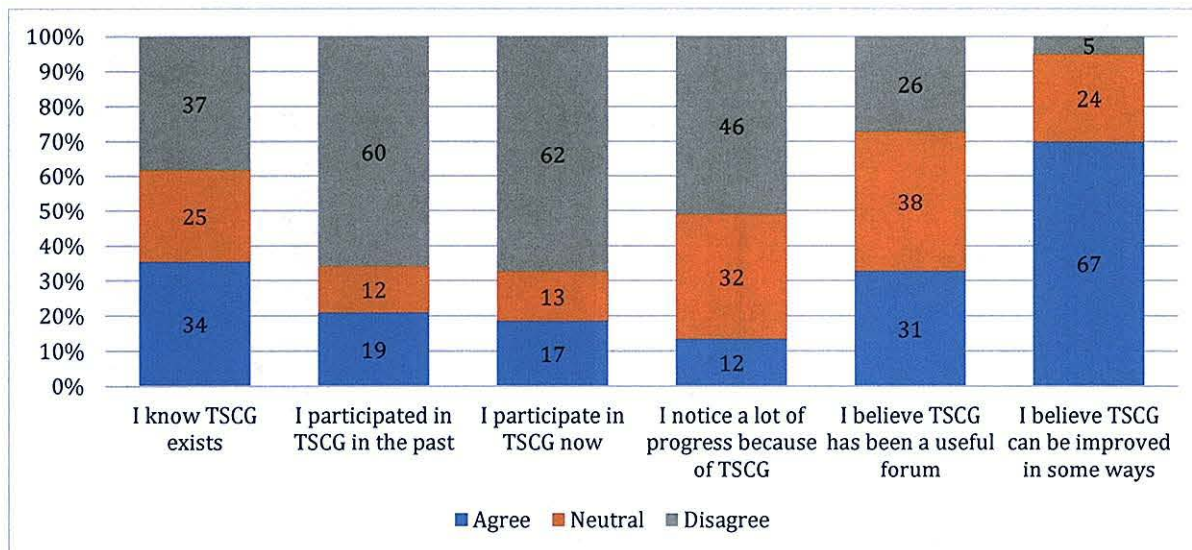
Many approaches to resolve disagreements between tribes and OCS were tried over the years. Through all these efforts, the Tribal State Collaboration Group (TSCG), a forum established in 1994, stood the test of time, and continues as a valued and meaningful forum to foster constructive dialogue between OCS and the tribes. In the 22 years since its formation, TSCG claims a remarkable string of accomplishments including the establishment of several specific positions within OCS, organization of many joint training programs, enhancing participation of tribal representatives in OCS decision-making on key policies and programs, conducting some joint projects with the support of external entities, and instituting several Title IV-E agreements for Tribes to assume some of the responsibility of foster care programs in their respective regions and for their members.

While this impressive list of accomplishments continues to grow, Alaska CRP sought to understand the perceptions of ICWA workers and other personnel delivering services on the frontlines regarding TSCG’s work and impact. The survey asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement on six specific statements with respect to TSCG. Respondents could indicate their level of agreement on a five-point scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, or Strongly Agree). For this report, all responses were grouped into three categories – agreed, neutral, and disagreed. Figure 4 presents the



number and percentage of respondents in each category, on all six statements. The statements are on the horizontal axis of the graph.

Figure 4: Level of agreement of respondents on six statements regarding the Tribal State Collaboration Group (TSCG)



A little less than 40% of all respondents indicated that they were not aware of TSCG's existence. This stands in stark contrast to the 22 year history of TSCG. More than 65% of the respondents never participated in TSCG, nor currently participate in it. More than 50% of the respondents did not agree that they "notice a lot of progress because of TSCG", and a little less than 30% believed that "TSCG has been a useful forum". Almost 70% of the respondents felt that "TSCG can be improved in some ways".

While these can be concerning, these results must be interpreted with caution. This is not a representative sample. While there are no reliable numbers, it is highly likely that ICWA worker positions contend with similar rates of high turnover as OCS. Therefore, individual respondents may be new and relatively under-informed about TSCG. In addition, despite some uniformity across the state in ICWA worker positions, each tribe or tribal entity may have a different set of duties it assigns ICWA workers; and different requirements and opportunities for training. The ability of an individual frontline ICWA worker to be connected to the statewide networks, and familiarize oneself with the macro developments is severely limited by all these factors. This is illustrated by a comparison of responses to first and last statements in Figure 4. Out of the 37 respondents that disagreed that they knew TSCG existed, 20 agreed that TSCG can be improved in some ways. A natural question is, how can one suggest improvements without knowing that the organization even exists? Respondents may be indicating that their lack of awareness is an indicator that TSCG needs to improve its visibility.

Moreover, TSCG is a state-wide initiative with representation from each OCS region. While respondents to this survey may feel that they do not get to participate in these discussions, it is likely that their voices are being represented. OCS indicated that TSCG will be regionalized, and region level concerns will take precedence. These results indicate that regionalization may be very welcome by a majority.



Interaction and collaboration at the local level

OCS workers are responsible for many decisions on a Child in Need of Aid (CINA) case. They frequently report very high caseloads, with limited time on any one case. Consequently, they seek any assistance available on a case. ICWA workers are resourceful individuals in the local context of most cases, and can offer much assistance with many aspects of a CINA case. However, this ICWA worker- OCS worker relationship is not structured or institutionalized.

While OCS workers are asked to rely on ICWA workers as resource persons, and while ICWA workers often intervene in cases as representatives of their respective tribes, there are no existing regulations that guide this relationship. The CRP recommended in the past that this relationship be more structured. This survey sought to understand the frequency of interaction, and levels of collaboration between OCS workers and ICWA workers on thirteen different tasks in the absence of any structure regulating this relationship:

- Reporting
- Screening
- Initial Assessment (IA)
- Case planning
- Voluntary Services Agreement (VSA)
- Relative search
- Placement decisions
- Administrative Reviews
- Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) decisions
- Adoption decisions
- Independent Living (IL) decisions
- Other practice decisions
- Other policy decisions

Table 2: Possible response options for questions on interaction and collaboration

<b>Interaction</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>
Never	Contentious
Rarely	Somewhat contentious
Occasionally	Neutral
Frequently	Somewhat collaborative
Often	Collaborative
I don't know what this means	I don't know what this means

Table 2 shows the possible options that respondents could choose in response to questions about their interaction and collaboration with OCS workers on each task. While some of these tasks necessitate more interaction or collaboration, some do not need or allow much room for interaction or collaboration. Consequently, as shown in Figure 5, a good number of respondents either chose



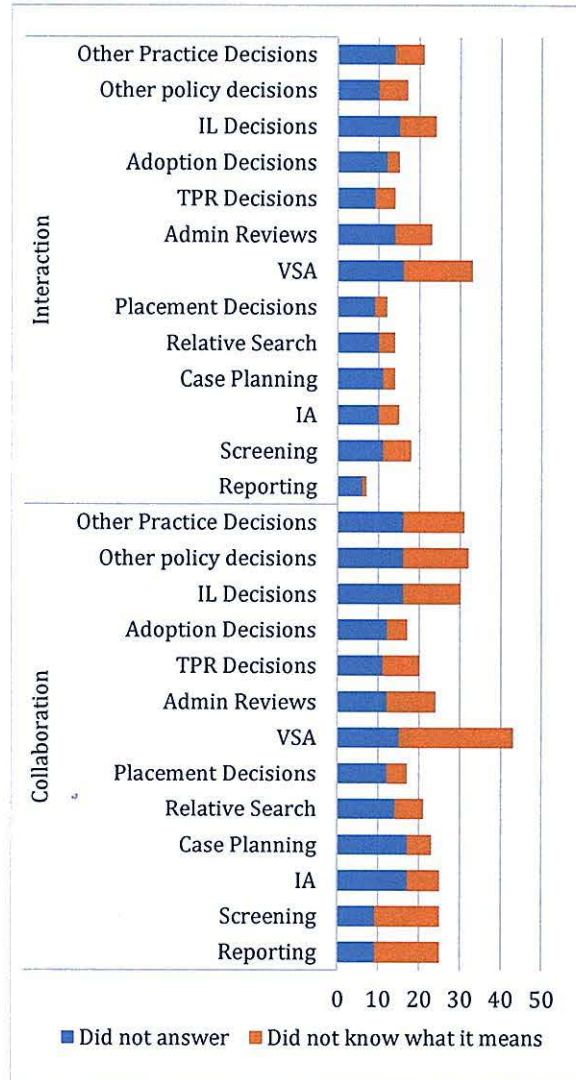
not to answer or indicated that they did not know what was meant by interaction or collaboration in the context of each of the tasks. Tasks such as reporting and screening do not lend themselves to interactions and collaboration. Voluntary Service Agreements are not frequent, and thus some of the respondents may not even be familiar with them. In addition, 'other practice decisions' and 'other policy decisions' may have been too vague to elicit a meaningful response.

Nevertheless, most respondents indicated familiarity with most tasks by choosing one of the top five responses shown in the two columns in Table 2. For simplicity, a collapsed set of responses are used for analysis. The sample included both ICWA workers and other personnel affiliated with a tribe's ICWA program. There were no statistically significant differences in their responses on any of the thirteen tasks either on interaction or collaboration.

Figure 6 shows the responses to two questions: "To the best of your knowledge, mark how frequently your tribal ICWA worker interacts with OCS personnel in the following activities" (Panel A), and "To the best of your knowledge, rate your collaboration with OCS workers on the following activities" (Panel B). Only ten of thirteen tasks are shown. Reporting, Screening, and VSA are omitted.

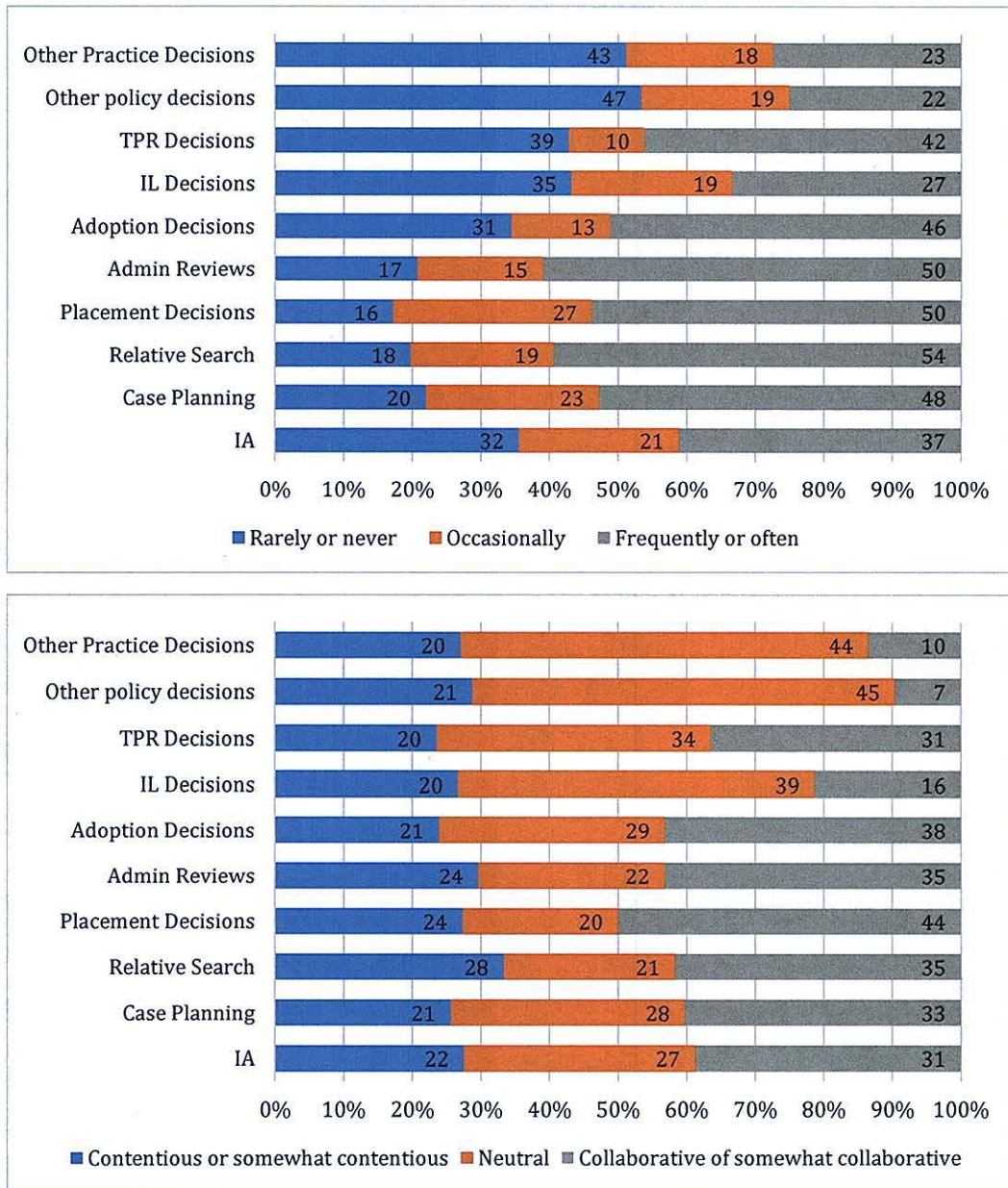
Panel A shows the responses on interaction. Most respondents felt that they interact with OCS workers frequently or often during administrative reviews and relative search. While "other" policy and practice decisions may not have been clear to the respondents, close to or more than 50% of them felt that they rarely, never, or only occasionally interact with OCS frontline workers in connection with all the other tasks (IA, case planning, placement decisions, adoption decisions, independent living decisions, and decisions on termination of parental rights). This may be because these tasks do not need or allow for interaction. However, it is counterintuitive that a large percentage of the ICWA personnel (35% of the 90 that answered that question) rarely or never interact with OCS frontline workers on initial assessment. More than 40% of the respondents felt that they rarely or never interact with OCS frontline workers on decisions regarding independent living

Figure 5: Number of respondents that did not choose a valid response on interactions or collaboration on various tasks



or termination of parental rights. Panel B shows the responses on collaboration. Most respondents (50% of 88 that answered this question) felt they collaborate on placement decisions, followed by adoption decisions and admin reviews (a little over 40%). Close to 30% of the respondents felt that their collaboration is contentious regardless of the task.

Figure 6: Perceptions of respondents on their frequency of interaction with OCS frontline workers on various tasks (Panel A); and on their relationship with OCS frontline workers on various tasks (Panel B)



Higher interaction generally leads to better collaborative relationship. Therefore, respondents should have experienced better collaborative relationships on tasks where they indicated higher interaction. Conversely, they should have experienced less collaborative relationships on tasks where they had lower levels of interaction with OCS frontline workers. In other words, responses on each of these tasks should positively correlate between interaction and collaboration. This is true on six tasks. Seven out of thirteen tasks did not conform to this.<sup>1</sup>

Most interestingly, relative search and administrative reviews are tasks the respondents identified where they interact frequently with OCS frontline workers. However, they also said that their interactions on these tasks are not collaborative. OCS recently revised their practice of administrative reviews. The new process is shortened and focuses on the federally required elements and discards all the other components that were added over time by OCS for various reasons. OCS indicated that this shorter new process will help in compliance, reduce workload, and avoid duplication. CRP's discussions with personnel of various tribal entities revealed some discontent with the new process. Specifically, they mentioned that the shorter version does not give them adequate opportunity to get the facts of the case, and does not allow for them to interact with other parties in the case. This most recent change in the process may explain some of the reasons for high interaction but low collaboration expressed by ICWA personnel on this question. Relative search is often identified as a key area of collaboration between OCS workers and ICWA personnel. However, 60% of the respondents felt that they frequently interact with OCS personnel on relative searches, but only 40% felt that their relationship is collaborative.

## **Conclusion**

Alaska CRP recognizes the importance of local partnerships and relationships in delivering effective and efficient child protection services. For several years, through various tools, Alaska CRP has been trying to assess the quality and nature of local relationships, specifically in remote rural communities. Most remote rural communities in Alaska are also home to one or more federally recognized Alaska Native tribes. Each tribe receives a formula-based grant from the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) each year to provide services under the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). Whether through an independent contract with the BIA, or through a compact under a regional tribal non-profit entity, each tribe provides some level of service. Most frequently, tribes employ one or more individuals, commonly referred to as ICWA workers, performing ICWA-related duties.

ICWA workers' job descriptions vary widely across the state, and may range from minimal supporting role to extensive case work and legal responsibilities. ICWA workers' education qualifications and work experience too vary similarly. Despite all the variations, ICWA workers collectively form a network of responders and support personnel, often the only resource persons at the community level. Children, families, as well as OCS workers rely on ICWA workers in various ways from quick family visits to relative search. In addition to being resource persons or persons directly responsible for child safety and wellbeing, ICWA workers are also heavily relied on as persons with local knowledge of the community's context and individual family network and history. In this context, OCS-ICWA workers relationships are extremely important.

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<sup>1</sup> Correlation coefficients are not presented here.



Local CPS system is rarely a single-institution system. Collaboration and coordination are essential. Most respondents identified at least two institutions. Local ICWA office and OCS are the most frequently identified institutions, signifying the important role both these institutions play in providing child protection services in local communities. Additionally, local school, clinic, and public safety are other important institutions identified as part of the local CPS. Teachers, medical personnel, and public safety personnel are all mandated reporters. Beyond that, their roles in ensuring child safety and providing child protection services are not identified in any specific statute. While OCS has specific working relationships with certain local institutions, CRP's site visits often reveal the lack of a structured approach to these relationships. Respondents to this survey clearly identify these local institutions as important components of their local CPS system, indicating a clear need for a more structured, multi-institutional strategy and approach to child protection.

Overall, respondents rated their local CPS, as defined by them in their respective communities, at 5.99 on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the worst and 10 being the best). This was marginally lower than the rating provided last year at 6.1. Rating varied by regions – respondents from Southcentral region rated their local CPS higher than the corresponding rating provided by respondents of their respective regions. Southeast region was rated the lowest.

While Tribal State Collaborative Group (TSCG) has been a major presence in Alaska's child protection, 40% of the respondents were not aware of it. More than 60% of the respondents neither participated in TSCG in the past nor are currently participating in it. This may just be an artifact of the organization of TSCG. It is not uncommon that only a few representative leaders get to participate in state-wide initiatives. Survey results indicate that a proposed move to regionalize TSCG may be very welcome. However, its current low visibility will likely be a barrier for enhanced participation.

CRP has long pointed out the need for a structured relationship between ICWA personnel and OCS frontline workers. Responses on interactions and collaboration between ICWA personnel and OCS workers provide some interesting insights. While reporting, screening, and voluntary service agreements may provide little opportunity or necessity for interaction, respondents indicated that they interact with OCS workers on many other key tasks and decisions. It is interesting to note that while ICWA personnel felt that they interact most on admin reviews and relative search, their relationships with OCS workers is least collaborative on these tasks. The data from this survey does not allow for a deeper examination of the reasons for the reported nature of these relationships nor the outcomes of such a relationship. In other words, do these relationships lead to better outcomes? This question requires a deeper examination of individual case outcomes. From data collected from this sample, this relationship seems rather unpredictable from one task to the other.

However, in the absence of any legal or regulatory requirement that either OCS workers or ICWA personnel should be collaborating or coordinating their services, these results are very encouraging. However, CRP contends that, owing to the significance and impact of various decisions made by both OCS workers and ICWA workers that impact some of the most vulnerable children and families in Alaska, it is only meaningful that this relationship is structured to foster better collaboration and coordination.



## Appendix – Survey instrument

The Alaska Citizen Review Panel (CRP) evaluates the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child protection agencies for effectiveness in discharging their child protection responsibilities.

This survey gathers opinions on child protection system in your community and helps the Alaska CRP to better understand the context and circumstances of relationships between Alaska's Office of Children Services (OCS) and the communities they serve. Results of this survey will be available on the CRP's website at [www.alaskacrp.org](http://www.alaskacrp.org).

Your Professional title \_\_\_\_\_ Your Community \_\_\_\_\_

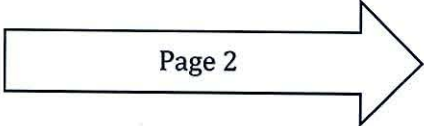
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### The following questions are about your community and your relationship with OCS.

- In your opinion, which organizations below are a part of the child protection system in your community? (Check all that apply)
  - Office of Children's Services
  - BIA Social Services
  - Local Tribal ICWA program
  - Regional ICWA program
  - City social services
  - Borough social services
  - Courts (Tribal and state)
  - School
  - Clinic
  - Public safety (VPSO, Troopers, City Police)
- On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being best and 1 being poor) how would you rate child protection in your community? (Pick one number)
 

Poor 
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
Best
- Are you the Tribal ICWA worker for your tribe?  Yes  No
- Please indicate your level of agreement on the following statements about Tribal State Collaborative Group (TSCG)

	Strongly Disagree <span style="font-size: 2em;">→</span> Strongly Agree				
	1	2	3	4	5
I know TSCG exists	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I participated in TSCG in the past	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I participate in TSCG now	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I notice a lot of progress because of TSCG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I believe TSCG has been a useful forum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I believe TSCG can be improved in some ways	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>





5. To the best of your knowledge, **mark how frequently** your tribal ICWA worker interacts with OCS personnel in the following activities:

	None → Regular					Don't know what this means
	0	1	2	3	4	
Reporting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Screening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Initial Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Case Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Voluntary Services Agreement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relative Search	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placement Decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Administrative Reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adoption Decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Independent Living Decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Termination of Parental Rights Decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other policy decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other practice decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. To the best of your knowledge, **rate your collaboration** with OCS workers on the following activities:

	Collaborative → Contentious					Don't know what this means
	0	1	2	3	4	
Reporting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Screening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Initial Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Case Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Voluntary Services Agreement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relative Search	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placement Decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Administrative Reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adoption Decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Independent Living Decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Termination of Parental Rights Decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other policy decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other practice decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

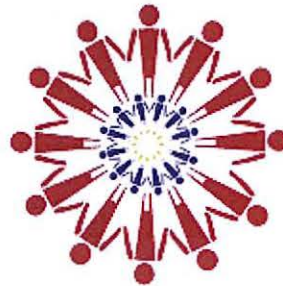
Please contact the Panel with any comments or concerns at [admin@crpalaska.org](mailto:admin@crpalaska.org). Please visit the Panel's website ([www.alaskacrp.org](http://www.alaskacrp.org)) for information on the Panel's activities and on how you can participate.



# ALASKA CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL

## ANNUAL REPORT

2015



*Alaska Citizen Review Panel evaluates the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child protection agencies for effectiveness in discharging their child protection responsibilities. The Panel is mandated through CAPTA 1997 (P.L. 104-235), and enacted through AS 47.14.205.*

212 Front Street, Suite 100, Fairbanks, AK 99701

[www.crpalaska.org](http://www.crpalaska.org)

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Alaska CRP's annual report is released on June 30<sup>th</sup> each year, and covers the Panel's activities through the period beginning July 1<sup>st</sup> of the previous year. The Office of Children's Services is required to respond to this report and its recommendations within six months of its release.

This report is distributed to all state legislators, Alaska's congressional delegation, the Children's Bureau, and the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. It is also available for any interested party and the general public on the Panel's website at [www.crpalaska.org](http://www.crpalaska.org).

## ABOUT THE PANEL

**AUTHORITY:** The Alaska Citizen Review Panel (CRP) is federally mandated through the 1996, 2003, and 2010 amendments to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), and authorized through Alaska Statute Sec. 47.14.205. The Panel operates under a set of operating guidelines, available on the Panel's website.

