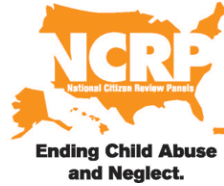


The Power of Community



# ALASKA CRP'S EVOLVING MECHANICS OF A PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION APPROACH

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**“Building Expertise from Experience” (BEE) Webinar Series**

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