**FUNCTIONS:** The primary purpose of Citizen Review Panels is to assist state and local child protection systems to be more responsive to community needs and opportunities in providing child protection services through evaluation and public outreach. In Alaska, the designated child protection agency is the Office of Children's Services (OCS). Therefore Alaska CRP:

Evaluates 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; and
- Any other criteria that the CRP considers important to ensuring the protection of children

Conducts public outreach and gathers public comment on current OCS procedures and practices involving children and family services.

The Panel is not a grievance redress mechanism, and thus is not equipped to address any concerns on individual cases.

**STRUCTURE AND MEMBERSHIP:** Membership on the Panel is voluntary, and expected to represent the diversity of the state. The Panel selects its own members, through a formal recruitment process. Members elect a Chair and Vice Chair from among the membership. While members are expected to serve for at least two years, there are no stipulated term limits. The panel membership during 2014-2015 included the following (\* indicates the member resigned during this work year, and + indicates the member joined the panel during this year):

Chair	Diwakar Vadapalli	Anchorage
Vice Chair	Dana W. Hallett	Haines
Members	Ben Creasy*	Juneau
	Bettyann Steciw	Anchor Point
	Jen Burkmire+	Wasilla
	Margaret McWilliams	Juneau
	Donna M. Aguiniga+	Anchorage
	Rebecca Vale+	Anchorage
	Rodreshia Dunbar*	Anchorage

**STAFF SUPPORT:** Information Insights, Inc. provided staff support under a contract with the State of Alaska.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Panel expresses its gratitude to all the staff and leadership of the Office of Children Services for their dedicated work keeping Alaska’s children safe, and being available to us through the year. The Panel recognizes the difficult jobs they have, filled with painful decisions, and greatly appreciates their willingness to continue to serve some of the most vulnerable children and families of Alaska.

The Panel also thanks all the partner agencies and their staff for being available for consultation, their thoughtful reflections, and helpful suggestions.

The Panel is thankful to all the individuals that served as resource persons to the Panel.

The Panel thanks Rep. Paul Seaton, Chairman of the House Committee on Health and Social Services, and all the Committee members for encouraging the Panel and providing a forum for meaningful and constructive dialogue.

Editorial review: Virgene Hanna, ISER, UAA

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## NOTE

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The Citizen Review Panel is tasked with reviewing the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child protective services in Alaska. In that capacity, this report notes the Panel’s observations on various components of the system in Alaska. The Panel’s review is intended to provide constructive feedback to inform OCS’ policy and practice. No observation should be construed as critical of any individual OCS employee.

## ACRONYMS

ACRF	Alaska Center for Resource Families
APSR	Annual Progress & Services Report
ARO	Anchorage Regional Office
CAPTA	Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act
CB	Children’s Bureau
CCLS	Community Care Licensing Specialist
CFSP	Child and Family Services Plan
CFSR	Child and Family Services Review
CPA	Child Placement Agency
CPS	Child Protective Services
CRP	Citizen Review Panel
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Services
DSS	Division of State Systems
HSS	Health and Social Services
IA	Initial Assessment
ICWA	Indian Child Welfare Act
NRC	National Resource Center
NRO	Northern Regional Office
OCS	Office of Children Services
ORCA	Online Resources for Children in Alaska
PSR	Protective Service Report
PSS	Protective Services Specialist
QA	Quality Assurance
RRRC	Regional Recruitment and Retention Committee
SACWIS	State Automated Child Welfare Information Systems
SCRO	South Central Regional Office
SRO	Southeast Regional Office
SSA	Social Service Assistants
TA	Technical Assistance
WR@	Western Regional Office

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Alaska Citizen Review Panel continued its structural reforms from 2013-2014 and streamlined more of its operations during 2014-2015. All four goals from last year were retained. In addition, in response to the concerns evidenced during the previous year, two goals – one related to data management practices, and another related to foster care – were added. All goals are listed in the work plan section of this report. Where possible, the Panel tried to follow a dual track approach examining both policy and practice on each goal, and examined the differences between stated policy and actual practice. In addition to the set goals, the Panel examines several issues as they surface during the course of the Panel’s work through the year.

Owing to its lack of capacity, the Panel frequently ends the year with much work yet to be completed on each goal, and many issues needing further understanding and examination. Findings and recommendations are limited by the information available to the Panel. This report and other Panel documents are part of a continuing dialogue between the Panel representing the community’s child protection needs and the OCS as the designated agency mandated to serve those needs. Therefore, the Panel hopes that these recommendations will spur further conversations and meaningful change.

### 2014-2015 RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1:** OCS continue to implement the Panel’s 2013-2014 recommendations on intake policy.

**Recommendation 2:** OCS constitute an internal task force to specifically focus on in-home service model. This task force should be tasked with operationalizing Strategy 2.A.2 of the 2015-2019 CFSP.

- In collaboration with local service providers, assess the existing in-home model as it exists in each region.
- Identify additional, more specific outcomes with respect to Strategy 2.A.2 of the 2015-2019 CFSP.

**Recommendation 3:** OCS address the root cause of the Initial Assessment (IA) backlog:

- Identify the nature of cases that are due past 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, and 120 days.
- Revisit the Differential Response process and examine its fit to the current situation

**Recommendation 4:** Improve efforts to recruit and retain resource families across the state:

- Identify, and advertise through appropriate channels, a clear message on the approximate numbers of resource families needed.
- Identify outcome measures and track success of recruitment and retention efforts.

**Recommendation 5:** Improve the survey instruments and reporting of results on various surveys that OCS QA unit conducts to assess important components of OCS operations.

**Recommendation 6:** Adopt a method to identify, measure, and assess various components of workload of frontline workers.

## ANNUAL ACTIVITIES

The Panel's 2014-2015 annual calendar included the following activities. Reports on all major activities are available on the Panel's website at [www.crp.alaska.org](http://www.crp.alaska.org).

**MONTHLY PANEL MEETINGS:** The Panel met first Tuesday of every month, with some minor deviations. Owing to the geographic dispersion of the panel members, all meetings by default are held over the telephone. October 2014 and June 2015 meetings were held in person in Anchorage. All monthly Panel meetings are open to public. Meeting agenda, date, time, location, and the call-in number to participate are announced a week prior to the meeting, and posted both on the Panel's website and on State of Alaska online public notices website. Summary minutes are posted on the Panel's website. Agency representatives or others with experience and expertise on a specific practice or policy are often invited to present to the Panel at its monthly meeting.

**MONTHLY MEETINGS WITH OCS:** In order to maintain a healthy working relationship, and to be informed of the latest developments in practice and policy, the Panel regularly met with Ms. Christy Lawton, Director of OCS and Mr. Travis Erickson, Division Operations Manager. Specific questions and concerns on various policies and practices of OCS are often addressed. Meetings with OCS are not open to public.

**SITE VISITS:** The Panel conducts visits to various OCS regional and field offices to gather information on practice and assess working relationships between OCS and its local partners. The Panel's observations and recommendations are documented in a report and are subsequently discussed with the OCS' state and the region' leadership. All site visit reports are available on the CRP website. The Panel conducted three site visits during 2014-2015: Anchorage Regional Office (ARO) in October 2014, Southeast Regional Office (SRO) in January 2015, and Western Regional Office (WRO) in May 2015.

**REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE:** Each February, the Panel attempts to present a summary of its previous year's work and an update on the current year's work to the Health and Social Services (HSS) Committees of both the Alaska House and Senate. The Panel has been unsuccessful in securing a hearing with the Senate HSS

### 2014-2015 CALENDAR

Panel Meetings	Meetings with OCS	Site visits	Other
Jul 1, 2014	Jul 11, 2014		
Aug 5, 2014	Aug 8, 2014		
Sep 2, 2014	Sep 12, 2014		
Oct 4, 2014	Oct 10, 2014	Oct 2-3, 2014 ARO	
Nov 4, 2014	Nov 14, 2014		
Dec 2, 2014	Dec 12, 2014		
Jan 6, 2015	Jan 9, 2015	Jan 21-24, 2015 SRO	
Feb 3, 2015	Feb 13, 2015		Feb 11-13, 2015 Visit to the legislature
Mar 3, 2015	Mar 13, 2015		
Apr 7, 2015	April 10, 2015		
May 5, 2015	May 29, 2015	May 7-8, 2015 WRO	May 18-21, 2015 CRP National Conference
Jun 20, 2015			

### 2014-2015 PRESENTATIONS TO THE PANEL

Month	Person	Title
Mar 2015	Aileen McInnis	Director, Alaska Center for Resource Families
Apr 2015	Yurii Miller and Tandra Donahue	OCS Foster Care Licensing Managers
May 2015	Carla Erickson	Chief Assistant Attorney General

Committee for the last three years. The Panel also meets with other legislators, legislative staff, Governor’s office, and the leadership of the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) during this visit. A brief report with the details of this visit and a recording of the Panel’s presentation is posted on the Panel’s website.

**OUTREACH ACTIVITIES:** The Panel reaches out to the public and various stakeholder groups to collect public comment. The Panel maintains an active website [www.crpalaska.org](http://www.crpalaska.org) that hosts all Panel documents and also serves as a means for the public to reach the Panel. The Panel also meets with or participates in meetings of various other groups, panels, and commissions to inform them of the Panel’s activities. Such activities included:

- Sep 18, 2014 Anchorage Meeting with the Children’s Justice Act Task Force
- Nov 24, 2014 Anchorage Meeting with the Coordinator of the Court Improvement Project
- Dec 3, 2014 Anchorage Presentation to the ICWA representatives at the BIA Providers Conference
- Dec 9, 2014 Anchorage Meeting with the Children’s Justice Act Task Force
- Dec 19, 2014 Anchorage Meeting with Aileen McInnis, Director of the Alaska Center for Resource Families
- Jan 15, 2015 Anchorage Presentation to the OCS Leadership Summit
- Jan 15, 2015 Anchorage Meeting with several OCS senior staff on the new Maltreatment Assessment Protocol (MAP)
- Mar 18, 2015 Anchorage Meeting with Dr. Beth Sirles, Director of the School of Social Work, UAA
- May 22, 2015 Anchorage Meeting with Rep. Paul Seaton, Chair of the Alaska House HSS Committee
- May 28, 2015 Anchorage Alaska conversations that matter – The wellbeing of our children

**CRP NATIONAL CONFERENCE:** In its attempts to critically examine its activities the Panel identified the CRP National Conference as a resource. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Panel attended the National Conference held in Portland, OR in May 2015. A detailed report of observations and recommendations from the Conference is available on the CRP website.

**CHANGES TO PANEL OPERATIONS:** The Panel adopted a set of operating guidelines in December 2014, opened up Panel monthly meetings to public in February 2015, streamlined site visits, developed templates for site visit reports, and improved the website.

For two years, the Panel has been exploring ways to initiate reviewing cases and conduct surveys as part of its annual activities. Both are recognized tools for effective Panel operations, and are used by several other Panels from across the country. Due to Panel’s resource constraints, both tools will need innovative partnerships to leverage necessary resources. The Panel’s attempts to recruit a student intern from UAA School of Social Work were unsuccessful. While this option will be explored again next year, the Panel is exploring other avenues to recruit help and meet its mandate.

*The Panel reviews the policies, procedures, and practices of the state and local child protection agencies in Alaska. The Panel’s review is limited to systemic factors of policy and practice, and does not involve examining individual case outcomes. As part of its outreach efforts, the Panel serves as an important conduit for information between the child protection agency and the general public. All of the Panel’s activities throughout the year serve both the review and outreach functions.*

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## WORK PLAN

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The Panel's annual work plan contains three components of the Panel's responsibilities: specific goals as part of the Panel's mandate of review and outreach; associated travel including site visits; and specific activities to change or improve its operations. Panel's travel and operational improvements are reported in the previous section of this report.

Work plan goals evolve in the course of the Panel's activities. The Panel maintains a running list of topics/issues/concerns, and picks the top four to six goals each year. If sufficient progress on a goal has not been made, that goal may be retained for the following year. The Panel retained all four goals from the 2013-2014 work plan and added two new goals this year.

**GOAL 1: What are the policy guidelines for screening Protective Service Reports?** *(retained from last year)* The screening decision, the very first decision OCS makes in any case, is extremely important. This decision may mean the difference between necessary intervention and undesirable intrusion into a family's life. With a large number of cases being screened out over the last several years, the Panel examined the process of screening and the results of the screening decision.

*Each goal relates to a component of OCS' practice model or operations. Where possible, both the stated policy and actual practice of that component are examined for each goal. Recommendations from the Panel are expected to address this gap, and help the child protection system be more responsive to the needs of the children and families it serves.*

**GOAL 2: What is the practice model for in-home service delivery (urban and rural)?** *(retained from last year)* Once screened in for services, many children are left at home with their caregivers. Both the children and their families are expected to receive services to help them alleviate the risks for child maltreatment. However, much of the state is remote and such services are unavailable. The Panel examined the magnitude of this caseload.

**GOAL 3: IA Backlog – without an increase in the workforce, what is the current plan for avoiding another backlog?** *(retained from last year)* Initial Assessments (IA) are conducted immediately after an allegation is screened-in for further investigation. OCS has had some challenges in conducting these IAs in a timely fashion. The Panel examined the methods OCS uses to minimize and prevent IA backlog.

**GOAL 4: Assess the need for services in communities in Alaska.** *(retained from last year)* With the closure of the Unalaska field office in 2012, the Panel wanted to examine the unmet needs for child protection services in the region that was covered by that field office. However, due to limited resources and capacity, this goal was never successfully pursued.

**GOAL 5: Understand the challenges of the Online Resources for Children in Alaska (ORCA) database.** ORCA is OCS's data and case management system. While all such systems have their limitations, OCS staff seem to have extreme challenges using the system despite its multi-million dollar improvements. The Panel examined parts of this system to better understand these challenges.

**GOAL 6: What are OCS' strategies to recruit and retain resource families?** Shortage of families available to foster children in need of a home has been a consistent issue over the last several years. The Panel examined the recruitment strategies employed by OCS to recruit resource families across the state.

# FINDINGS

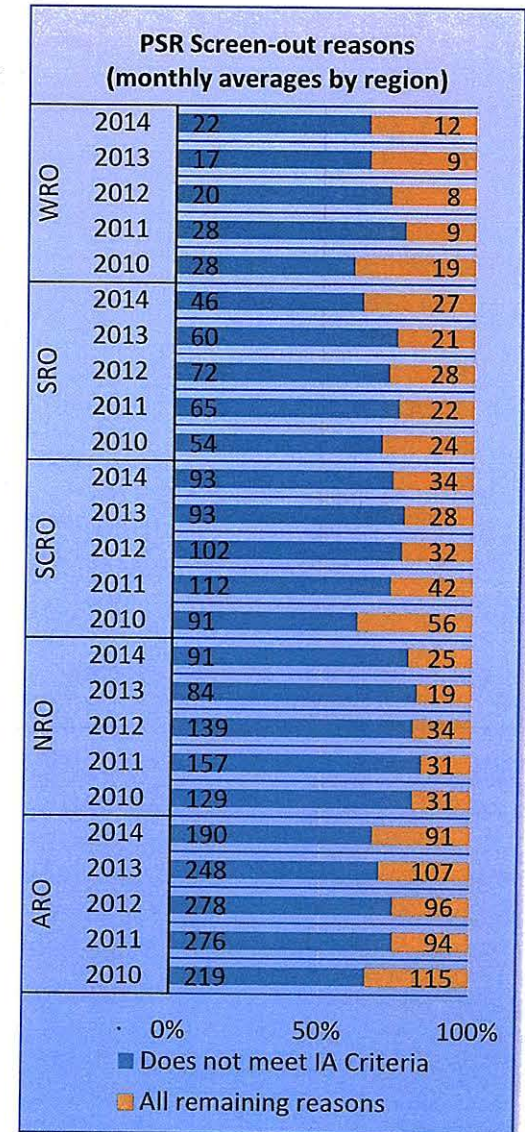
## GOAL1: What are the policy guidelines for screening Protective Service Reports?

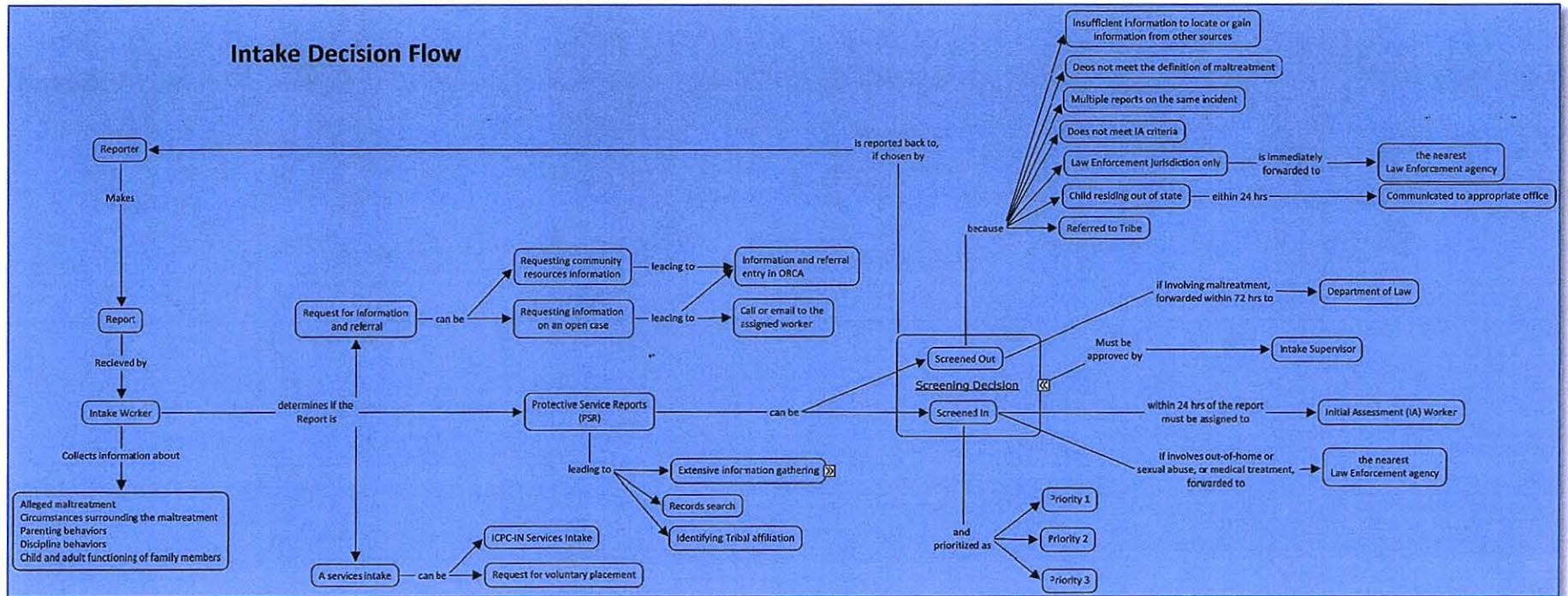
The Panel focused on the intake process for at least two reasons. First, the Panel gathered public comment over the last two years that children are being left in unsafe conditions despite reporting. In response, the Panel examined the policy on screening decision during 2013-2014 reporting period (see last year’s report available on the CRP website). Second, there were several discussions during the current year on extreme turnover among frontline workers, and high workloads at OCS. Every allegation triggers the screening process, consuming staff time. With increasing numbers of PSRs each month, the Panel is concerned that cases may not be getting the necessary attention.

Every call OCS receives is recorded as a PSR. OCS has received approximately 16,000 PSRs each year since 2011. Each PSR may contain multiple allegations of maltreatment involving multiple children and multiple perpetrators. A PSR is considered screened-in if at least one allegation is screened-in. Just above 50 percent of PSRs were screened-in for further investigation in 2014, the highest percentage since 2009. This means, nearly half of the reports OCS received were screened-out each year. Northern Regional Office (NRO) consistently had the highest percentage of screened-out cases, with more than 50% screened out each year. On the other hand, Western Region saw the lowest screen-out rate each year since 2010.

OCS records eight different reasons for screening-out an allegation. Of the eight, a large majority of the allegations are screened out because they “do not meet IA criteria.” OCS Child Protective Services Manual defines ‘Does Not Meet Initial Assessment Criteria (formerly titled No Alleged Maltreatment)’ as: “Information does not indicate that the child may be unsafe or at a high risk of maltreatment by a primary caregiver, parent, custodian or guardian.” The percentage screened out that did not meet the IA criteria” is highest in NRO, consistently at or above 80% since 2011. While Native Village of Barrow has exclusive jurisdiction, only a minute number of cases are screened out to the Tribe. WRO consistently had the lowest percentage through the same years.

OCS intake was handled locally by frontline social workers in each field and regional office until 2011 when the current regional intake system was introduced. Regional intake improved consistency but several local partners complained about the loss of direct contact with local personnel, and a general lack of information about follow up on a PSR. OCS is currently working towards a state-wide centralized intake, expected to be implemented by 2017, to further improve practice consistency.





While regional intake brought some consistency to the screening decisions, these regional differences indicate some systematic differences between regions. In order to adequately understand these differences, the Panel will continue to follow these trends next few years. To facilitate this work, the Panel developed a flowchart of the decision process. We hope this flowchart will serve as a communication tool between OCS, its various partner agencies, and the general public. It was reviewed by OCS for accuracy. OCS informed the Panel that a new decision making tool for screening is being developed.

OCS' intake process is a relatively short but complex process. The flowchart shows several detailed steps beginning from the reporter of the alleged maltreatment calling in, to the screening decision and immediate follow up. The entire process typically takes no longer than 24 hours. This turnaround time is challenging, especially considering the impact this may have on the child's or family's life. The flowchart is a series of sentences represented by key phrases connected by arrows. Starting at any box, it is best to read along the direction of the arrows for a logical flow of decisions.

**Recommendation 1:** OCS continue to implement the Panel's 2013-2014 recommendations on intake policy.

The Panel's 2013-2014 annual report recommended several changes to the intake processes. OCS agreed with all recommendations and noted that they will be implemented in due course. However, as of the date of this report, the Panel is not aware of any changes to the intake policy in response to those recommendations. As the intake policy evolves and new protocols are adopted, the Panel strongly encourages OCS to implement the recommendations from the previous annual report.

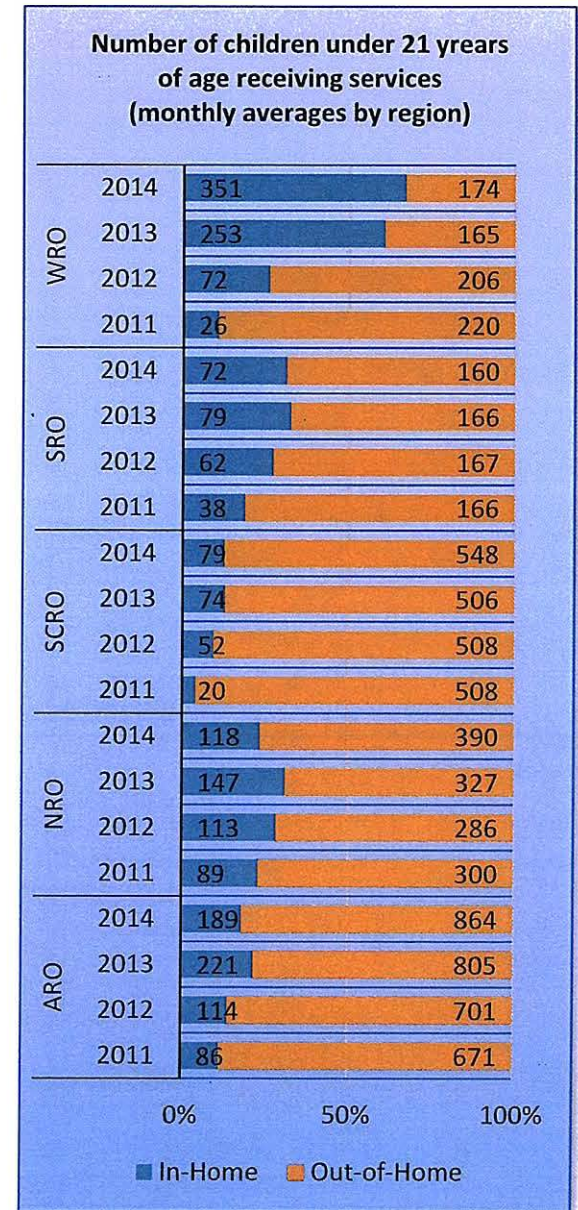
**GOAL 2: What is the practice model for in-home service delivery (urban and rural)?**

In-home cases are those where children are left in their home while services are provided to the children and their families to improve child safety. Among other challenges with in-home cases, many remote rural areas of the state do not have access to necessary services. Without the recommended services, conditions can worsen and children may be at higher risk of harm. OCS acknowledges that Alaska needs a better model for providing services. The Panel understands that OCS plans to develop a meaningful and feasible model by mid-2016 as identified in the 2015-2019 Children and Family Services Plan (2015-2019 CFSP). The Panel examined OCS’ in-home caseload for the last few years. Specifically, in response to the Panel’s discovery that in-home case workers have logistically impossible caseloads, the Panel requested data on the number of children being served in their homes. Complete data was available for years 2011 through 2014 for each region. There are several important nuances to be aware of before discussing these data. We were advised by OCS data managers that the count of in-home cases is accurate when examining current open cases. However, due to various limitations of the data, in-home case counts from previous months and years may be inaccurate. Despite these limitations, the larger story here is consistent and one that OCS seems to concur.

The number of children receiving services in their homes increased over the four years since 2011. On average, 215 children in Alaska were receiving in-home services each month during 2011, compared to 809 in 2014 – an increase of 279 percent in four years. While all regions saw an increase in the number of children in in-home cases, children in in-home care formed a small percentage of total children with OCS contact in ARO and SCRO. The more remote regions (SRO, NRO, and WRO) had a higher percentage of children in in-home situations.

WRO had the most dramatic increase in the number of children receiving services in their homes. The Panel’s site visit reports to WRO both in 2014 and 2015 documented this rise. The Panel has been focused on WRO since its formation. The region is facing several challenges, and the rise in number of children in in-home cases is an illustration of those challenges. WRO is the only region with more children in in-home situations than in out-of-home situations. More recent numbers show that the number of in-home cases in WRO decreased from over 400 in January 2014 to under 200 in February 2015. These fluctuations add to the intrigue of WRO. With 45 communities spread across a vast region, there are limited services for in-home cases in the region.

On the other hand, both ARO and SCRO are regions where most services are available for a successful in-home model. Contrary to what one would expect, these regions have the least number of in-home cases.



Planned action steps and benchmarks on in-home services (Child and Family Services Plan 2010-2014)	Progress reported in the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) each year
A.3.6.1 Develop program statement for in-home family services.	<b>2010 APSR:</b> Achieved. This was developed as part of action step A.1.1 and was completed in February 2010.
A.3.6.2 Request technical assistance (TA) from National Resource Center (NRC) for redesign of an in-home family services program.	<b>2010 APSR:</b> Achieved. TA was requested in May 2010. Work will begin in July 2010. Work will be coordinated with the NRC - Western Pacific Implementation Center project.
A.3.6.3 Develop work plan with NRC for design and implementation of an in-home family services program.	<b>2011 APSR:</b> Achieved. Work plan submitted and approved February 2011.
A.3.6.4 Analyze existing Family Support, Family Preservation and Time Limited Reunification grants to ensure outcomes are reflective in supporting needs of children and families on a regional level	No progress reported as of 2014 APSR.
A.3.6.5 Collect systematic data and develop reports that will provide data to track utilization at a youth/family, local and regional levels.	No progress reported as of 2014 APSR.
A.3.6.6 Work with OCS leadership, regional CSMs and local offices to review data and realign resources, if warranted, based on analysis.	No progress reported as of 2014 APSR.
A.3.6.7 Assess data to determine if ORCA is representing accurate in-home population.	<b>2010 APSR:</b> Achieved. Based on assessment of data, the ORCA design and maintenance team created and implemented an enhancement that allows workers to quickly and easily change the status of a case from initial assessment to in-home family services or out-of-home family services.
A.3.6.8 Revise in-home policy and disseminate to all Anchorage and Fairbanks staff.	<b>2012 APSR:</b> Achieved. The revised policy was disseminated to Anchorage and Fairbanks staff on 10/11/11 with an effective date of 10/17/11 to coincide with the staff development that occurred during the first two weeks of October 2011.
A.3.6.9 Provide staff development to all OCS field management and front line workers in Anchorage and Fairbanks related to the in-home family services program.	No progress reported as of 2014 APSR.

The lack of in-home services in remote rural areas of Alaska was a major finding in the both the 2002 and 2009 Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) conducted by the Children’s Bureau (CB). The 2010-2014 CFSP included a planned strategy and action steps to develop an in-home case model. Strategy A.3.6 stated “redesign In-Home Program Model to increase number of children served in their own homes and enhance reunification efforts” (page 26). The table shows OCS’ efforts over the plan period on each of the planned action steps and benchmarks under strategy A.3.6. The year noted in the right column in bold indicates the most recent year in which progress was reported in that year’s Annual Progress & Services Report (APSR). It is notable that three out of the four action steps where no progress was reported deal substantially with data on in-home cases. This is illustrative of OCS’ challenges mentioned earlier with tracking and compiling data on in-home cases.

The 2015-2019 CFSP includes Strategy 2.A.2 which states, “new in-home services model will be fully implemented with fidelity by December 2016” (page 55). While the Panel looks forward to the progress on this strategy, the outcome measures listed are focused on decreasing removals to foster care, increasing reunification rates, and decreasing repeat maltreatment. These

outcome measures do not directly assess quality or quantity of the provision of in-home Services. Strategy A.3.6.5, “collect systematic data and develop reports that will provide data to track utilization at a youth/family, local and regional levels” from the previous (2010-2014) CFSP is not included in the current 2015-2019 CFSP. However, this will be an important step in assessing progress on designing and implementing new in-home services model.

OCS prepared a Title IV-E waiver application to design and implement an in-home strategy in the SCRO and SRO regions but withdrew the application. Such a waiver would provide the opportunity to examine unique models that might suit Alaska’s context. Along the same lines, OCS’ attempts to gain support from the Anne E. Casey Foundation to develop an in-home model seems to have been unsuccessful. Despite these unsuccessful attempts, there seems to be significant progress in tribal in-home services in various regions in the state. The Panel is aware of such models in the SRO, ARO, and NRO. In all regions, specific tribal entities work closely with OCS to develop and implement a culturally sensitive array of in-home services to preserve Alaska Native families. With very distinct systems of care, these tribal entities will likely differ in the types of services offered and the methods used in offering such services. Since OCS is the designated entity responsible for the safety of all Alaskan children, it will be important for OCS to track the performance of these distinct systems of care. The Panel is not aware of any such plans. The Panel did not examine any of these existing models, and hope to learn more about their effectiveness.

WRO seems to have the most challenges in providing in-home services. The OCS QA unit recently completed a comprehensive assessment of all in-home cases, with a focus on case management. Out of 82 cases reviewed, 20 were marked “urgent” and sent for immediate action. The remaining 62 were all in need of immediate follow up due to the impending danger, lack of safety planning, case planning, and extended periods with no contact with the family. This, the Panel suspects, is a direct consequence of impossible workloads, inadequate staff, high turnover, challenging geography, and a simple lack of adequate number of service providers in the region. The Panel’s most recent site visit to WRO in May 2015 noted the high turnover in the region, associated challenges, and consequent impacts on service provision. In addition, as reported in every site visit report for the last several years, lack of effective working relationships between OCS and its local partner agencies is counterproductive. The Panel recommended in past years that OCS develop a formal structure for initiating and sustaining formal partnerships with local partners.

With wide variations across regions in availability and accessibility of services for in-home cases, in-home services provided by OCS needs a critical examination.. No reliable data is available for a systematic assessment of the availability, accessibility, and quality of services in any region. Designing a new service model will necessarily require a deeper understanding of the existing system. The current CFSP strategy 2.A.2 is vague and the proposed outcome measures do not directly assess the success of the service provision The Panel recommends that OCS constitute a task force to specifically focus on in-home service model. This task force should operationalize Strategy 2.A.2.

**Recommendation 2:** *OCS constitute an internal task force to specifically focus on in-home service model. This task force should be tasked with operationalizing Strategy 2.A.2 of the 2015-2019 CFSP.*

- *In collaboration with local service providers, assess the existing in-home model as it exists in each region.*
- *Identify additional, more specific outcomes with respect to Strategy 2.A.2 of the 2015-2019 CFSP.*

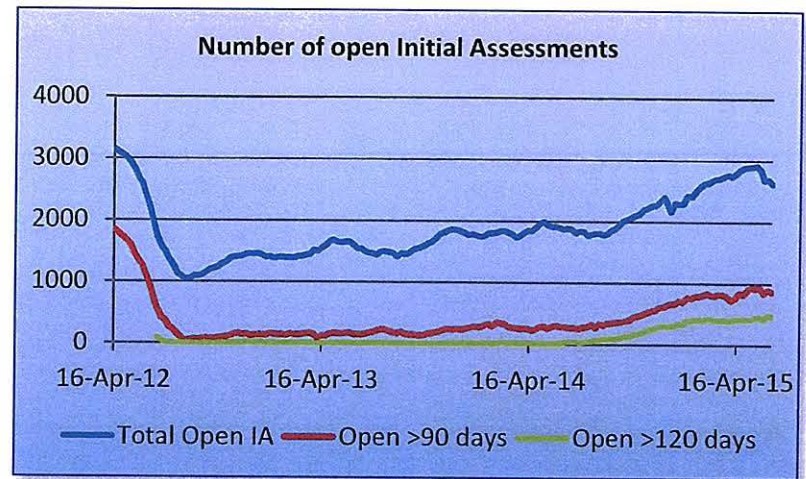
### GOAL 3: IA Backlog – without an increase in the workforce, what is the current plan for avoiding another backlog?

Every report OCS receives is recorded as a PSR and if an allegation in a PSR is screened in, an Initial Assessment (IA) is the second step in the progression of a case. All allegations that are screened-in are assessed for actual harm, and risk of harm to the child. The final outcome of the IA process is a substantiation decision. If the alleged maltreatment is substantiated, the child is either removed from home into foster care, or services are provided to improve safety in the home. An IA is expected to be completed within 30 days of the assignment of the IA to a worker, and all documentation must be entered into the online database management system within 15 days of completion. However, many IAs get delayed for various reasons such as difficulty in reaching appropriate parties to corroborate information. Regardless of the reasons for the delay, an incomplete IA indicates a child in potential danger, one who needs help and is likely not being helped.

OCS seems to have periodic challenges in completing IAs in a timely manner, even after considering delays due to valid reasons. A small number of the IAs remain open as many as 60, 90, or 120 days after assignment. Accumulation of delayed IAs has reached alarming numbers in a regular manner over the last several years. The first such instance that the Panel is aware of was in 2004, when more than 4,000 IAs were incomplete. A similar situation with comparable numbers occurred in 2008 and again in 2012.

OCS' response to the most recent backlog in 2012 included an infusion of experienced workers from across the state into IA units in various field offices to clear pending IAs. While the IAs were cleared efficiently, the Panel was concerned about the safety of the children represented by the cases cleared so rapidly. The Panel was unsuccessful in obtaining any data on the IAs that were cleared through this expedited process. The Panel's 2014 annual report detailed several OCS' efforts to prevent another such backlog. The Panel has since been following the number of past due IAs.

Despite all the efforts in preventing another backlog of 2012 proportions, the most recent data show that the volume of past due IAs is slowly increasing, and is close to the levels in 2008 and 2012. This trend may be indicative of many things. IA process is very tedious, involving several steps of information gathering, risk assessment, home visits, court dates, and judgements. It involves coordinating with various service providers associated with the family and the child. The IA units across the state are overburdened, and the Panel gathered during site visits that these units are the least preferred by frontline workers. Workers in at least two IA units across the state have more than 40 cases on their work load at one time. This coupled with high turnover in IA units can cause severe disruption in workflow, and cases of lower priority may be set aside to be examined later.



During one of the Panel's site visits, more than one frontline worker indicated that screening decisions are made with little or no knowledge of the child or the family, and thus, what might seem like a genuine case of maltreatment from a distance might actually be a simple case of misunderstanding. Such IAs will obviously take a lower priority to more severe cases of maltreatment known to the local worker. Such gaps in communication between a regional intake team and frontline IA workers can be another cause for the spike.

Many states implemented a *Differential Response (DR)* system to address similar backlogs. Alaska had a DR system from 1999 to 2009. The DR system was designed to address cases with no violent criminal convictions involving weapons, no sexual offence convictions, no felony convictions for substance abuse in the last 6 months, and no prior substantiated investigation within a 6 month period. Similar to the in-home services in some regions in Alaska, a local service provider was identified to directly provide services to the child and family in low-risk cases that were not being addressed by OCS due to lack of adequate workforce. An initial evaluation found positive results both on case outcomes and worker performance and satisfaction. The DR program was discontinued in 2009 due to the loss of legislative funding allocated for the program. A similar approach could be explored again for low-priority cases, thus reducing the burden on the IA units, and helping to keep the number of overdue IAs under control.

If the past trends hold, IA backlog will reach the 4,000 mark in mid-2016. That will be the fourth time in the last 12 years, at regular intervals of 4 years. The Panel recommended in 2014 that OCS develop a systemic approach to avoid another IA backlog. We reiterate that same recommendation with a few specific suggestions.

**Recommendation 3:** OCS address the root cause of the Initial Assessment (IA) backlog:

- Identify the nature of cases that are due past 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, and 120 days.
- Revisit the Differential Response process and examine its fit to the current situation.

**GOAL 4: Assess the need for services in communities in Alaska**

Following the closure of the OCS field office in Unalaska, the Panel intended to assess the need for services in the region covered by that field office. It was included as a goal in the 2013-2014 work plan. Due to lack of resources, this goal was never addressed. This goal was transformed in the 2014-2015 work plan to conduct an assessment of service provision in different regions of the state. The Panel could not accomplish the goal this year, again due to lack of resources. However, considerable progress was achieved. The Panel now has a comprehensive list of service providers in three of the five regions in Alaska. This allows the Panel to efficiently connect with the providers during site visits. The Panel intends to continue its work in compiling lists of service providers for the remaining regions, and conduct periodic assessments of various components of child protection services in the state.

**GOAL 5: Understand the challenges of the Online Resources for Children in Alaska (ORCA) database**

ORCA is the online database system that OCS uses for case management and reporting. The Panel consistently hears from frontline workers that ORCA is very cumbersome, and some tools within the system do not function as expected. In response, the Panel decided to examine the difficulties that ORCA presents to the frontline worker. The Panel's main purpose under this goal was to understand the actual challenges that frontline workers face. However, in pursuit of the goal, it was quickly apparent that such an exercise is nearly impossible unless we reach a substantial number of frontline workers to gather their opinions. Instead, the Panel requested screenshots of ORCA as they appear to a frontline worker. These screen shots, the Panel hopes, will assist in assessing frontline workers' challenges as part of the Panel's work next year. The Panel also gathered information on ORCA's active development.

ORCA is an extensive system with multiple users at various levels performing numerous functions. Millions of dollars were invested in designing, building, and maintaining this system over the last decade. Despite this investment, as with most other systems of this magnitude, numerous challenges exist. Many states in the nation have similar systems. They are commonly referred to as State Automated Child Welfare Information systems (SACWIS), promoted by the Children's

Bureau (CB) through its Division of State Systems (DSS). Almost all states report many challenges with their systems and CB is actively supporting the continued development of these systems.

Alaska’s ORCA management team is comprised of an ORCA project manager, a program officer, a research unit manager, 2 business analysts, 2 help desk personnel, and 3-4 developers. CGI, a business process servicing company from Illinois, is contracted to develop and implement ORCA, and provides ongoing management consulting. Approximately \$8.3m were spent in management consulting contract supporting this system since 2011. ORCA is constantly under development. As of November 2014, there are approximately 300 specific issues on the waiting list to be addressed. Each of them may be a specific bug in the system that needs fixing (roughly half of them are bugs), or requests for changes in features offered in ORCA (approximately 12 are major change requests).

The Panel’s examination of ORCA will continue into next year.

**GOAL 6: What are OCS’ strategies to recruit and retain resource families?**

Resource families, commonly referred to as foster families, are families that provide temporary homes for children in state custody. There were over 2,300 children in foster placement settings each month during 2014. This number was well above 2,500 in April 2015, and will likely increase in the near future due to changes in protocols for substantiation. OCS identifies six different types of foster placement settings: two types of foster family settings (relative and non-relative), institutions, pre-adoptive homes, trial home visit, and other. Generally, assessing the need for foster families is challenging. The Panel gathered that the most acute need is for families that can care for sibling groups of 2 or 3 children, medically fragile children, and older teens. In addition, there is a general shortage of foster homes in rural areas of the state.

Recruitment and retention of foster families is a responsibility assigned to the OCS licensing unit. In an attempt to understand and assess OCS’ efforts to recruit foster families, the Panel met with Yurii Miller and Tandra Donahue, Community Care Licensing Managers at OCS. Seven supervisors and 24 Community Care Licensing Specialists (CCLS) are working on recruiting and licensing foster homes. Licensing is a very involved process comprising safety assessments, home inspections, home studies, background checks, and periodic monitoring of the foster family for safety of the children placed in the home.

Approximately 1,899 (79%) of children in foster care are in foster homes (both relative and non-relative). as of February 2015. Out of these, several children are in therapeutic foster homes, managed by independent Child Placement Agencies (CPA). The number of homes in the licensed column of the table presented here does not include those homes under CPAs.

Since the need for foster homes can never be accurately determined, recruitment efforts target the most challenging situations such as sibling groups, medically fragile children, and older teenagers. The target in rural areas is to have a couple of

Regional Office	Licensing staff		Monthly average number of children under 21 in foster care (2014)	Status of foster homes or foster groups homes as of 3/3/2015	
	Supervisors	Specialists		Waiting to be licensed	Licensed
ARO	2	9	898	63	463
SCRO	2	6	556	72	399
SRO	1	2	164	21	131
NRO	1	4	404	44	169
WRO	1	3	192	26	94

foster families available for placement when the need arises. Due to limited staff in rural areas, recruitment is challenging.

Recruitment efforts are primarily designed through Regional Recruitment and Retention Committees (RRRC). RRRCs are formed by OCS. Membership is comprised of CCLS, their supervisors, other CPS staff including adoption specialists, tribal partners, other partner agencies, Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF) staff, foster and adoptive parents. RRRCs focus on both recruitment and retention of resource families. They meet quarterly, or more often when they have events such as celebrating May as foster parent month. RRRCs develop regional plans with goals, action plan, and associated budgets which are then reviewed by State Office staff. Once approved, budgets and activities are monitored by licensing supervisors and managers. Regions with larger number of field offices identify multiple local recruitment and retention efforts that will be included into the regional plan. A Statewide Recruitment and Retention Plan (SRRP) is created by State Office staff from all the regional plans. SRRP is included as a part of the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR).

The SRRP (last updated in April of 2014) was made available to the Panel (available on the Panel’s website). The Plan has four major activities – support to the regional and field offices, statewide efforts for retention and recruitment, FosterWear program, and Resource Family Advisory Board. Significant progress is reported on the first, third and fourth activities. Notably, development of protocols to track effectiveness of retention and recruitment efforts was one of the tasks under the first activity, and was reported as only 20% complete as of April 2014. The second activity includes tasks on efforts to recruit foster families to care for large sibling groups or medically fragile children, and Alaska Native foster families. The impressive Public Service Announcement, “One Child” encouraging Alaskans to consider becoming foster parents, is not part of the SRRP.

In addition to the RRRCs, there was a Native Rural Recruitment Team (NRRT), which is no longer active. Instead, each region is now participating in a program with Anne E. Casey Foundation’s Casey Family Programs to enhance tribal and state partnerships in recruitment and retention of native foster homes to increase ICWA preference placements. These regional efforts will be incorporated into the regional plans for each region.

None of the activities or tasks in the SRRP have any identified outcome measures to help in assessing progress. Admittedly, it is challenging to track and measure success of recruitment and retention strategies. Nevertheless, it is important to identify outcome measures. Since the need for foster families is unclear, and there are no measurable outcomes, the Panel is uncertain of OCS’ success in their efforts. The Panel encourages OCS to assess the need for foster families by region, by status of the foster child (medically fragile, sibling, etc.), by ethnicity, and other criteria, and to convey this information through appropriate and culturally sensitive channels to enhance recruitment. Outcome measures must be identified to adequately assess progress on the statewide plan. These two steps will provide tangible benchmarks for continuing efforts to recruit and retain foster families. In their absence, any effort may feel short of what is required.

***Recommendation 4: Improve efforts to recruit and retain resource families across the state:***

- *Identify, and advertise through appropriate channels, a clear message on the approximate numbers of resource families needed.*
- *Identify outcome measures and track success of recruitment and retention efforts.*

## OTHER IMPORTANT WORK THIS YEAR

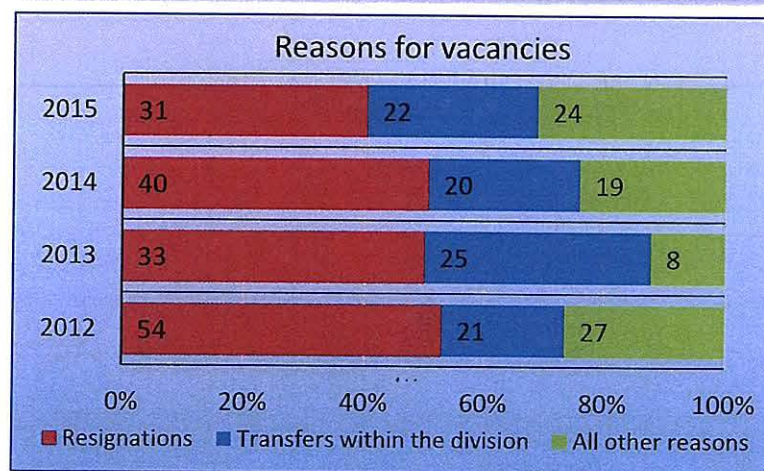
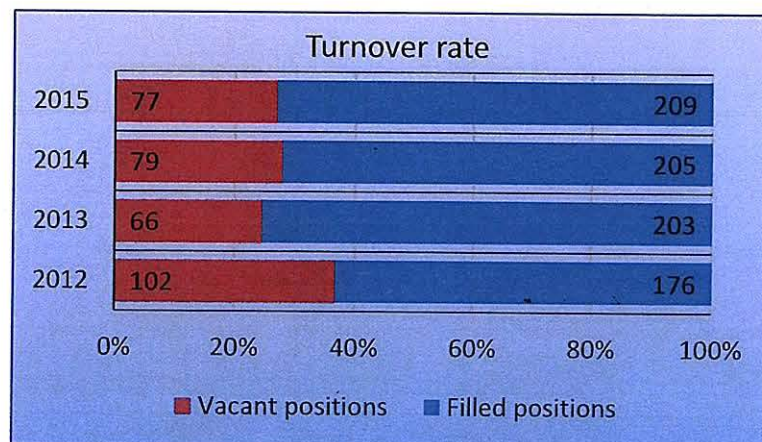
Every year, during the course of its work, the Panel comes across various issues of importance to the delivery of child protection services in Alaska. Many of these issues are interconnected, and overlap with the goals for that year. Below are issues the Panel considered during 2014-2015. These are reported here to give the readers a more complete account of the Panel's work, and also to help readers understand the depth and scope of the Panel's work. While its mandate is broad and covers everything that the state and local child protection system does in Alaska, the Panel is limited by the available resources. Thus, this list does not include several other issues that could have been considered during this year.

### TURNOVER IN PROTECTIVE SERVICE SPECIALIST (PSS) POSITIONS

OCS and most other CPS systems across the country, struggle with high turnover in their frontline worker positions. OCS reported a consistently high turnover (approximately 30%) in these positions for the last decade. There can be a number of reasons for such high turnover. OCS staff survey results indicate high workloads and low pay among the principal reasons for considering leaving their positions.

Since workload issues are central for any organization to adequately perform, the Panel began efforts to understand the turnover in frontline PSS positions. These are positions that provide direct services to children and families, and are often the face of the agency. OCS provided the Panel with quarterly numbers on turnover and vacancies in these positions for the fiscal years 2012 through 2015. The agency had 278 PSS positions in 2012 and experienced 102 vacancies through the year, resulting in a staggering 37% turnover rate. Over the next three years, the turnover rate was 25% in 2013, 28% in 2014, and 27% in 2015. These numbers vary by region and WRO fares worst among all regions. The numbers for 2015 do not include the data from the last quarter ending in June 2015.

OCS data records 11 different reasons why a worker may have vacated the position. Over the last four years, resignation from the position was the most frequent reason for vacancy, followed by transfer within the division. In 2012, 19% of all positions were vacated through resignation. In the first three quarters of FY 2015, 11% of the total positions were vacated through resignation. While people resign for various reasons, such high proportion of vacancies through resignations is concerning. While it is true that most CPS agencies across the nation face similar challenges with turnover, reasons for it may vary by the agency, geographic location, and many other factors. It is impossible to address turnover without accurate and meaningful data. OCS currently does not have any meaningful data from exit interviews. The Panel is trying to understand the obstacles for OCS to obtain such data to inform action to curb the turnover rate.



## EMPLOYEE SURVEYS

OCS frequently surveys its employees to understand their working conditions and other operational issues. These surveys are of high value to inform internal human resource management. Given the high turnover rates in the PSS positions, the Panel is interested in these surveys. The Panel was informed that the current employee survey was designed with input from various stakeholders several years ago. Upon OCS request, the Panel offered extensive feedback on restructuring various questions in the 2014 version of the survey. The survey needs considerable further improvements and the Panel strongly encourages OCS to redesign the instrument and allow meaningful data collection that can help managers and supervisors.

The survey is answered by everyone in the agency. A summary results document was made available to the Panel. Results were summarized for the entire workforce, without any delineation between different positions. It was impossible to know the responses of those in PSS positions as opposed to those in managerial positions. Since the turnover is so high among PSS positions, it will be important to know the opinions of those in PSS positions on important issues such as pay and reasons for staying or leaving their positions. OCS assured the Panel that both the survey instrument and the results format are useful to its management in making decisions. While the Panel is skeptical, we trust that OCS does in fact find them useful.

**Recommendation 5:** *Improve the survey instruments and reporting of results on various surveys that OCS QA unit conducts to assess important components of OCS operations.*

## WORKLOAD ASSESSMENT

The Panel briefly reviewed OCS' efforts in assessing the workload of frontline workers. OCS commissioned two workload studies, one in 2006 and another in 2012. The 2006 study focused on frontline workers and recommended adding several new positions. The legislature funded and new positions were promptly filled. The 2012 study focused on Social Service Assistants (SSA) and Community Licensing Care Specialists (CLCS) and recommended several new positions in both categories. This was partially funded during FY 2015.

While the Panel agrees that OCS needs additional workers to meet its statutory mandate, and agrees with both workload studies' recommendations on adding additional positions, the Panel is uncertain on the derived benefits of adding additional positions in light of the high worker turnover. As an illustration, OCS workers were stretched too thin before adding approximately 80 frontline workers in response to the 2006 study. A few years later, workers again found themselves stretched too thin. There certainly is a definite increase in the number of reports of harm OCS receives and addresses, and the number of cases for all PSS positions. While it is accurate to say that more reports of harm directly increase the workload, number of reports of harm is not the only factor. The Panel finds OCS focused on increased workload, but finds very little discussion on workload management.

Workload is currently measured by the number of cases. The Panel learned from site visits to both ARO and SRO that IA workers often have approximately 40 cases on their workload. In-home case load was around 60-70 cases per worker in WRO during the Panel's visit both in 2014 and 2015. Family Services workers have relatively fewer cases on their workload. However, the number of cases is a very poor measure of workload for several reasons, principal among them being the diversity in the nature of each case. Some cases may have just one child and a small family, while another case may have 10 children with a large network of extended family and related players. While both cases are counted as one, they obviously differ in the amount of work they take to manage. It is the Panel's

understanding that OCS supervisors make judicious decisions in assigning cases to workers based on individual workers' current case load. Nevertheless, a heavy workload is an agency-wide issue and needs a more systematic approach, beyond adding additional workers.

The Panel strongly encourages OCS to explore ways to help frontline workers and their immediate supervisors manage their workload. The Panel realizes this is a complex multidimensional issue, and requires careful thought and intentional action. As a first step, we suggest implementing a recommendation from both 2006 and 2012 workload studies that OCS identify a method to compute, track, and continuously assess workloads of frontline workers in all units, by region. Several other states have distinct models that can be explored. However obvious it may be that OCS needs additional workers, adding positions is not a panacea that will cure the workload issues which impact retention, quality of life, and secondary trauma that frontline workers face. If OCS truly is to be a trauma-informed organization as it aims to be, addressing frontline workers' workload will be a necessary step.

**Recommendation 6:** *Adopt a method to identify, measure, and assess various components of workload of frontline workers.*

## **DATA SHARING**

The Panel requires data and information to adequately meet its mandate. The Panel collects information from various sources through the year. However, in order to fulfill the mandate of reviewing the state's child protection system, the most important source of the data is the OCS ORCA system. The Panel thus is heavily reliant on the ability and willingness of OCS to share data as requested. The Panel is pleased with the responsiveness of the ORCA staff in providing the required data when requested.

Beyond that, the Panel is also aware of several efforts underway to reorganize the online data access page. In addition, OCS is also working on establishing data sharing protocols with its various partner agencies and other interested entities. The Panel is looking forward to note the progress on these efforts and we commend the initiatives on this front.

## **PANEL'S SURVEY EFFORTS**

The Panel conducted a survey of all Indian Child Welfare (ICWA) workers and other representatives from several Alaska Native tribes that attended the Bureau of Indian Affairs ICWA work session at the Providers Conference in December 2014 in Anchorage. The survey focused on OCS-Tribe relationships in Alaska. A primary finding of the survey was "child protection system in most Alaska's communities is a multiple-entity system heavily dependent upon interagency relationships and communication. These relationships currently seem to lack any institutional/organizational framework or structure, and are dependent on individual workers' ability and desire to partner." OCS provided input on the design of the survey. A report of the survey results is included in the appendix. The Panel intends to expand its survey efforts to gain a better understanding of several issues and increase its public outreach.

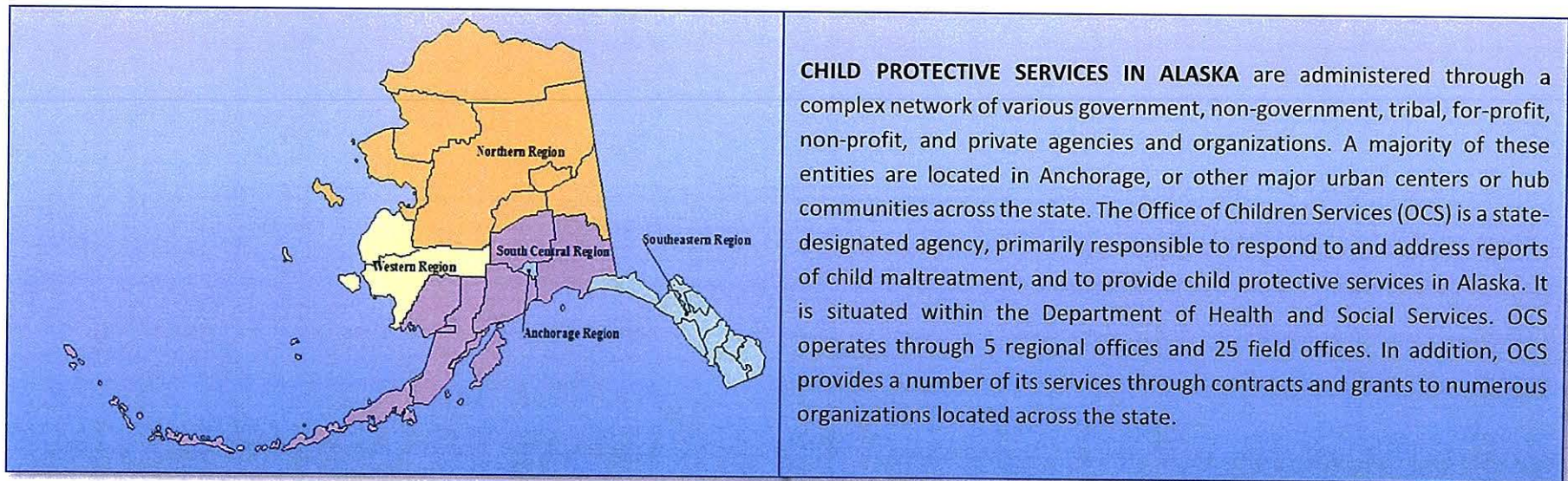
## **OCS-PARTNER AGENCY RELATIONSHIPS**

The Panel continues to find several challenges in relationships between OCS local offices and their local partners. Challenges range from basic trust issues to communication, and responsiveness. While relationship is always a two-way street, we believe OCS can contribute by devising a protocol for its workers to begin a constructive relationship, nurture it, and sustain it. This is most critical in remote rural areas with a severe shortage of services.

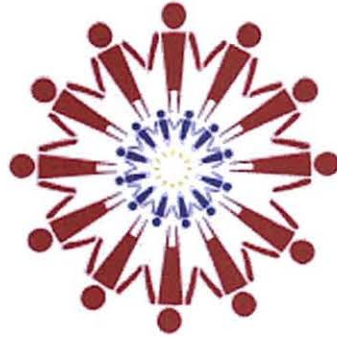
## APPENDIX

Appendices are not included with this report. They are all available on the CRP website at [www.crpalaska.edu](http://www.crpalaska.edu). Please refer to them for further information.

1. Anchorage Region Site Visit Report
2. Southeast Region Site Visit Report
3. Western Region Site Visit Report
4. BIA Providers Conference Survey Results
5. Legislative Visit Report
6. CRP National Conference Report
7. OCS Statewide Recruitment and Retention Plan



**CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES IN ALASKA** are administered through a complex network of various government, non-government, tribal, for-profit, non-profit, and private agencies and organizations. A majority of these entities are located in Anchorage, or other major urban centers or hub communities across the state. The Office of Children Services (OCS) is a state-designated agency, primarily responsible to respond to and address reports of child maltreatment, and to provide child protective services in Alaska. It is situated within the Department of Health and Social Services. OCS operates through 5 regional offices and 25 field offices. In addition, OCS provides a number of its services through contracts and grants to numerous organizations located across the state.



## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Anchorage Region Site Visit Report

Appendix 2: Southeast Region Site Visit Report

Appendix 3: Western Region Site Visit Report

Appendix 4: BIA Providers Conference Survey Results

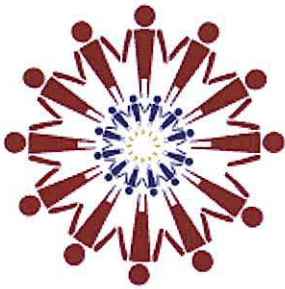
Appendix 5: Legislative Visit Report

Appendix 6: CRP National Conference Report

Appendix 7: OCS Statewide Recruitment and Retention Plan



## **Appendix 1: Anchorage Region Site Visit Report**



## Alaska Citizen Review Panel

### Members

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The Citizen Review Panel is a statewide group of volunteers mandated by federal and state law to provide oversight to the Office of Children's Services.

<b>Dates of visit</b>	October 2-3, 2014
<b>Date of the Report</b>	October 29, 2014
<b>Members of CRP on the visit</b>	The entire Panel (6 members) Sylvan Robb (staff)

### Offices covered in this visit

<b>Regional Office</b>	Anchorage Regional Office
<b>Field Office</b>	Anchorage
<b>Communities served</b>	Anchorage, Tyonek

### Agencies consulted

**Public Safety:** *Alaska State Troopers (AST); Anchorage Police Department (APD)*

**School system:** *Anchorage School District (ASD)*

**Typical parties to a CINA case:** *Attorney General (AG) Office (representing the OCS); Public Defenders Agency (PDA, representing the parents); Office of Public Advocacy (OPA, representing children); Alaska Native Tribes and ICWA workers (representing their community); CASA (volunteer advocates for children in need of aid); Alaska Legal Services*

**Service Providers:** *Child Advocacy Center (Alaska C.A.R.E.S.); Residential Service Providers (North Star Hospital; Covenant House)*

*Acknowledgments:* The CRP would like to thank all staff of the Anchorage Regional Office for taking time to meet with the Panel. The Panel really appreciates Sara Childress, CSM at Anchorage Regional Office, for allowing us to meet with her staff amidst impossible workloads. The Panel would also like to thank all local partners for their time and their honest appraisal of their working relationships with OCS.

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*Site visits are an important part of the annual work load of Alaska's Citizen Review Panel. Panel members consult with staff at OCS regional or field offices and their local partner agencies to assess various instrumental practice behaviors and institutional relationships. The Panel's consultations cover a broad range of topics, focusing on systemic issues (not on strengths and weaknesses of individuals). Questions are often open-ended, and part of a free-flowing unstructured conversation. All information shared with CRP is confidential and will be de-identified and summarized into a Trip Report. Trip reports are made available to OCS senior leadership, and to all parties that were consulted on that visit.*

This report summarizes the Panel's consultations with supervisors and staff at the ARO and representatives of local partner agencies. This report is organized into three major sections that are relevant to the current focus of the Panel. While the Panel tries to be as comprehensive in their review as possible, large areas of practice may have been omitted from review for various reasons. The Panel encourages all concerned parties to consider this report as part of a constructive dialogue in improving child protection services within ARO and the state, and remains open for a continued conversation.

### **General reflections**

Anchorage Regional Office (ARO) is the largest of the five OCS regions. The region is home to approximately half the state's population and 42% of the state's children. The region has a proportionally high caseload, and thus the largest staff, among all regional offices. Anchorage is also endowed with a variety of available services in contrast to almost all of the rest of the state. Therefore, ARO caseload includes a number of children and families that migrate from other parts of the state, or are moved here for services.

### **Leadership**

The Panel met with the CSM and some of the unit supervisors. Many of them have been in their positions or in this regional office for quite some time (usually more than 4 years). Their longevity certainly is welcoming and explains some of the positive comments gathered during the visit. Additionally, it is very encouraging to note the entrepreneurial approach of the CSM, and the freedom she has in innovating, in trying new ideas such as designating a specific supervisor to be the liaison for several partner agencies so each agency has a named person to whom they can reach out. Another example is how new staff spend several days going around town visiting partner agencies while they wait for SKILLS training sessions.

While high turnover and vacancy rates among OCS Child Protection Specialist positions are debilitating in general, ARO had an unusually high number of positions vacant during the time of this visit. In light of that, the Panel noted some challenges with leadership:

- Lack of training for frontline workers: No formal mechanism exists for on-the-job training that includes coaching, mentoring, and job shadowing especially for new and inexperienced workers in IA and Intake. Specific skills that were mentioned that may not often be part of the worker's previous training or academic program may include drafting petitions and reports for court; managing and meeting the expectations of the attorneys from the AG's office while in court; managing relationships with all different parties involved in a case.
- Some of the frontline workers felt that a formal mechanism to support, encourage, and train some of the supervisors would improve their morale and help with decreasing the current turnover rate.
- Promotion of senior SSAs is hindered by some unwieldy HR requirements. Unit supervisors expressed helplessness in trying to retain some of their most experienced and skilled SSAs due to this barrier.

- While the Panel does not have a means to examine this, inertia of doing things a particular way was mentioned as one of the challenges in devising and implementing innovative management ideas at the ARO.

### OCS staff workload and morale

The Panel met with approximately 20 staff (frontline social workers, SSAs, and admin staff) from intake, IA, family services, in-home, and licensing. Many of these frontline workers had much shorter tenures and stated that their jobs are stressful. A change in OCS intake practice leading to a rise in number of screened-in reports over the last several months seems to have had an impact on the workload of the staff. Both the staff and supervisors expressed many related concerns on high workload, and potential ways to manage it:

- Despite Anchorage being the largest population center in the state with the largest concentration of service providers, workers claimed that the available services are still inadequate. An assessment of unmet needs and available services will be helpful. Such an assessment might be most feasible if done in partnership with other agencies providing similar or complementary services.
- New workers were expected to find someone to shadow on their own; there is no formal mentoring (as mentioned in the previous section). A worker suggested a system similar to residency for medical doctors, where new doctors are required to accrue a certain amount of experience with each type of procedure. In the current case, the new social workers would work through a list ensuring that they shadowed someone doing each of the elements of their position before they were expected to do it on their own. Although workers with a college education would have had a field practicum, the Panel agrees with the idea of more formal on-the-job training mechanism.
- SSAs in Anchorage spend 40-45 percent of their time in transporting children for visitation. While this is an important and required task, it appeared that the opportunity cost of having SSA's do this is very high, especially in light of high workloads. ARO should explore using SSA's skills in better assisting social workers in many other critical tasks.
- A related concern is the lack of adequate number of vehicles. With just a handful of vehicles, waiting for a ride consumes much of SSA's time.
- Anchorage office has just five laptops that could be checked out by social workers. Past attempts at providing workers with mobile technology seem to have been unsuccessful. Availability of mobile technology with access to ORCA can significantly improve the workers' abilities to manage their workload.
- ORCA does not support multiple goals for a case plan. This is a source of confusion, especially when it is statutorily required.

Many workers appreciated the BizHub copy and fax machine. Nearly everyone appreciated the return of dictation, but didn't appreciate it having been taken away for so long with nothing to replace it. Recent efforts in increasing safety were certainly appreciated.

Partner agencies expressed typical frustrations with OCS staff being hard to reach and overworked. Nearly all partner agencies acknowledged that OCS workers have large caseloads

and not enough resources to get their work done. However, the usual complaints were heard as well, primarily around communication. Points below are not universally true. However, they were mentioned by partners as more frequent and avoidable.

- Case planning takes too long, sometimes are not discussed with the clients, and sometimes are not signed.
- ICWA workers did not feel like they were kept in the loop nearly as well as they should have been.
- Supervised visits are being overused.
- Need some streamlining of the number of meetings. While partners realize the purpose and need for each meeting, they wish to see a more streamlined process that would minimize meeting times.
- With clients that need critical care, it is important that OCS workers have access to, and find means to share appropriate information that is necessary to start care.
- While the OCS' Psych Nurses are appreciated, North Star staff suggested that some of their advice is contradictory to the advice from North Star professionals, and this is a severe problem.

Particularly, there appears to be room for improvement and streamlining in relationships with the legal system. The Office of Public Defenders Agency (PDA) and the Attorney General's (AG) office both expressed the need for training social workers in drafting petitions. It was not clear if writing petitions is the responsibility of a social worker who has minimal legal training, or of the attorneys with sophisticated legal training at the AG's office. There seems to be no standard format or clear guidelines on content for the petitions filed by social workers at the initiation of a CINA case. Clarity at this time is critical for all parties to attend to their share of the work in ensuring the child and family involved receives all services necessary. Clarification of roles and responsibilities may be necessary.

### Partner relationships

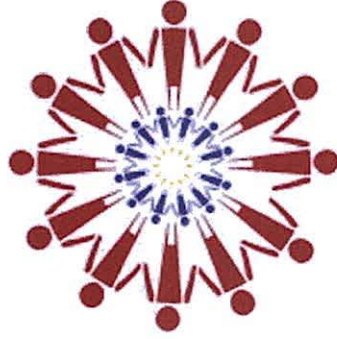
Overall, relationships between the Anchorage Regional Office and local partner organizations seemed positive. While several partners pointed many limitations to their relationship with OCS workers, there is a general recognition that staff and workers are trying hard to do their best while battling very difficult and stressful situations. Along the same lines the partners also point out that they themselves are working in similarly stressful situations, implying systemic changes within OCS are required to change the status quo. Almost all partners were quick to point out that their opinions do not concern any individual at OCS. The following specific concerns/thoughts were noted by several partners:

- Good and frequent communication is desired. There was some frustration expressed, but often the problem seemed manageable through better communication. For example, one partner expressed frustration that workers didn't show up for court cases estimating that this happened 5-6 times annually out of approximately 200 court dates. Even with the liaison system, there was a desire for more communication. Several people noted that it doesn't feel like a two way street—when OCS wants something they need it now, but when being asked for something they never have time to return the favor.

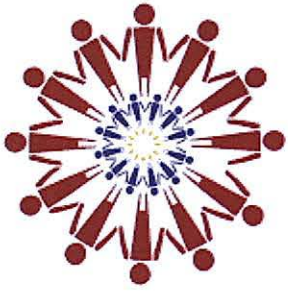
- The legal community in general (OPA, PDA, AG) expressed the need for better training on legal procedures for social workers. Since the needs of each of these legal agencies are different, it is likely quite challenging to satisfy them all, especially with minimal legal training. It appears important that OCS attempts to clarify the mutual roles and responsibilities and ensure that workers' skills match their responsibilities vis-à-vis the legal community.

The Panel is concerned that local partner relationships have surfaced to be of concern on almost every site visit for last several years. With relatively large amounts of resources at the office's disposal, it is very concerning that Anchorage Regional Office too is suffering from the same problems as the Western Regional Office.

Admission 087 Hearings seem to be a major source of disagreement and contention for at least the medical and mental health professionals at North Star Hospital and the AAG's office. The Panel did not hear any concerns from OCS staff on this issue. The Panel understands this to be an important issue to be resolved, and suggest the concerned parties approach either the Court Improvement Project or the Children's Justice Act Task Force. Both serve broader mandates and are better equipped to address this issue.



## **Appendix 2: Southeast Region Site Visit Report**



## Alaska Citizen Review Panel

### Members

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*Alaska Citizen Review Panel evaluates the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child protection agencies for effectiveness in discharging their child protection responsibilities. The Panel is mandated through CAPTA 1997 (P.L. 104-235), and enacted through AS 47.14.205*

## SITE VISIT REPORT

<b>Regional Office</b>	Southeast Region
<b>Field Offices visited</b>	Juneau, Ketchikan, Sitka
<b>Other Communities visited</b>	None
<b>Dates of visit</b>	January 21 – 24, 2015
<b>Members of CRP on the visit</b>	Donna Aguiniga, Jen Burkmire, Dana Hallett, Diwakar Vadapalli

### Partner Agencies consulted

#### **Alaska Native governments or entities**

*Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska  
Douglas Indian Community  
Ketchikan Indian Community*

#### **Public Safety**

*Juneau Police Department (JPD); Sitka Police Department*

#### **School system**

*Juneau: Auke Bay Elementary School; Glacier Valley Elementary School  
Ketchikan: Houghtaling Elementary School  
Sitka: Keet Gooshi Heen (Baranof) Elementary School*

#### **Legal Community**

*Attorney General (AG) Office (representing the OCS)  
District Attorney's (DA) Office in Sitka*

#### **Service Providers**

*S.A.F.E. Child Advocacy Center, Juneau  
Juneau Youth Services (Comprehensive behavioral health services provider)  
WISH Family Services, Ketchikan  
Two foster parents*

The Panel tried to reach out to several other partner agencies that either could not be reached or were not available for a meeting.

*Acknowledgments:* The CRP would like to thank all staff of the Southeast Regional Office (SRO) for taking time to meet with the Panel. The Panel appreciates Sharon Fleming, SRO's Children Services Manager, for allowing us to meet with her staff amidst difficult workloads. The Panel would also like to thank all local partners for their time and their honest appraisal of their working relationships with OCS.

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## 1. Key observations:

- Relations between Office of Children’s Services (OCS) and its partners seem to be relatively positive in the region. The efforts of all parties are very encouraging. Relationships are generally more positive and constructive in Sitka and Ketchikan than in Juneau.
- Management tools employed by the state office management need to be better contextualized and made applicable to local conditions. Quality Assurance (QA) reviews and the Initial Assessments (IA) backlog tracking mechanism are two tools that the Panel is aware of, and are being examined in the local context.
  - The utility of QA reports to the frontline workers needs to be critically examined. While the precision and periodicity of the reviews is much appreciated, utility of these QA report findings to improve practice behaviors of frontline workers seems uncertain. A more systematic, constructive, and strengths-based follow-up is desired.
  - The backlog of Initial Assessments has been a challenge for OCS for several years. Local workers find that many of the overdue IAs are of the lowest priority, and better screening with local input would reduce the number of egregiously overdue cases, and would reflect well on their QA reports.
- Secondary trauma needs to be systematically addressed. All frontline workers expressed severe concerns about their heavy workload, minimal supervision, and subsequent stress-related secondary trauma. Efforts of the agency to address secondary trauma were limited to a book on the subject handed to each worker. Addressing this need could help improve retention of frontline workers. Turnover appears to be quite high in the Juneau field office during the time of this visit.
- Efforts to recruit of foster families need to be more intensive, systematic, and innovative. While the number of children in foster care and the number of available foster homes seems to match well, the Panel did not have any information on the types of foster homes (emergency, therapeutic, etc.), and many other details necessary to meaningfully assess the adequacy of foster homes. General consensus among those with whom the Panel consulted, expressed the need for more foster homes in the region, especially in the smaller communities, and more native foster homes. Efforts to recruit foster homes seem to have been limited due to lack of coordination between players.
- There seems to be some confusion about the role of OCS workers in forensic interviewing. The CAC in Juneau has staff that conducts forensic interviews, this works very well for the Juneau Field Office. However, it is expensive and logistically challenging for other field offices to utilize these services. It would be more efficient if OCS frontline workers in the other field offices were trained in child forensic interviewing.

## 2. Categories

The Panel examines a specific set of categories on each site visit. Below are observations on three specific categories.

### 2.1 Leadership

The Panel met with the CSM and all unit supervisors. The Southeast Region's (SR) leadership team seems to have had considerable experience working at OCS. It is very encouraging to note the innovative and creative approach to challenges they perceive in their work. While many challenges remain, and resources are never adequate, the SR's initiative to identify and address the issue of repeat maltreatment speaks well of their leadership.

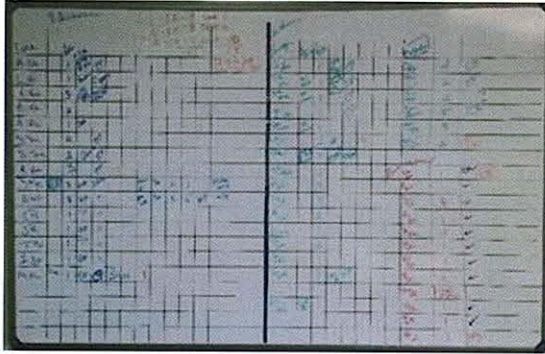
This creative approach is needed in tackling the many challenges clearly evident from the Panel's brief visit to just three of the five field offices:

- **Communication with frontline workers:** Frontline workers clearly expressed their inability to get the guidance and supervision they need in performing their duties. They acknowledged and appreciated the effort of their supervisors in trying to be available at all times by any means possible. However, they were also clear that the current supervision time is insufficient. Lack of supervision can translate to negative outcomes on casework and, decreased worker morale, and is contributes to high turnover. No one among the current group of frontline workers in the Juneau field office have been there for longer than 3 years, and the newest person has been there for just over 6 months. A specific idea, suggested by one of the frontline workers, for the local leadership and OCS senior leadership to consider is a 'field training officer', who focused on training and orienting new workers for an extended period of time. This is akin to "shadowing" that is currently being practiced, except that the training officer would have a reduced number of active cases on his/her workload as workers are guided in managing their caseloads.
- **Employee evaluations:** While several frontline workers reported being evaluated, this seems to differ by the supervisor. Some workers reported they had not been evaluated for several years. Lack of adequate, meaningful, and timely evaluation has been a concern of the Panel on prior site visits.
- **Secondary trauma:** As busy as the supervisors are, frontline workers depend on them for support and guidance on handling secondary trauma. The Panel is aware of the agency's initiatives in addressing secondary trauma of frontline workers. However, this initiative remains nebulous to frontline workers in the SRO. They reported being disillusioned with the discussion and support material supplied to them.
- **Partner relations:** Supervisors and especially senior management of SRO must extend their positive efforts in reaching out to partners. While partner relations are generally positive and constructive across the region, one specific suggestion was an 'open house' for agencies might be beneficial. Relationships in Juneau have relatively more room for improvement compared to the outlying field offices.
- **Physical security and friendly appearance:** The Panel realizes the need for secure work space and the fine balance OCS strives to achieve between functional security and friendly appearance. While the Juneau field office building seems to be highly secure, Sitka field office does not have a working lock on their front door.

- There is a general shortage of foster homes throughout the state, particularly native foster homes. However, the Panel found it intriguing that efforts to recruit foster families have not been approved, and seem to be otherwise discouraged. The Panel could not understand the reasons to not support new recruitment initiatives.

## 2.2 OCS staff workload and morale

Figure 1: Board used to track workload in Sitka field office



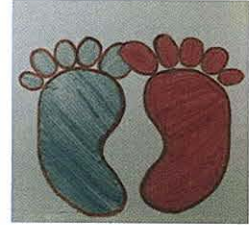
The Panel met with most frontline workers in Juneau, Sitka, and Ketchikan, and as many other staff as available. While the vacancies are relatively minimal, it is evident that the staffing is barely adequate to meet the workload demands, and the turnover is quite high. Juneau field office workers in the IA unit are assigned approximately 40-45 cases per person. While caseloads are marginally lower in Ketchikan and Sitka, workers in these field offices are generalists and have multiple responsibilities on each case.

Given the above working conditions, staff morale, especially in Juneau, is uncomfortably near the tipping point. Major issues that the Panel noted are:

- Severe shortage of support staff: There is a severe shortage of SSAs that could handle many case-related functions that do not require time with children and families.
- Individual safety: Several partners expressed their dismay regarding workers' lack of training and awareness of the context on safety matters. They were concerned that workers often cannot spot threats to their own personal safety while deeply involved in case work, and, thus, put themselves in dangerous situations.
- Secondary trauma: OCS claims to be attending to the employees' secondary trauma. However, frontline workers universally expressed disillusionment with these efforts.
- Utility of the QA review process: The QA process is increasingly robust, and is modeled after the federal Children and Family Services Report (CSFR) process. However, frontline staff in all field offices seem to be uncertain how the QA process and its findings can be used to improve their performance. Specifically, workers expressed the need for efforts to connect the findings of 'strengths' and 'practice improvement' under each outcome to the ground reality of their operation. A constructively critical tone in the language of the QA report, and strengths-based follow up were desired.

### 2.3 *Partner relationships*

The Panel has been closely examining partner relationships over the last several visits. While there are positive signs across the state, many relationships remain ad hoc and dependent upon personality of individual workers and supervisors. Positive relationships do not seem to be grounded in OCS' central mission or culture nor do they seem ubiquitous statewide.



The Panel observed a clear distinction in the quality and depth of relationship based on the partner's relative size and role:

- With agencies that have a clear role in a case, and where statute requires OCS to collaborate, relationships tend to be constructive and meaningful. All institutions that have a legal or service provider role that directly is either stipulated by legal statute or necessary due to desired outcomes (such as medical, educational, or behavioral health) fall in this category. However, even in these relationships, it is not uncommon for partners to express disenchantment. Almost all of these non-positive perceptions can be attributed to high turnover. For example, the public safety officers and school personnel all reported the turnover among frontline workers is very challenging and makes it difficult to establish a long-term working relationship. On the other hand, in Sitka, all partners expressed highly positive feelings about their relationship with current local OCS office and acknowledged the longevity of the field supervisor and frontline worker.
- Where the partners' role is not clearly defined, the relationship depended on the relative size and influence of the partner. This is clearly noticeable in relationships with tribal partners in the region. For example, Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, the largest Alaska Native tribal organization in the region, seems to enjoy a constructive relationship with OCS. They serve seven communities, and worked with OCS on several initiatives over the years. This on-going working relationship resulted in multiple working agreements that provide a structure to their relationship. On the other hand, the partnership with smaller tribal governments seems to be less structured and less constructive.

In general, relationships in SR are constructive and there is widespread recognition by all parties to work together. As observed in other regions in the state, the lack of a structured and institutional relationship is also hampering collaboration in SR. Additionally, all partners identified high turnover among OCS frontline staff as a challenge to having sustained positive relationship.

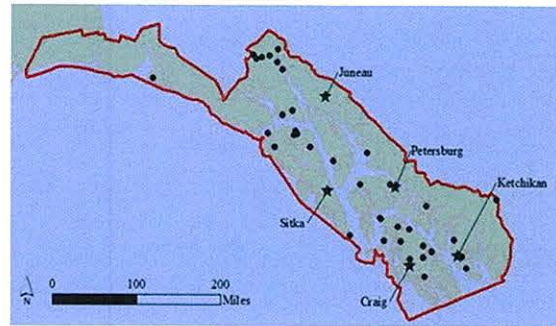
### 3. Southeast Region Overview

This section gives a brief background of the region to help readers understand the context of this report's findings.

#### 3.1 Background

Southeast regional office (SRO) includes ten different boroughs or census areas in southeast Alaska. The region is home to 71,664 people, with 28.06% 21 years or younger (U.S. Census 2010). There were approximately 164 (76 boys and 88 girls) children on an average per month in out-of-home placement situations in the region. Data on in-home services were not available. There are currently 167 (Sitka – 33, Ketchikan – 48, Juneau – 71, Craig – 10, and Petersburg – 5) licensed foster homes in the region (as reported by Alaska Center for Resource Families).

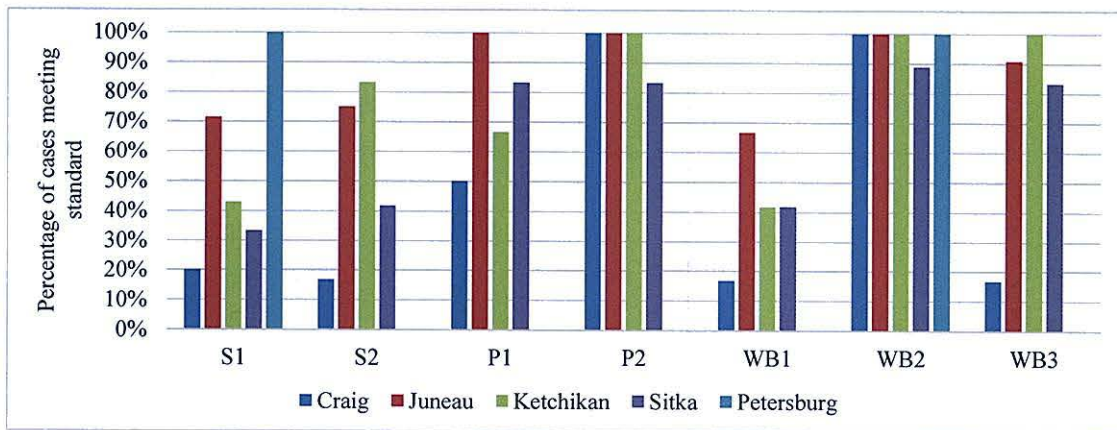
Figure 2: Southeast Region with its five field offices



#### 3.2 Choosing field offices to visit

The Southeast region has its regional office in Juneau, and has five field offices – Juneau, Ketchikan, Craig, Sitka, and Petersburg, serving 42 communities across the region. The Panel compiled performance indicators from the region's Quality Assurance (QA) reviews conducted by the Office of Children Services QA Unit to help focus our review.

Figure 3: Performance on seven quality assurance (QA) outcomes by field office - 2014



QA reviews follow the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), and cover seven outcomes areas – 2 safety (S) outcomes, 2 permanency (P) outcomes, and 3 wellbeing (WB) outcomes (see Table 1). Each review is based on a small sample of cases, and the score on an outcome shows what percentage of the sample of cases met the expected standard on a set of items that represent that outcome. OCS tries to review each of their field and regional offices every year. Given the small sample of cases, these reviews may not always reflect a

comprehensive picture. The Panel tried to use this information to identify field offices to visit, and to understand the challenges that each office faces.

The earliest such QA review in southern region was done in 2007 for Petersburg, and each office was reviewed at least four times since. Figure 3 shows the performance values for all seven QA outcomes for each field office in the southeast region for the year 2014. All offices except Petersburg (last reviewed in August 2013, and was being reviewed during the Panel’s visit) were reviewed in 2014. From Figure 3, field offices in the southern region appear to have had some challenges with five of the seven outcomes. They appear to have done well on permanency 2 and wellbeing 3.

Figure 4: Performance on seven quality assurance (QA) outcomes – Sitka field office, 2010-2014

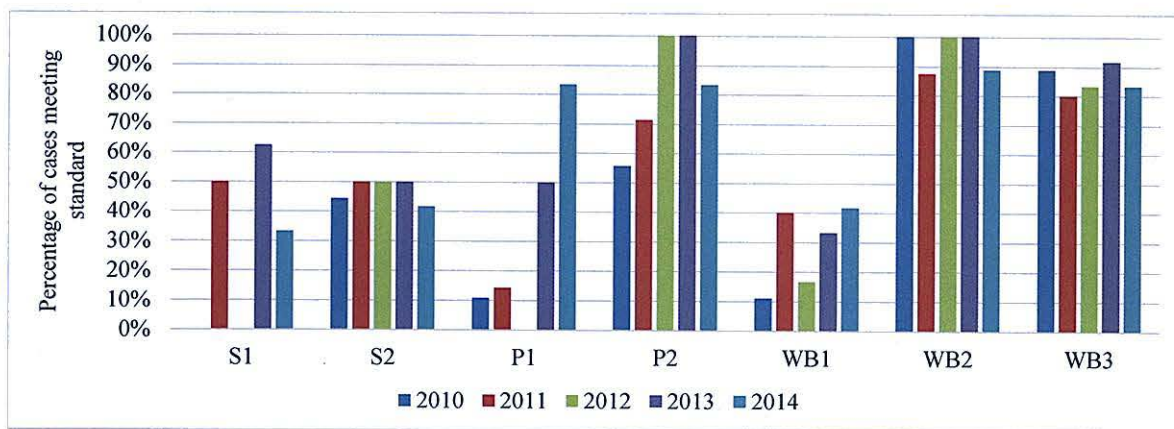
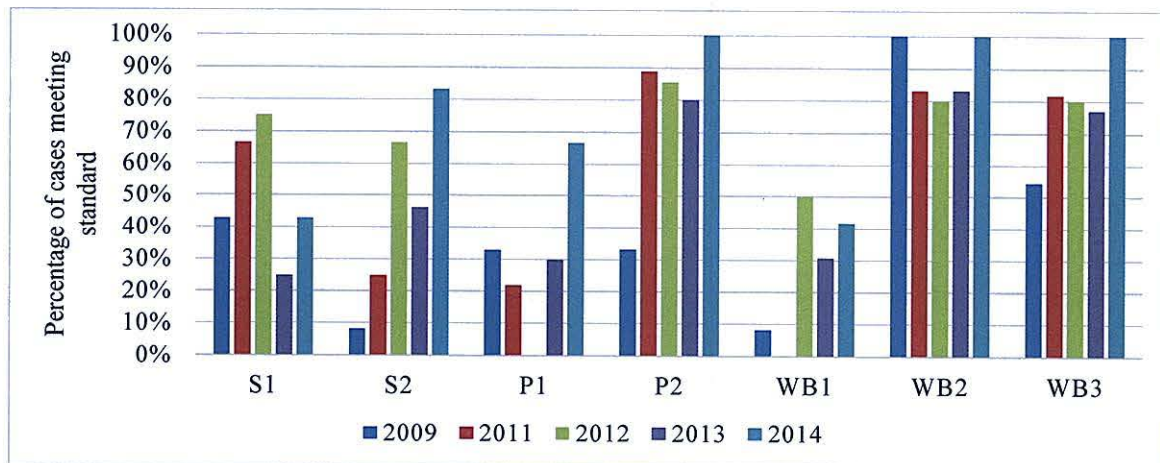


Figure 5: Performance on seven quality assurance (QA) outcomes Ketchikan field office, 2009-2014



The Panel examined data from all available reviews for each field office and identified Sitka and Ketchikan for an in-person visit. In addition to the QA data, travel cost and logistics, and the number of employees in each office also informed this choice. Figure 4 and Figure 5 show the

QA performance values for Sitka and Ketchikan respectively. Each office develops a follow-up Program Improvement Plan (FO-PIP) in response to the QA review. FO-PIP identifies specific goals associated with each area of improvement identified in the QA review. The Panel did not receive the FO-PIP for any of the SRO field offices in time for an in-depth review. The site visit review was focused on the QA outcomes for each field office.

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Table 1: Outcomes and Items of the Quality Assurance Review

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<p><b>Outcome S1:</b> Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment</li> <li>Item 2: Repeat maltreatment</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcome S2:</b> Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Item 3: Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal</li> <li>Item 4: Risk of harm to child(ren)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcome P1:</b> Children have permanency and stability in their living situation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Item 5: Foster care re-entries</li> <li>Item 6: Stability of foster care placement</li> <li>Item 7: Permanency goal for child</li> <li>Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives</li> <li>Item 9: Adoption</li> <li>Item 10: Permanency goal or other planned permanent living arrangement</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcome P2:</b> The continuity of family relationships and connection is preserved for children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement</li> <li>Item 12: Placement with siblings</li> <li>Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care</li> <li>Item 14: Preserving connections</li> <li>Item 15: Relative placement</li> <li>Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcome WB1:</b> Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents</li> <li>Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning</li> <li>Item 19: Worker visits with child</li> <li>Item 20: Worker visits with parents</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcome WB2:</b> Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Item 21: Educational needs of the child</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcome WB3:</b> Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Item 22: Physical health of the child</li> <li>Item 23: Mental health of the child</li> </ul>

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**3.3 Employee Profile of the SRO (supplied by SRO's Children Services Manager)**

Table 2: Employee profile of Southeast Regional Office at the time of the visit

Title	SRO	JFO	SFO	KFO	CFO	PFO
Managers	3					
Supervisors		3	1	1		
Protective Services Specialists(PSS)		11	2	5	1	1
Social Service Assistants (SSA)		3	1	2	1	
Administrative professionals	2	2				
Mental Health Clinician	1					
Psychiatric Nurse	1					
Regional Adoption Worker	1					
Independent Living Specialist	1					
Licensing Staff	2					
Intake Staff	3					
ICWA Specialist	1					
Eligibility Technician	1					
<b>Total Employees</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

**3.4 Community Partners (supplied by SRO's Children Services Manager)**

*Juneau Field Office (JFO):* (Communities served – Juneau, Angoon, Haines, Hoonah, Skagway, Yakutat)

- Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska,
- Douglas Island Association,
- Juneau Douglas School District,
- Juneau Police Department,
- SEARHC,
- REACH,
- REACH Infant Learning Program,
- AWARE,
- AST,
- Bartlett Regional Hospital,
- Juneau Youth Services,
- Rainforest Recovery Center,
- Adult probation,
- Division of Juvenile Justice,
- Catholic Community Services (including the Child Advocacy Center and MDT),
- Lemon Creek Correctional Center,
- Assistant Attorney General's office.

*Ketchikan Field Office (KFO):* (Communities served - Ketchikan, Metlakatla)

- Ketchikan Indian Community,
- Gateway/Akeela,
- WISH,

- Community Connections,
- Early Learning,
- Public Safety: State troopers; Ketchikan police
- Schools,
- Hospital,
- Adult probation,
- Division of Juvenile Justice,
- Clinics.
- Metlakatla Indian Community, and their service providers through Annette Island Service Unit and the children's mental health.

*Sitka Field Office (SFO):* (Communities served – Sitka)

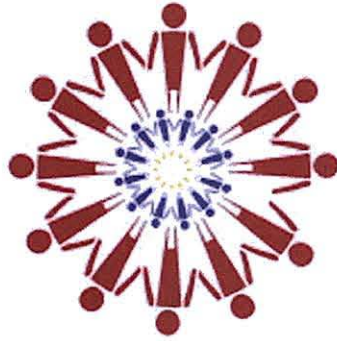
- Sitka Tribe of Alaska,
- Early Learning program,
- Youth Advocates of Sitka,
- Sitka Counseling Services,
- Sitkans Against Family violence (SAFV Shelter),
- Sitka Police Department,
- Sitka School District,
- SEARHC Clinic 2.

*Craig Field Office (CFO):* (Communities served – Coffman Cove, Edna Bay, Hollis, Hydaburg, Kasaan, Klawock, Naukiti, Thorne Bay, Whale Pass)

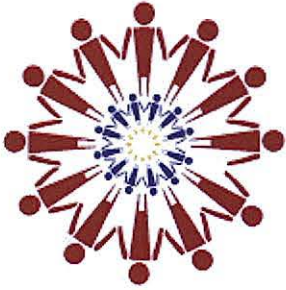
- SEARHC,
- Community Connections,
- Early Learning or the agencies providing services for adult and children's mental health and developmental type services,
- Hydaburg tribe,
- Klawock tribe,
- Craig tribe,
- Kasaan tribe.

*Petersburg Field Office (PFO):* (Communities served – Kake, Wrangell)

- Petersburg Indian Association,
- Petersburg School District (head start; high school),
- Petersburg Mental Health, True North Counseling, SEARHC Counseling,
- Petersburg Police Department,
- Petersburg WAVE (Working Against Violence for Everyone),
- Petersburg Medical Center,
- Reach Inc,
- Infant Learning Program,
- Public Health.
- Churches: Lighthouse Assembly; Salvation Army.



### **Appendix 3: Western Region Site Visit Report**



## Alaska Citizen Review Panel

### Members

Diwakar K. Vadapalli, Chair  
Dana Hallett, Vice-chair  
Donna M. Aguiniga  
Jen Burkmire  
Margaret McWilliams  
Bettyann Steciw  
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*Alaska Citizen Review Panel evaluates the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child protection agencies for effectiveness in discharging their child protection responsibilities. The Panel is mandated through CAPTA 1997 (P.L. 104-235), and enacted through AS 47.14.205*

## SITE VISIT REPORT

<b>Regional Office</b>	Western Region
<b>Field Offices visited</b>	Bethel
<b>Communities visited</b>	Bethel
<b>Dates of visit</b>	May 7 – 8, 2015
<b>Members of CRP on the visit</b>	Donna Aguiniga, Jen Burkmire, Bettyann Steciw

### Partner Agencies consulted

#### **Public Safety**

*Alaska State Troopers  
Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) program at Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP)*

#### **School system**

*Lower Kuskokwim School District Social Work Department*

#### **Legal Community**

*Attorney General (AG) Office  
Guardians ad Litem*

#### **Service Providers**

*Tundra Women's Coalition Child Advocacy Center  
Foster parents*

#### **Alaska Native entities**

*Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) ICWA Office*

The Panel reached out to several other partner agencies that either could not be reached or were not available for a meeting.

*Acknowledgments:* The CRP would like to thank all staff of the Western Regional Office (WRO) for taking time to meet with the Panel. The Panel appreciates Fennisha Gardner, WRO's Children Services Manager, for allowing us to meet with her staff amidst difficult workloads. The Panel would also like to thank all local partners for their time and their honest appraisal of their working relationships with OCS.

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*Site visits are an important part of the annual work load of Alaska's Citizen Review Panel. Panel members consult with staff at an OCS regional or field office and their local partner agencies to assess various instrumental practice behaviors and institutional relationships. The Panel's consultations cover a broad range of topics, focusing on systemic issues and not on individual strengths and weaknesses. Questions are often open-ended, and part of a free-flowing unstructured conversation. All information shared with CRP is confidential and will be de-identified and summarized into a Trip Report. Trip reports are posted on the Panel's website.*

## 1 Key observations:

- A silent crisis appears to be brewing in the Western Region. The number of children during any given month of the year who are in in-home custody ballooned from 26 in 2011 to 351 in 2014, a dramatic 1,227% increase in a region where these children are distributed across 45 remote communities. This raises many important and unsettling questions about the abilities of the region's staff in attending to all the cases on their case load, and consequently, the general health and welfare of these children. This increase needs to be understood and explained.
- Lack of formal institutionalized relationships between OCS and other partnering agencies has been a consistent concern over the last several years, and is most acute in WRO. While efforts to improve relations continue, we noted the following during this visit:
  - Most concerning is the lack of a meaningful relationship with local public safety infrastructure. WRO is vast, with 45 villages only reachable by air. Social workers are often alone and isolated while in the field. While the Panel is aware of and appreciates OCS' efforts to improve worker safety across the state, we suggest OCS establish a formal agreement with the Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) program. VPSOs are often the only public safety officers in most villages in the region.
  - OCS should create formal agreements with institutions (e.g., schools, tribal authorities) in villages to provide workers safe accommodations if they need to stay overnight in a community. It is unacceptable that workers are responsible for locating their own accommodations based on their connections in the villages. This is particularly problematic considering the high turnover rate, resulting in new workers unfamiliar with the villages.
  - CRP's previous WRO site visit report (January 2014) noted that the relationship with Bethel PD was an area for growth. It seems that there is still room for improvement in this relationship.
  - Outreach efforts to village ICWA workers, tribal elders, VPSOs, and other community leaders are recommended. Specifically, ICWA workers and VPSOs are trained and equipped to help OCS workers during their visits to villages.
  - "Healthy Families" curriculum is currently structured for families. While attending this training is useful, a more customized curriculum structured for workers (as opposed to families) would better help build competency and strengthen relationships. OCS should also implement shorter or more informal training or relationship-building opportunities to help build cultural awareness and sensitivity of workers.
- WRO has suffered a relatively very high workforce turnover over the last couple of years.
  - OCS should explore creating a workforce development program/partnership to identify and recruit employees from among the residents of the region. Residents are more likely to be familiar with the culture and its unique aspects of life. While intrafamilial and intratribal relationships may pose some challenges, these can also be strengths.
  - Community partners recommended the creation of a specialist position to work with parents with FAS/FAE to facilitate family maintenance and family reunification.
  - Partner with tribes and schools for services and resources for children.



- The most recent review of any of the WRO offices by the OCS QA unit was in May 2014. The QA Unit focused its efforts over the last year on in-home cases in the region. While this was desirable and welcome, the Panel is concerned that none of the field offices or the region was reviewed by the QA unit over more than a year. This is especially concerning given the severe challenges faced by offices in the region.
- Electronic Tablets, which have the potential to improve case worker efficiency and documentation, are not yet functional for caseworkers. There have been delays in implementation and problems with IT providing support. Based on feedback provided during the site visit, the CSM calendared a training session to take place within the next month to teach workers how to use the tablets effectively. Providing assistance for workers, including IT support, will help ensure that technology is useful for them.
  - A related concern is the caseload issue. Caseloads continue to be very high, with an individual worker carrying as many as 79 cases at once. This is well above any known standard recommendation of worker case load, and is humanly impossible to adequately perform on all cases.
- Continue support for in-person foster parent training and recruitment for village families.

## 2 Categories

The Panel examines a specific set of categories on each site visit. Below are observations on three specific categories.

### 2.1 Leadership

Western region has had a change in leadership since the last CRP visit. The new Children's Services Manager had some working experience in the Western Region in the past, and was a senior manager with the Agency for several years. It has been a few months since the change in leadership and the supervisors and staff expressed a sense of optimism. The CRP is looking forward to positive changes in the region.

### 2.2 OCS Staff workload, morale, and practice issues

OCS, as most other CPS systems across the nation, has been battling high workloads that are often debilitating and demoralizing to the workers. A worker in the Western Region reported seventy-nine (79) cases. CRP reported almost the same number of cases on the workers' case load during our January 2014 site visit. This translates to approximately 150 children, with each child needing a visit by the worker every month. Given that these children are distributed across 45 villages, it is simply impossible to meet the legal mandate, and unreasonable to expect adequate service provision. Note that this is not the only task assigned to the worker.

Given the high rates of maltreatment, sexual exploitation, suicide rates, truancy, and many other related issues in the region, a single agency with more than 30% staff turnover cannot adequately serve the child protection needs of the population. The following observations are not new, and have been made repeatedly over the last several years. These observations are indicative of a general systemic failure rather than any individual workers' or managers' fault. While the Panel realizes that change is difficult and resources are limited, we hope these observations will galvanize action:

- OCS shared the latest numbers of children in out-of-home care and in-home care prior to this site visit. Table 1 shows the number of monthly average number of cases in both situations in each region, for the years 2011 through 2014. The number of children during



any given month of the year who are deemed to be safe enough to be left at home ballooned from 26 in 2011 to 351 in 2014, a 1,227% increase. Numbers for other regions are presented for comparison. While the number of in-home cases increased in all regions, the increase in Western Region is incomparably high (the next highest increase was 300% in South Central Region). The comparable number for children in out-of-home placement settings (foster care) grew from 161 in 2010 to 174 in 2014, an increase of 8%.

Table 1: Monthly average number of children in out-of-home care and in-home care by OCS region (2011-2014)

Year	Western Region		Anchorage Region		South Central Region		Southeast Region		Northern Region	
	OOH*	IH	OOH	IH	OOH	IH	OOH	IH	OOH	IH
2011	220	26	671	86	508	20	166	38	300	89
2012	206	72	701	114	508	52	167	62	286	113
2013	165	253	805	221	506	74	166	79	327	147
2014	174	351	864	189	548	79	160	72	390	118
Percentage change (2011-2014)	-21%	<b>1,227%</b>	29%	121%	8%	300%	-4%	89%	30%	33%

\* OOH – Out-of-home care; IH – In-home care

- OCS’ internal Quality Assurance (QA) Unit reviewed a sample (93) of in-home cases during 2014. A summary of the reviews made available to the CRP prior to this visit indicated that all children involved in these cases were facing impending danger, and none of them had current or adequate safety plans.
- Multiple community partners remarked that calls to OCS, from the agency staff or clients, go unreturned, and that OCS does not initiate contact to the same degree as other agencies.
- Reported by several community partners that assessment of children is inconsistent, with some being left in unsafe situations while others were removed when situations may not have warranted. Of particular concern is the report that 100% of out-of-home placements are ICWA cases.
- Reporters of harm typically do not receive a follow-up letter on the status of a report they make. Reporters, a majority of them being mandated reporters, are often uncertain if a report was acted upon. CRP recommended in 2014 that OCS consider an opt-out option for reporters than the present opt-in option for receiving follow-up letters. This recommendation was accepted and is expected to be implemented.
- Case workers often approach schools, particularly in villages, expecting to speak with or remove children from school without necessary IDs or documentation.
- Schools are often unaware of children’s status re: custody and placement. This was also identified by the Panel in our December 2012 site visit.
- Foster parents not receiving necessary information (i.e. Red Packet) upon placement.
- We were informed that Aniak does not currently have assigned caseworkers and the SSA will not travel under most circumstances; this office needs to be staffed and it needs to be determined if cases are being properly served. In addition, the success of St Mary’s week



on/week off program needs to be evaluated, with attention given to documentation and case service compliance.

Despite these concerns, the Panel recognizes that staff and management of the Western Region, and the State office, try to respond to critical needs in a swift and affective way.

- In January 2014, the site visit report noted that workers were unable to provide for the needs of children removed from their homes. During this visit, we were informed that food and diapers are now available in the office for children. We encourage the continued development of a resource closet to ensure children have their basic needs met upon removal.

### 2.3 *Partner relations*

The Panel had consistently recommended institutionalizing relationships with local partners, and identifying consistent protocols for collaboration. Several community partners identified lack of consistent and sustained communication is the biggest impediment in their relationship with OCS:

- Communication: Poor communication with community partners has a negative impact on workers' ability to service their cases and OCS' reputation in the community. Prior site visit reports, including the two from 2012, recommended restarting the MDT. The Panel was informed on the last visit (January 2014) that OCS was convening a meeting of all key players to restart the MDT. It is yet to be functional. We learned that a facilitator from the Child Welfare Academy is scheduled for June 11th for an all-day meeting to help bring OCS and community partners together. This is a positive step forward in the reformation of the MDT. A functional MDT will provide OCS with regular communication with community partners and help ensure that families and children are being served. Communication is severely impaired due to absence of MDT.

While great interpersonal relationships can exist in any context, they cannot be a substitute for structured protocols that can ensure accountability. The recent change in senior leadership seems to have infused a sense of hope and optimism among the community partners. The Panel hopes to see development of structured protocols for collaboration with local partner agencies.

'Culture' surfaced as a central theme during our discussions on this visit. A majority of partner agencies interviewed reported that OCS workers do not demonstrate culture awareness and sensitivity:

- Cultural awareness/competency: Lack of cultural competency and awareness of unique issues of villages and the region impedes practice, impacts case disposition, and creates distrust and distance between many organizations and OCS. OCS leadership and staff did not identify any particular concerns with this issue. OCS staff referenced attending trainings, *Knowing Who You Are* and *Undoing Racism*, as evidence of their efforts on this front. While certainly helpful, these trainings are not specific to the Western Region. Several OCS staff also attended *Healthy Families* offered by AVCP. *Healthy Families* includes information specific to the Western Region. Our conversations indicate that not all workers have attended this program. In fact, many workers report never having heard of the *Healthy Families* program.



It is very concerning that comments and feedback from OCS management staff is inconsistent with comments from several partner agencies, specifically with regard to attendance at cultural awareness/sensitivity training and the occurrence of monthly partnership meetings with the school district.

The geography and weather in the region pose several challenges to service provision. Most villages can only be reached by air, and transportation is expensive in the region. Among other things, organizing visits between families and children, and between workers and children, are logistically challenging and expensive. The CRP recommended in March 2012 that specific workers be assigned to villages to improve rapport and maintain consistency in relationships. A program to assign workers to villages is in development stages, and augurs well for improving relationships with remote villages. CRP made further recommendation in March and December 2012 to identify specific individuals in each community as contact persons.

- Through this report, we are recommending that both ICWA workers and VPSOs be formally identified and clear protocols be established to encourage collaboration.

Along these lines, CRP noted in the past two site visit reports that relationships with AVCP needs to be more structured. The recent creation of an office at OCS that allows AVCP ICWA workers to be co-located is a positive and proactive step forward.

### 3 Western Region Overview

This section gives a brief background of the region to help readers understand the context of this report's findings.

#### 3.1 Background

Western regional office (WRO) includes the Bethel Census Area and the Wade Hampton Census Area in southwest Alaska. The regional office is located in Bethel and two field offices are located in Aniak and St. Mary's. The region is home to 26,453 people, with 41.80% 21 years or younger (U.S. Census 2010). There were approximately 174 children in out-of-home placement situations, and 351 children receiving services at their homes, in the region during any given month in 2014. A total of 29 staff were serving in the region and five positions were vacant (Table 2)

Figure 1: Western Region (Regional office in Bethel with two field offices – Aniak and St. Mary's)

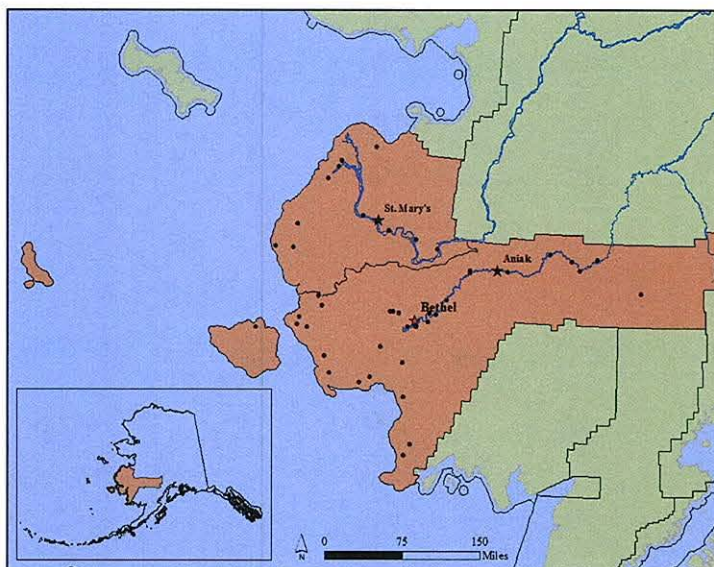


Table 2: Employment profile of Western Region by field office

	Bethel	Aniak	St. Mary's
Number of Communities Served	29	8	8
Total population served (2010)	19,613	1,249	4,563
Staff Counts (as reported during this visit)			
<i>Protective Services Specialist (PSS) IV</i>	4 (1*)		
<i>Protective Services Specialist (PSS) I/II</i>	17 (4*)		2
<i>Social Services Associates (SSA)</i>	3	1	1
<i>Office Assistant (OA)</i>	1		

\* Vacancies

### 3.2 Choosing field offices to visit

WRO has had severe challenges with staff turnover in the last several years since its creation in 2010. Accordingly, the Panel has been focused on the regional office, and limited its last several visits to the regional office in Bethel. While the choice to visit just the Bethel regional office was dictated by various factors, this summary presents performance indicators from the region's most recent Quality Assurance (QA) reviews conducted by the Office of Children Services QA Unit. Please refer to the box for further explanation of the QA review process.

The earliest such QA review for which we have data in the Western region was done in 2009 for Bethel, and each of the three offices were reviewed at least four times since. It is important to note that the latest such review was of St. Mary's in June 2014. The QA Unit reported that QA reviews were not conducted in the Western Region since June 2014, and instead, a sample (93) of in-home cases were reviewed.

Figure 2: Performance on seven key outcomes by field office – 2013-2014

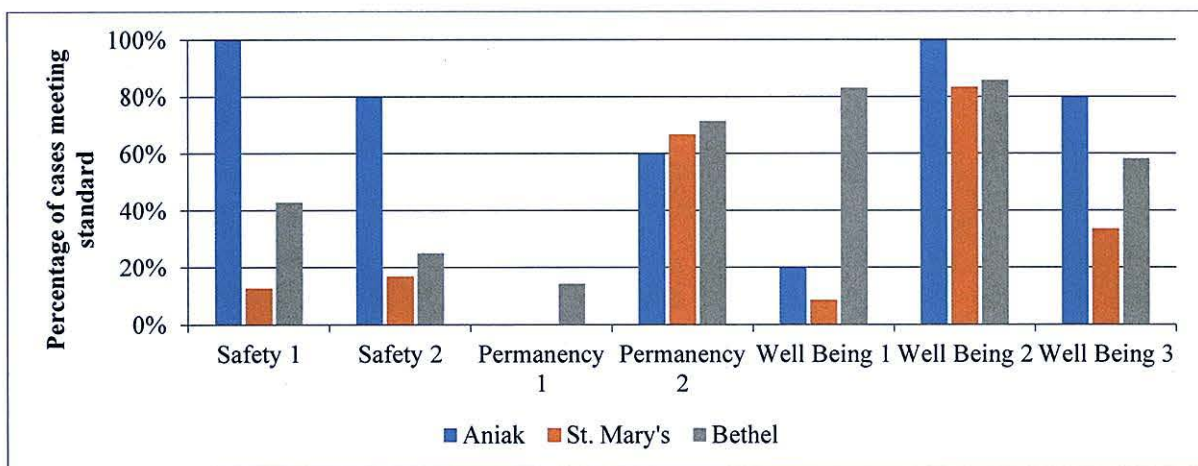


Figure 2 shows the percentage of cases in each field office that substantially achieved an outcome on their respective latest QA review. All seven outcomes are reported. St. Mary's was the only Western region office reviewed in 2014. Field offices in the Western region performed



well on well-being 2, but appear to have had some challenges with the other outcomes. St. Mary's seems to have had the most challenges across all outcomes. OCS had consistent challenges in staffing this field office and is currently experimenting with a one-week-on/one-week-off schedule. Effectiveness of this schedule is yet to be examined.

Figure 3: Performance on 7 quality assurance (QA) outcomes – Aniak field office, 2010-2013

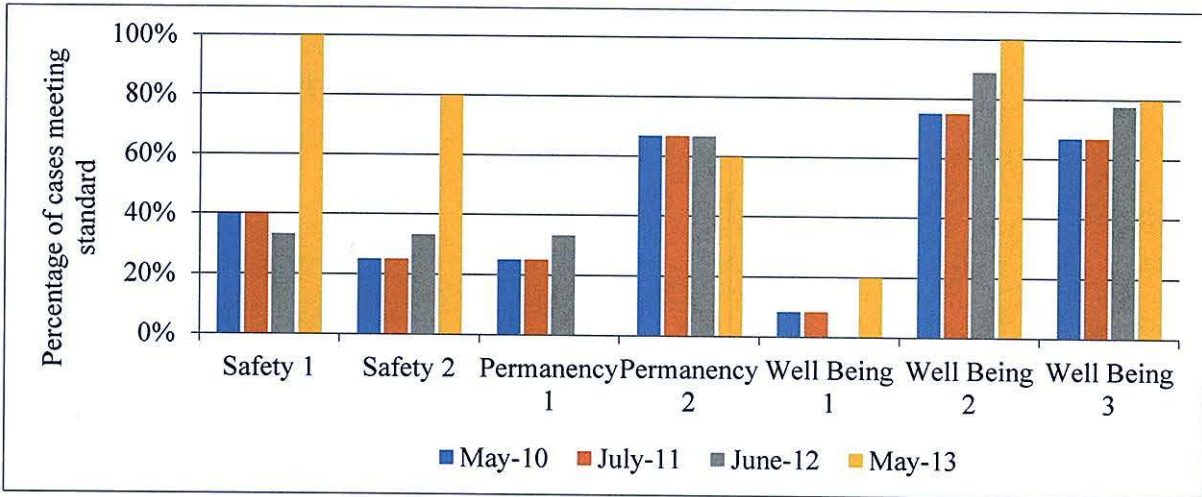


Figure 3 through Figure 5 show the QA performance values for Aniak, Bethel and St. Mary's respectively, for all the years that QA reviews were conducted. Permanency 1 and Well-being 1 seems to be of serious concern in Aniak. Similarly Safety 2 and Wellbeing 1 in Bethel; Safety 1, Permanency 1, and Well Being 1 in St. Mary's are of high concern.

Figure 4: Performance on 7 quality assurance (QA) outcomes Bethel field office, 2009-2012

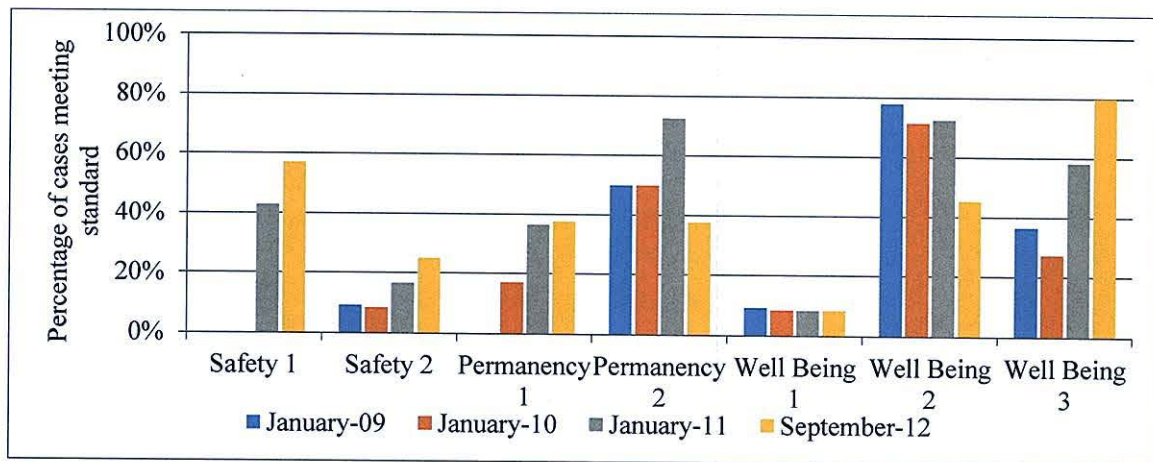
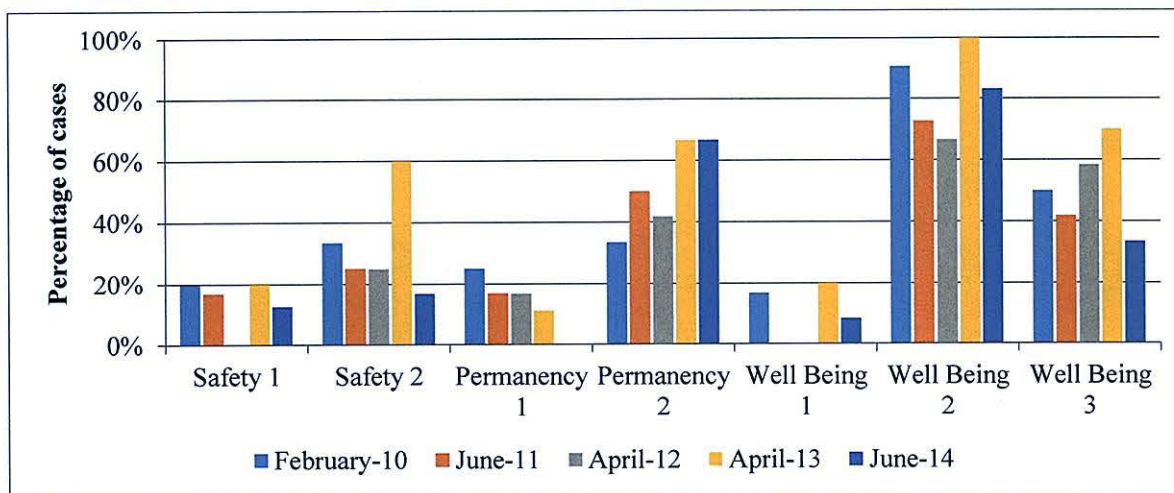


Figure 5: Performance on 7 quality assurance (QA) outcomes St. Mary's field office, 2010-2014



### OCS Quality Assurance Reviews

Alaska OCS Quality Assurance (QA) unit tries to review every field and regional office each year. The review follows the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) method consisting of a complex set of questions covering 23 distinct functional areas (items) classified into seven broad outcomes – 2 safety outcomes, 2 permanency outcomes, and 3 wellbeing outcomes. A small sample of cases served through the office under review are examined and rated on each of the 23 items. Performance on each outcome area is reported in terms of percentage of the sample of cases meeting the expected standard on a subset of items that represent that outcome. Each item is assessed using a set of questions pertaining to various decisions and actions in the case. These QA reviews are used by senior management to identify areas for improvement. Each regional or field office is encouraged to prepare a program improvement plan (PIP) in response to the QA review. Given the small sample of cases, these reviews may not always reflect a comprehensive picture, and may not be representative of the regions' performance in general.

For example, Permanency 1 outcome is determined by performance on six different items:

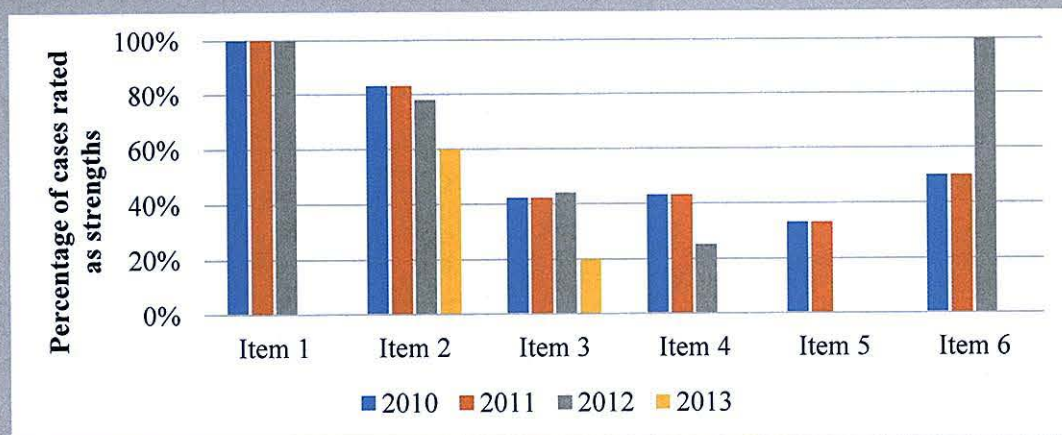
1. Foster care re-entries
2. Stability of foster care placements
3. Permanency goal for child
4. Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives
5. Adoption
6. Permanency goal or other planned permanent living arrangement

Figure 6 shows the percentage of cases that were strengths on all six items that make up Permanency 1 for the years 2010 through 2013 for Aniak Field office. The most concerning among these items are numbers 3, 4, and 5. For example, Item 3 refers to permanency goal for a child in OCS custody and is assessed using seven different questions:



1. What is (are) the child's current permanency goal(s) (or if the case was closed during the period under review, what was the permanency goal before the case was closed)?
2. Is (are) the child's permanency goal(s) specified in the case file?
3. Were all permanency goals in effect during the period under review established in a timely manner?
4. Were all permanency goals in effect during the period under review appropriate to the child's needs for permanency and to the circumstances of the case?
5. Has the child been in foster care for at least 15 of the most recent 22 months?
6. If the answer to question 5 is No, does the child meet other Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) criteria for termination of parental rights (TPR)?
7. If the answer to either question 5 or 6 is Yes, was a TPR petition filed before the period under review or in a timely manner during the period under review?
8. If the answer to question 7 is No, is an exceptional or compelling reason for not filing for TPR specified in the case file?

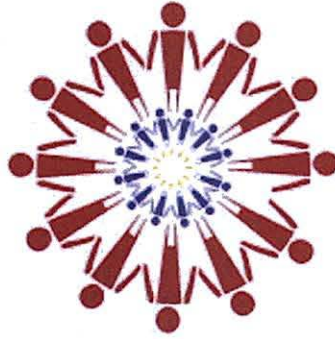
Figure 6: Performance on six items of Permanency 1 outcome, Aniak Field Office, 2010-2013



A protocol dictates how a case is rated (Strength, Area Needing Improvement, or Not Applicable) on the item. A little over 40% of the cases were marked as strength in Aniak on permanency goal during the first three reviews. This percentage dipped to 20% in the latest review conducted in 2013.

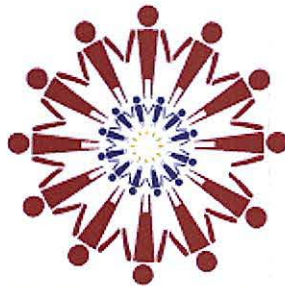
The above description is based in part on the Round 2 CSFR, a federal process of reviewing state child protection systems (CPS). Alaska OCS was reviewed in 2009 as part of the Round 2 reviews. For further information on Round 2 CSFR instrument and process, please refer to <https://training.cfsrportal.org/resources/1159>. OCS and several other state CPS are using the CSFR instruments to conduct their own internal reviews, a practice encouraged by the federal government. Round 3 reviews are commencing now and Alaska OCS is scheduled to be reviewed in 2017. For Round 3 resources visit: <https://training.cfsrportal.org/resources/3105>.





## **Appendix 4: BIA Providers Conference Survey Results**

**LOCAL CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM IN ALASKA'S  
COMMUNITIES: RESULTS FROM A SURVEY**



**Alaska Citizen Review Panel**  
212 Front Street, Suite 100, Fairbanks, AK 99701

January 2015

*Alaska Citizen Review Panel evaluates the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child protection agencies for effectiveness in discharging their child protection responsibilities. The Panel is mandated through CAPTA 1997 (P.L. 104-235), and enacted through AS 47.14.205.*

## **Acknowledgements**

The Citizen Review Panel thanks all the respondents for their informed opinion on various topics. The Panel thanks Ms. Gloria Gorman, Regional Social Worker with the Division of Human Services of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Alaska Region, for inviting the Panel to present at the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual BIA Providers' Conference, and for facilitating the survey. The Panel thanks Mr. Travis Erickson, Field Administrator, Alaska Office of Children Services for his helpful input on the survey instrument.

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**Appendix 7**

## **1. Introduction**

As part of its 'public outreach' mandate, Alaska's Citizen Review Panel (CRP) presented an overview of its activities for the year (2014-2015) at the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual BIA Tribal Providers Conference. The Division of Human Services of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Alaska Region organizes the Human Services sessions as part of the annual conference, usually held in Anchorage in the months of November or December each year. This session is attended by more than a hundred representatives of the social services or child welfare services divisions/departments of various Alaska Native communities and/or entities from across the state.

### ***1.1. Key findings***

All participants at the session were surveyed for their opinions and perceptions on various things. This document reports the results of that survey conducted during the CRP presentation on December 3, 2015. Primary findings of the survey are:

- Most communities rate their local child protection system as being above average on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the best.
- Child protection system in most Alaska's communities is a multiple-entity system heavily dependent upon interagency relationships and communication. These relationships currently seem to lack any institutional/organizational framework or structure, and are dependent on individual workers' ability and desire to partner.
- Most respondents and communities they represent are unaware of the CRP and expressed a desire to participate after they heard the presentation.

## **2. Purpose of the survey**

The CRP is interested in understanding the child protection needs and available services in communities across the state. This knowledge will inform the Panel's review and evaluation of the policies, procedures, and practice of the child protective services (CPS) in Alaska. This survey was designed to collect information and opinions from social service leaders, administrators, and workers of various Alaska Native tribes and tribal entities in the state on three primary topics:

1. Components of child protection systems in their community, and their effectiveness
2. Working relationships between their local child protection service system (as identified in 1 above) and Alaska's designated state-wide agency for child protection – Office of Children Services (OCS)
3. Awareness regarding the Citizen Review Panel

### 3. Sample

One hundred surveys were distributed at the conference session and seventy three completed surveys were received. Respondents represented 56 communities, distributed across the state from all OCS regions (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number of respondents by professional affiliation

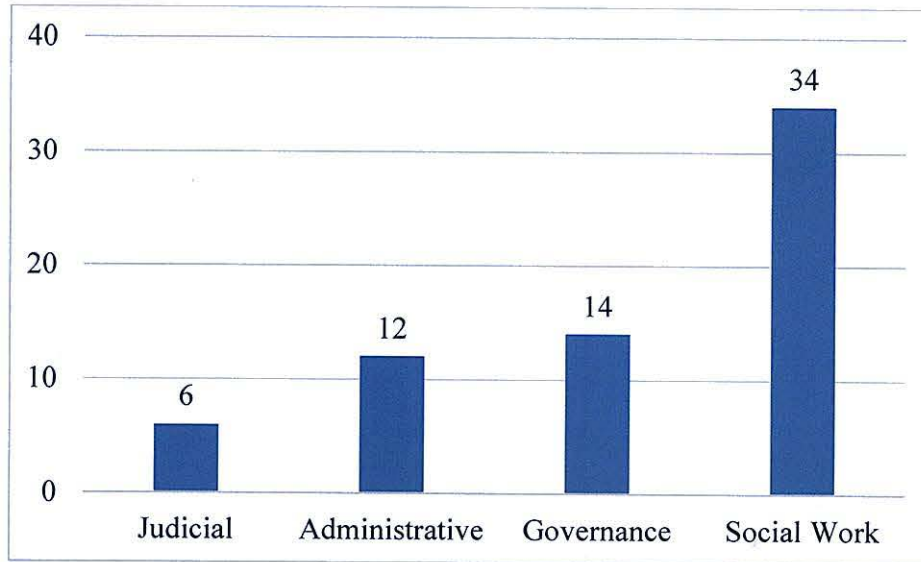
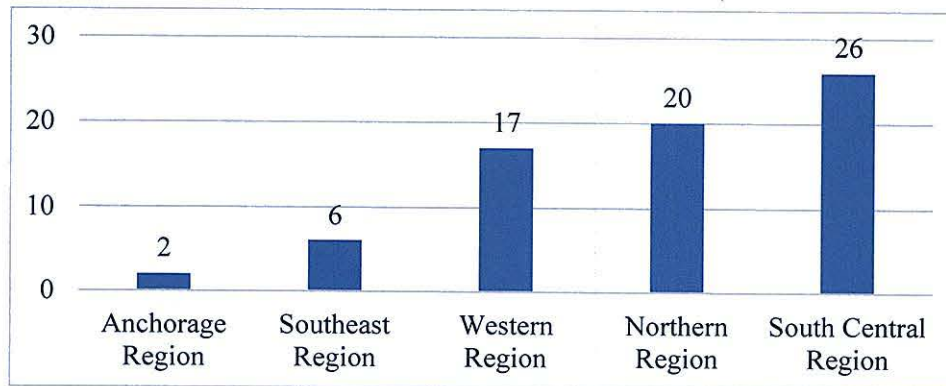


Figure 2: Number of respondents by OCS region



Respondents' professional affiliations are broadly classified into four distinct categories (Figure 2) – administration, governance, judicial, and social work.

- *Judicial* positions included tribal court judges or tribal justice program staff

- *Administrative* positions included: ‘tribal administrator’, ‘CEO’, ‘admin assistant’, ‘TANF supervisor’, ‘ICWA director’, project coordinator’, ‘self-governance director’, ‘human services director’, ‘tribal administrator’, and ‘director’.
- *Governance* positions included local governing council members.
- *Social work* positions included 21 different titles such as ‘ICWA worker’, ‘case worker’, family services worker’, etc.

#### 4. Results

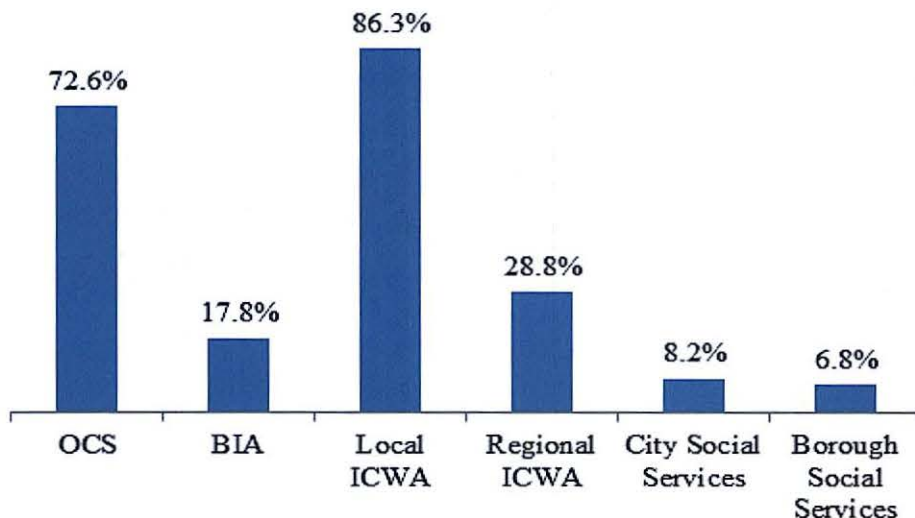
Child protection is a complex enterprise and requires collaborative working relationships between various agencies responsible for child safety. The Office of Children Services (OCS) is the designated state child protection service agency in Alaska. Federally recognized tribes and tribal entities also provide child protection services in most communities.

##### 4.1. Local child protection system

Respondents were asked to identify what might constitute child protection system in their community. Among the first six choices offered (Figure 3), ‘Local Tribal ICWA Program’ was chosen by more than 86% (63 out of 73) of the respondents. OCS is the second most identified option. This is expected since the respondents are attendees at an ICWA conference session.

A majority of the respondents (52 out of 71 valid responses, 73.2%) chose more than one agency as constituting their local child protection system. Forty five (45) respondents identified both the ‘Local Tribal ICWA Program’ and OCS, the most frequently identified pairing of entities.

Figure 3: Percentage of respondents that chose each agency as being part of their local child protection system.



In addition to these six choices, respondents also identified a diverse array of entities, individuals, and/or activities that are helping or could help in protecting children from abuse and neglect. These included

- public safety (local, regional, and state)
- school
- courts (tribal and state)
- local child protection teams
- Child Advocacy Centers
- clinic
- elders
- healthy activities for children after school
- regular and meaningful communication between various entities

With so many agencies, individuals, and activities identified, respondents rated child protection in their communities to be above the average. On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being best and 1 being poor), the overall average score was 6.1, with about half the respondents ranking child protection below 6 and half of them ranking it above 6.

Among the OCS regions, respondents from the Western Region ranked child protection to be poorest with an average ranking of 5.44. In comparison, respondents from Southcentral Region ranked at 6.22 and those from Northern Region ranked at 6.00. There were too few respondents from Anchorage and Southeast regions for a meaningful comparison. It is also interesting to note that those that identified just one of the six entities as comprising the local child protection system had the highest average rating of the system. These numbers are shown in Table 1.

It is interesting to note that those respondents that identified only one entity as part of the local child protection system ranked their child protection system highest. This may mean that the one component is highly effective in their view, which may minimize the need for other possible entities as part of the local child protection system. It may also mean that other possible components may either be inaccessible or ineffective, and these communities may be focused on making the one available component most effective. Thirteen of these nineteen respondents chose 'Local Tribal ICWA Program' as the child protection system. Their mean rating of their child protection system is slightly higher (6.42) than the rest (6.14).

Table 1: Mean rating (on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being worst and 10 being best) of local child protection system (categories with less than 5 respondents are not reported)

		<i>Mean rating</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>
<i>Number of entities identified as part of the local child protection system</i>	One	6.32	19
	Two	6.19	26
	Three	5.67	15
<i>OCS Region</i>	South Central Region (SCR)	6.22	23
	Northern Region (NR)	6.00	20
	Western Region (WR)	5.44	16

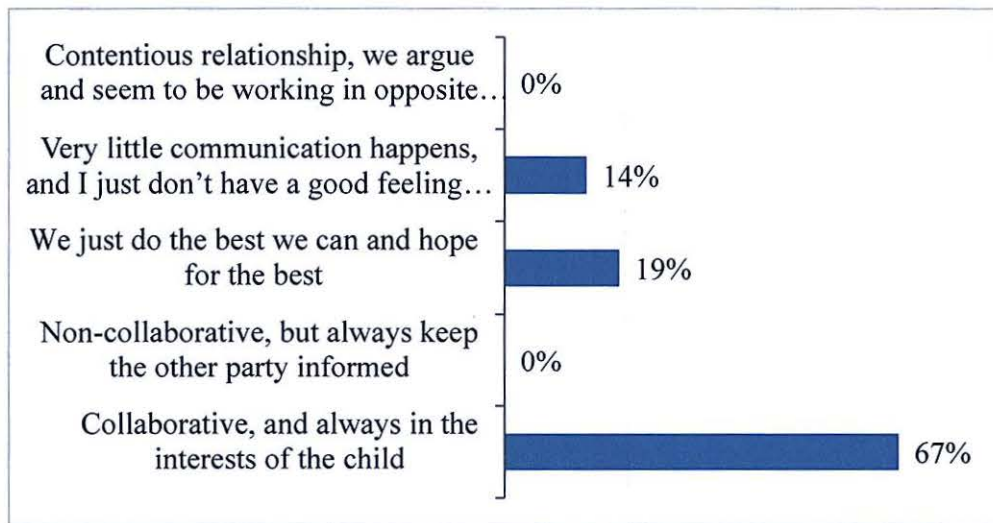
#### 4.2. Working relationship with OCS

The CRP is most interested in the working relationships between various local agencies concerned with child protection, and Alaska’s Office of Children Services (OCS). This relationship has been consistently identified by the Panel as needing improvement over the last several years.

About half (36 out of 68 valid responses, 49.3%) of the respondents reported to be working with OCS in an official capacity. Among those who work with OCS in an official capacity, only 15 reported to be working on individual cases. Remaining respondents reported that they interact with OCS workers, but do not work on any specific cases. Overall, out of 39 valid responses, respondents’ interaction with OCS staff seems random – occasional contact (9 respondents, 23%), sometimes a lot, and sometimes very little (20 respondents, 51.2%), and regular contact (10 respondents, 25.6%). A good majority (23 out of 39 valid responses, 59%) reported that they collaborate with OCS on case planning. A good majority (24 out of 36 valid responses, 67%) also reported that they “collaborate, and always in the interests of the child.”

When asked of the most important thing they do to maintain or improve their good working relationship with OCS workers, most respondents identified communication as key. This ranged from being available to OCS workers when they are visiting the community for a family visit or in response to a protective service report (PSR), to constantly keeping in touch with OCS workers either through email or phone to ensure good communication despite high turnover on both sides.

Figure 4: Nature of the working relationship with OCS workers



The above patterns could mean that the relationship is functional when necessary. But, it can also mean that it can be just as dysfunctional in the absence of any mutually agreed upon, or desired collaboration. The Panel’s own observations during site visits over the last several years support the second scenario. In other words, the reported collaboration may be more an artifact of

individual attributes and desires of people in respective positions than an institutional or organizational relationship.

#### ***4.3. Familiarity with the Citizen Review Panel***

Respondents were also asked about their familiarity with the CRP. Very few (10 out of 71) respondents were familiar with CRP or served on the Panel. Another 22 respondents heard about the panel but knew very little. A good majority (39 out of 71, 54.9%) never heard of CRP. This is an indication of how little individual communities may know about the opportunity that the Panel presents them to participate in the efforts to improve child protection system in their communities. A majority of the respondents found the presentation to the session useful, and indicated that they are more inclined to work with CRP.

#### **5. Conclusions**

This survey was conducted to gain the perspective of tribal representatives on child protection in their communities, and their relationships with the state's Office of Children Services (OCS). A majority of the respondents identified more than one institution/organization as constituting their local child protection system (CPS). As is known, local tribal ICWA program and the state OCS are the primary components of the local CPS in most communities represented in this survey.

Relationships between the staff of the community's local child protection system and OCS seems generally positive, but depends heavily on individual initiative. No structural mechanism seems to exist, at least to the extent the respondents of this survey are aware.

#### **6. Limitations**

The survey is limited in several ways. This is not a representative sample, and is limited to those who attended the BIA Human Services conference session on December 3, 2014. The sample is small and valid responses on several questions did not exceed 35 responses. Thus, analysis is limited in several ways.

**Appendix**

**Survey Form**

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This is a survey to gather opinions on child protection system in your community. The Citizen Review Panel (CRP) is a federal and state mandated voluntary body to evaluate child protection systems in Alaska. This information will be used by CRP to better understand the context and circumstances of relationships that OCS has with communities and local child protection personnel. Results will be reported to you through the BIA Social Services office.

Your Professional title \_\_\_\_\_ Your Community \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

**The following questions are about your community and your relationship with OCS.**

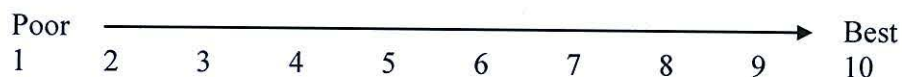
1. In your opinion, what constitutes child protection system in your community? (Check all that apply)

- Office of Children Services
- BIA Social Services
- Local Tribal ICWA program
- Regional ICWA program
- City social services
- Borough social services

2. In addition to the official child protection system, what else do you notice in your community that you think helps in protecting children from abuse and neglect?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

3. On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being best and 1 being poor) how would you rate child protection in your community? (Pick one number)

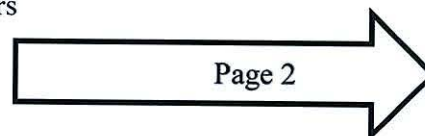


4. Do you work with (not for) OCS in any official capacity?

- Yes. Official role (if different from your title above): \_\_\_\_\_
- No **(SKIP TO QUESTION 10)**

5. What is the nature of your contact with OCS?

- I work on cases with OCS social workers and supervisors
- I interact with them but do not work on any cases



6. How frequently do you interact with OCS personnel:
- Occasional contact,
  - Contact as needed, sometimes a lot, and sometimes very little
  - Regular contact
7. If you have a case load in your official capacity, would you describe your work with OCS social workers as:
- Collaborative, and always in the interests of the child
  - Non-collaborative, but, always keep the other party informed
  - We just do the best we can and hope for the best
  - Very little communication happens, and I just don't have a good feeling about it
  - Contentious relationship, we argue and seem to be working in opposite directions
8. What is the most important thing that you do to make your relationship with OCS as strong as it is?
- 
9. Do you collaborate with OCS social workers in any case planning?
- Yes
  - No

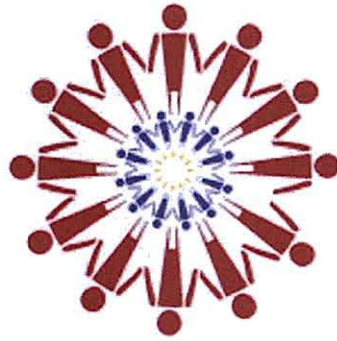
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**The following questions are about the Citizen Review Panel.**

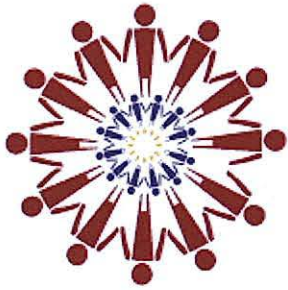
10. Did you know about Alaska Citizen Review Panel (check only one):
- Never heard of the CRP before
  - Familiar with CRP
  - Heard about it but know very little
  - Served on CRP/know a lot about it.
11. Was this presentation useful?
- Yes
  - No
12. After learning more today, do you think you would be likely to work with the CRP?
- Yes
  - No
13. Are there any additional topics that we should have covered that might benefit you?
- 

14. After listening to the presentation today, do you have suggestions for CRP?

**THANK YOU!**



## **Appendix 5: Legislative Visit Report**



## Alaska Citizen Review Panel

### Members

Diwakar K. Vadapalli, Chair  
Dana Hallett, Vice-chair  
Donna M. Aguiniga  
Jen Burkmire  
Margaret McWilliams  
Bettyann Steciw

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*Alaska Citizen Review Panel evaluates the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child protection agencies for effectiveness in discharging their child protection responsibilities. The Panel is mandated through CAPTA 1997 (P.L. 104-235), and enacted through AS 47.14.205*

## LEGISLATIVE VISIT – REPORT

Dates of visit	February 11 – 13, 2015
Members of CRP on the visit	Dana Hallett, Diwakar Vadapalli

### Presentation:

Annual overview of the Panel's work to the House Committee on Health and Social Services

### Meetings:

- Rep. Les Gara** (*D – Anchorage*)  
*Member, House Finance Committee; House Finance Subcommittee on HSS*
- Rep. Paul Seaton** (*R – Homer*)  
*Chair, House HSS Committee*
- Rep. Tarr** (*D – Anchorage*)  
*Member, House HSS Committee*
- Rep. Wilson** (*R – North Pole*)  
*Member, House Finance Subcommittee on HSS*
- Rep. Saddler** (*R – Eagle River*)  
*Member, House Finance Subcommittee on HSS*
- Rep. Herron** (*D – Bethel*)  
*House Majority Whip*
- Sen. Olson** (*D – Nome*). *Due to scheduling conflict, we could only meet with his staffer.*  
*Member, Senate Finance Subcommittee on HSS*
- Sen. Coghill** (*R – North Pole*)  
*Senate Majority Leader*  
*Member, Senate Finance Subcommittee on HSS*
- Sen. Giessel** (*R – Anchorage*)  
*Vice Chair, Senate HSS committee*  
*Member, Senate Finance Subcommittee on HSS*
- Deputy Commissioner Ree Sailors**  
*Department of Health and Social Services*
- Director Christy Lawton**  
*Office of Children Services*

The Panel tried to reach out to several other legislators that either could not be reached or were not available for a meeting due to scheduling conflicts.

*Acknowledgments:* The CRP would like to thank the House Committee on Health and Social Services, and Rep. Paul Seaton for accommodating our request for a hearing. The Panel would also like to thank all the legislators and their staff for meeting with us and discussing various issues related to child protection in Alaska.

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*As part of its public outreach responsibilities, each year during the legislative session, the Panel presents an overview of its work from the previous year to the State's Standing Committees on Health and Social Services (HSS) of both the House of Representatives and the Senate. In addition, the Panel also meets with various legislators, the Governor's office, and the Commissioner's office during and beyond the legislative session to discuss various issues of importance.*

## 1. Presentation

This year, the Panel presented its overview to the House HSS Committee on February 12. The Committee is chaired by Rep. Paul Season (R-Homer), and includes Rep. Foster (D-Nome), Rep. Stutes (R-Kodiak), Rep. Talerico (R-Healy), Rep. Tarr (D-Anchorage), and Rep. Wool (D-Fairbanks). A recording of the entire presentation and discussion are available on the Panel's website at: <http://crpalaska.org/reports/presentations/>

The Panel had consistent challenges over the last several years in scheduling a hearing with the Senate HSS Committee.

## 2. Highlights from other meetings

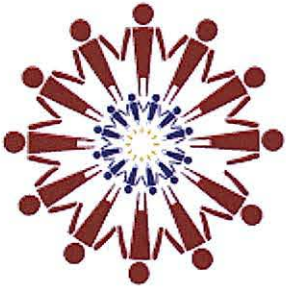
Many issues were discussed, including:

- Supporting a budget request to add positions to the current OCS workforce.
- Improving CRP's oversight responsibilities and OCS responsiveness
- Improving CRP's public outreach responsibilities by reaching out to legislators when the legislature is not in session
- Exploring case reviews as part of the CRP's mandate
- Issues and concerns in OCS' Western Region
- Availability and accessibility of data and information from OCS

The Governor's Office redirected us to meet with the Commissioner of DHSS. Commissioner Davidson was unavailable due to scheduling conflicts. However, the Panel met with Ree Sailors, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), and Christy Lawton, Director of the Office of Children Services (OCS). We discussed various opportunities and challenges in enhancing CRP's functioning.



## **Appendix 6: CRP National Conference Report**



## Alaska Citizen Review Panel

### Members

Diwakar K. Vadapalli, Chair  
Dana Hallett, Vice-chair  
Donna M. Aguiniga  
Jen Burkmire  
Margaret McWilliams  
Bettyann Steciw  
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*Alaska Citizen Review Panel evaluates the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child protection agencies for effectiveness in discharging their child protection responsibilities. The Panel is mandated through CAPTA 1997 (P.L. 104-235), and enacted through AS 47.14.205*

## TRIP REPORT

### Observations from the 2015 CRP National Conference

**Dates of the conference:** May 18-20, 2015

**Location of the conference:** Portland, OR

**Attendees:** Diwakar K. Vadapalli (Chair), Dana Hallett (Vice Chair)

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### Purpose of the trip

Alaska CRP has been critically examining its structure and functions for the last two years. Many key components of the Panel's operations are being significantly changed to improve the Panel's relevance and effectiveness. The CRP National Conference was identified as a meaningful resource in this process of critical reflection. The Conference offers an opportunity to learn various methods and means available to the Panels, successes and challenges of other Panels, and various pertinent legislative, regulatory, and legal developments. For several years, Alaska CRP has not attended the conference and felt necessary to reconnect with the resources available at the national level. While it was impossible to be methodical and precise in our observations, we tried to accomplish the following:

- Identify and connect with available national resources
- Examine the work of other Panels from across the nation

This brief report describes our observations and lessons learned. We also note some suggested changes in our operations.

### Brief description of the conference

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) amendments of 1996 required that each state have three Citizen Review Panels, with the exception that the states receiving the minimum allocation under the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention grant program (Title II of CAPTA) have at least one such panel. The Panels were expected to be operational by 1999.

It was recognized early that in order to fulfil their mandate, Panels need support and technical assistance to identify their roles and responsibilities. In the absence of a national network and community of practice, the first annual conference for CRP coordinators and members was held at the University of Kentucky in 2001. The conference has since evolved and is now attended by close to 200 people involved with CRPs in various capacities. The CRP National Conference 2015 was held in Portland, OR from May 18-20, hosted by the Oregon Citizen Review Panels. Most states were represented, and attendees primarily included CRP coordinators, Panel members, and CPS agency staff from across the nation. Sessions included presentations by nationally recognized experts and resource persons on broad topics (see attached agenda).

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### **Key observations from the conference**

The National conference is a useful resource and should be on Alaska CRP's annual calendar. Many Panels have been regular participants of the conference over the last decade, and their current activities reflect the benefits derived from their continued participation. A network of coordinators, long-time panel members, CPS staff, and other interested professionals has developed over the years. These individuals form a community of practice, identifying and resolving several challenges facing CRPs. Alaska CRP can both learn and benefit from this network, and also contribute to the discussion.

Participation in the conference is very diverse. Some Panels are represented by their coordinator and at least one Panel member. Many Panels were represented by either just the Panel member(s) or just their coordinator. Each Panel seem to have their own method of identifying who may attend the conference and the specific purpose of their attendance. There were CPS staff from several states.

Location of the conference varies each year, allowing participants to know the local CRP activities. Most presenters at the conference were from Oregon. There was an extended discussion on how Oregon Panels are organized, how they perform their work, and how they interact with their CPS system. It was instructive to note the differences and similarities with the Alaska CRP.

### **What we learned about other Panels**

Panels across the nation are organized in very different ways. While Alaska has always had one Panel, and appoints its own members, many states have multiple panels and appointment structure varies. Many states have three panels, the minimum number required by CAPTA for states receiving more than the minimum allocation under Title II of CAPTA. States with county-administered CPS often have regional panels covering multiple counties. Panels in some states are appointed by either the Governor's office or individual legislators. Some state's CRP coordinators are staff from the state or local CPS. Some Panels are coordinated by staff of a local university.

Panel's relationships with their state or local CPS varies. Unlike Alaska's panel where members are selected and appointed by the panel, members of panels in some states are appointed by the governor's office or individual state legislators. While appointments and patterns of staffing determined by an external authority ensures representation and full membership, panels often find themselves subject to political influences of these external authorities. Consequently, panels vary greatly in their relationship with CPS agencies and their legislatures. Few panels have a working relationship with their state legislature. Many participants admired Alaska CRP's appointment structure, and its independence, and our continued constructive relationship with both the OCS and the legislature.

Individual presentations were informative. Several nationally recognized experts spoke on a variety of issues. Topics included CPS system; legal developments in child protection; importance of diversity; CRP's role; evaluation of CRPs; importance of CFSR and the need for CRPs to be involved; connections between CRPs, CIP, CJA taskforce, and foster care reviews; relationships with CPS (agenda attached).

Structure and functions of the panels vary. The Conference offers an opportunity to learn various methods and means available to the Panels, as well as successes and challenges of other Panels.



Preliminary assessment of mandated, structural, and functional components Alaska CRP in comparison to other CRPs in the nation

Component	Other states				Alaska
	None	Few	Many	All	
<b>Mandated - Review/Evaluate</b>					
<i>Conducts system-wide annual evaluation</i>	X				
<i>Reviews child deaths or near deaths from maltreatment</i>		X			
<u><i>Identifies and utilizes following data sources:</i></u>					
<i>Surveys</i>			X		X
<i>Interviews</i>			X		X
<i>Focus group discussions</i>		X			X
<i>CPS agency</i>			X		X
<i>Case reviews</i>		X			
<b>Mandated - Public Outreach</b>					
<i>Presenting to the legislature</i>		X			X
<i>Communicating with the media</i>			X		X
<i>Maintaining an active website with regular updates</i>		X			X
<i>Conducting open meetings with public participation</i>			X		X
<i>Publishes an annual report</i>				X	X
<i>MOA with CPS agency</i>		X			
<u><i>Regular communication/meetings with the following:</i></u>					
<i>CPS agency</i>			X		X
<i>Parents of children being served by CPS agency</i>		X			
<i>Children being served by CPS agency</i>		X			
<i>CPS Partner agencies</i>		X			X
<b>Structure and functioning</b>					
<i>Operating guidelines/bylaws/policies are in place</i>			X		X
<i>Regular meetings are held</i>			X		X
<i>Diversity in panel membership is a goal</i>			X		X
<i>Annual workplan</i>			X		X
<i>Adequately autonomous</i>		X			X
<i>Active membership</i>			X		X

While it is widely recognized that CRPs serve an important function, panels across the nation seem to vary greatly on their perceptions of their central purpose. A framework to guide the panels in establishing their internal structure and functions, and their role and responsibilities was proposed very early in the history of the Conference. While many panels perform many of these functions, we did not have an opportunity to assess this for each panel. Table above provides a crude assessment of how Alaska's panel compares to others.



Funding and membership structure vary. Levels of annual funding for individual panels vary, and are a mixture of direct funding and staff time. Many panels are staffed by their state CPS personnel, while few other panels have no staff support. Some panels operate with little to no funding, severely affecting their abilities to perform any functions.

Panels across the nation struggle with recruitment and retention of members. Volunteer engagement and management is intensive work and requires dedicated staff time. It is one of the more challenging responsibilities of panel coordinators.

### **Need for self-evaluation**

Alaska's CRP is well ahead on many components listed in the table above. However, the Panel's effectiveness was never evaluated. Gray colored boxes in the table above identify areas that the Panel currently recognizes as needing improvement. A more systematic evaluation of the Panel's work and its effectiveness is necessary.

### **Conclusion**

Alaska's CRP is one of the most active panels in the nation. The Panel enjoys healthy independence and support from OCS, and has a constructive relationship with the legislature. While there are several areas for improvement, Alaska CRP has a lot to offer other CRPs. CRPs are relatively new and very little oversight is provided from any authority. While technical assistance is available from the Children's Bureau, it seems minimal. Essentially,

CRPs are left to fend for themselves and the National Conference grew out of the need to fill this gap in oversight and assistance. Panels exchange important tools and techniques, challenges and opportunities, and latest developments in legislative and legal developments. It is important that Alaska CRP is represented at the national conference every year.

### **The little panel that could...**

Among the best sessions at the conference was a presentation by South Carolina Citizen Review Panel on their work reviewing the case of a child fatality.

Reviewing CPS cases with fatalities or near fatalities is one of the suggested responsibilities of a CRP. South Carolina has three panels, but had not reviewed child fatality cases. Summer of 2012 was particularly hard in the state with several child deaths resulting from child abuse and neglect, several of them preventable. A particularly painful death of a four-year old boy who was returned to his father despite high concerns for the boy's safety made the news. The boy died of severe physical injuries. Before his death, the case bounced between the state CPS and a community non-profit agency that provided services to low-risk cases as part of the state's differential response system. The Panel's subcommittee conducted an extensive review of the entire case file, interviewed several staff and supervisors of various agencies involved in the case, reviewed the state's differential response system, and recommended several changes to practice.

The journey from never reviewing a case to thoroughly reviewing a very complex case and associated policies was very inspiring. The perseverance of the subcommittee members in getting the required case files and statistics is illustrative of the challenges CRPs face in establishing their legitimacy and purpose vis-à-vis the state's child protection system. Their pride in their success is reflected in the title of their presentation, "The Little Panel That Could..."



**People, Programs & Performance:  
Piecing Together Successful Citizen Review Panel**  
**DRAFT AGENDA**



2015 National Citizen Review Panel Conference  
May 18-20, 2015

**Monday, May 18, 2015**

11:30 am – 5:00 pm	Registration
1:00 pm – 1:30 pm	<b>Welcome and Announcements</b> The Honorable Thomas Balmer, Chief Justice, Oregon Supreme Court
1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	<b>Taking ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences Study) to Scale – A Move from Program Thinking to System Change</b> Susan Dreyfus, President & CEO, Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
3:00 pm – 3:30 pm	Informal Networking
3:30pm – 4:45pm	<b>Increasing Diversity in Public Processes</b> Emmett Wheatfall, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Director, Clackamas County Oregon
5:30 pm – 8:30 pm	<b>Portland Spirit Dinner Cruise</b>

**Tuesday, May 19, 2015**

7:30 am	<b>Breakfast Buffet and Registration</b>		
8:00 am – 8:15 am	<b>Announcements</b>		
8:15 am – 8:45 am	<b>Welcome</b> Lois Day, Child Welfare Director, Department of Human Services		
8:45 am – 10:00 am	<b>Youth Panel</b> Facilitated by Darin Mancuso, Foster Care Ombudsman, Governor's Advocacy Office		
10:00 am – 10:30 am	Informal Networking		
	<b>PEOPLE</b>	<b>PROGRAMS</b>	<b>PERFORMANCE</b>
10:30 am – 11:45 am	<b>Believing the Change is Always Possible – Parent Mentor Panel</b> Facilitated by Ruth Taylor, Director, Parent Mentor Program, Morrison Child & Family Services	<b>Trauma Informed Child Welfare Practices</b> Mandy Davis, Senior Research Assistant, Portland State University	<b>File Reviews, Surveys, and Focus Groups: How to Gather Information to Inform Your CRP</b> Conor Wall, Data Analyst, Juvenile Court Improvement Program, Oregon Judicial Department.
11:45 am – 1:15 pm	<b>Lunch &amp; Plenary - Engaging the Courts in Child Welfare Efforts,</b> The Honorable Nan Waller, Presiding Judge, Multnomah County Circuit Court		
1:30 pm – 2:45 pm	<b>You Can't See What You Don't Know: Addressing the Revolving Door in Foster Homes when Children in Care have Developmental and Mental Health Needs</b> Donnie Winokur, Executive Director, FASDempowered	<b>Oregon's Trail to the Foster Children's Bill of Rights</b> Darin Mancuso, Foster Care Ombudsman, Governor's Advocacy Office	<b>Using Concept Mapping as a Planning and Evaluation Tool for Citizen Review Panels</b> J. Jay Miller, Chair Jefferson County CRP & Blake Jones, Program Coordinator, Kentucky CRP
2:45 pm – 3:15 pm	Informal Networking		
3:15 pm – 4:30 pm	<b>Native American Culture and Historical Trauma</b> Jillene Joseph, Executive Director, Native Wellness Institute	<b>CRPs Working Toward More Timely Permanency for Children and Youth in Interstate Placements</b> Pennsylvania Northeast CRP	<b>It IS a Matter of Life and Death</b> Child Fatality ACTION Subcommittee South Carolina
4:30 pm – 7:00 pm	<b>Dinner Options Around Portland</b>		

For more information, contact: Amy Church, [amy.m.church@ojd.state.or.us](mailto:amy.m.church@ojd.state.or.us) or 503.986.4535

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2015 National Citizen Review Panel Conference  
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Wednesday, May 20, 2015

7:30 am	<b>Breakfast Buffet</b>
8:00 am – 8:30 am	<b>Welcome and Announcements</b>
8:30 am – 9:15 am	<b>Federal Updates</b> Howard Davidson, Director, ABA Center for Children and the Law
9:15 am – 10:00 am	<b>The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Process - How to Engage CRPs in CFSR efforts</b> Tina Naugler, Child Welfare Program Manager, Children's Bureau, Region 10
10:00 am – 10:15 am	<b>Break</b>
10:15 am – 11:30 am	<b>World Cafe</b>
11:30 pm – 1:00 pm	<b>Lunch &amp; Plenary</b> <b>If Not You, Who? Never Settle - Never Stop!</b> Nancy Miller Systems are institutions. People can become institutionalized. Have you? This presentation will challenge your assumptions and help you find ways to keep the passion alive, never settling for anything less than safety, permanency, and well-being for every child in foster care!
1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	<b>Closing Plenary – Putting The Pieces Together</b> Leola McKenzie, Director of Juvenile & Family Court Programs Division Oregon Judicial Department

## Conference Scholarship Opportunity

The National Citizen Review Panel Advisory Board is pleased to offer a limited number of scholarships to attend the 2015 National Citizen Review Panel conference in Portland, Oregon, May 18-20, 2015.

Proceeds from the silent auction held at the previous conference are used to support these conference scholarships. The \$275.00 scholarship covers registration costs only. Applicants will be responsible for paying their own travel, hotel and meals (not provided at the conference).

You will be notified of the Advisory Board's decision by March 6, 2015. If you are selected, a check for your registration fee will be sent directly to the organizers of the conference.

### Scholarship Application Process:

Please email your request for scholarship consideration to Blake Jones **via email** ([Bljone00@uky.edu](mailto:Bljone00@uky.edu)). Include the following information:

1. Name
2. State you represent
3. Contact information (phone, email, address)
4. Citizen Review Panel you represent, and your role
5. Have you ever attended a National CRP conference and, if so, when?
6. How would attending this conference help you in your work as a CRP member or coordinator?

**Scholarship Application Deadline: February 27, 2015**

For more information, contact: Amy Church, [amy.m.church@oid.state.or.us](mailto:amy.m.church@oid.state.or.us) or 503.986.4535



## **Appendix 7: OCS Statewide Recruitment and Retention Plan**



## SFY 14 Statewide Recruitment and Retention of Resource Families (updated April 2014)

ACTIVITY	Start	Finish	Percent Complete	Staff Responsible	Comments/Notes
<b>1 Support to the Regional and Field Offices</b>					
Regional R&R plans will be received, reviewed.	June	July	100%	CCLS III's and SSPO	All regional recruitment and retention plans and budgets reviewed & to State Office on 7/24/13.
Regional R&R budgets will be received, reviewed, and requested through State Office	June	July	100%	CCLS III's and SSPO	Regional Budgets (food and non-food) approved on August 14, 2013
Documents or protocols will be established to track the effectiveness of R&R efforts.	8/15/2013		20%	CCLS III's and SSPO	Meeting with ORCA Project Staff to discuss how to best utilize existing template in ORCA for R/R or change to meet needs during upcoming build. SERO Licensing currently entering R/R events in ORCA as pilot.
<b>2 Statewide Efforts for R&amp;R</b>					
Develop slogan	8/15/2013	11/1/2013	100%	NRO CCLS III	Slogan Chose: Make a difference, one child at a time.
Tangible items	8/15/2013	1/15/2014	100%	NRO CCLS III	Tangibles chosen for Fiscal Year 14: Ice scrapers, tote bags, key-chain lights and pens. Items purchased from Stellar Designs and distributed to all Regional Offices March 2014.
Recruit for Medical homes through collaboration with AK medical facilities	8/15/2013		50%	CCLS III & CCLS II	Presentations by CCLS at local clinics to include: Tanana Valley Clinic and Mat-Su Medical Center. Recruitment tables held at Willow Health Fair and Talkeetna Health Fair. SERO and ARO approached local hospitals to complete on-site Orientation; not allowed to present to staff on site.

ACTIVITY		Start	Finish	Percent Complete	Staff Responsible	Comments/Notes
	Work with regional staff to explore identification of homes who can serve larger sibling groups.	6/1/2013		20%	CCLS III & CCLS II	Quarterly Meetings being established with Foster Care Manager and Regional Management staff to identify areas of need for foster care.
	Recruit for Native Alaskan homes through collaboration with AK tribal organizations and corporations	6/1/2013		40%	CCLS III & CCLS II	During fiscal year 14, OCS collaborated with tribal partners to host provider conferences in both Bethel and Kotzebue. NRO Recruitment event held in conjunction with Tanana Chiefs at Spring 2014 Conference hosted by TCC.
	Emergency Shelter Foster Home recruitment in each regional hub.	6/1/2013		25%	CCLS III & CCLS II	Emergency Shelter Care Workshop Agenda developed and implemented in ARO, SCRO, NRO, WRO. NRO signed contracts with two resource families to provide Emergency Shelter Care.
	Assist staff in inclusion of adoption staff for R&R efforts	6/1/2013		75%	CCLS III & CCLS II, Regional Adoption Specialist and Adoption SSPC	Regional Recruitment and Retention Teams met during June 2013 to develop R/R plans and budgets. Regional Adoption Specialists participated in planning and budgetary process. On March 2014, Yurii presented a training on R/R to Statewide Regional Adoption Specialists.
	Identify new and innovative recruitment strategies.	6/1/2013		80%	CCLS III & CCLS II	Newly implemented recruitment and retention strategies included: Super Hero theme on flyers, brochures, pizza boxes, bookmarks. Informational flyers in employee paystubs at local businesses. Announcements at local sporting events such as hockey games and local running races.
<b>3</b>	<b>Foster Wear Program</b>					
	Recognize current providers	9/1/2013	11/1/2013	100%	Yurii	Thank you letters mailed to all current FosterWear Vendors. Letter are signed by OCS Director. Certificates of Appreciation mailed to all vendors.
	Recruit new providers	9/1/2013		75%	Yurii	Three new vendors were approved this year to include: Beaver Sports in Fairbanks, The Fox Hole in Ketchikan and the return of JCPenney in Anchorage.
	Inform families, staff, and partners of the program	9/1/2013		75%	Yurii	Updates provided in Frontline and Pipeline articles as well as presentations made at regional all staff meetings. OCS and ACRF Websites updated with new vendors.

ACTIVITY	Start	Finish	Percent Complete	Staff Responsible	Comments/Notes
4 <b>Resource Family Advisory Board</b>					
Ensure OCS participation on board	9/1/2013		75%	SSPO	During this fiscal year the following OCS staff participated in monthly RFAB meetings and one face to face meeting: KariLee Pietz, Yurii Miller, Susan Frisby and Alana Ballam-Schwan.
Plan annual face to face meeting	9/1/2013	3/25/2014	100%	Board / SSPO and CCLS III	Face to face meeting held in ANC on 3/25/14. Next face to face meeting tentatively scheduled for October 27-29, 2014.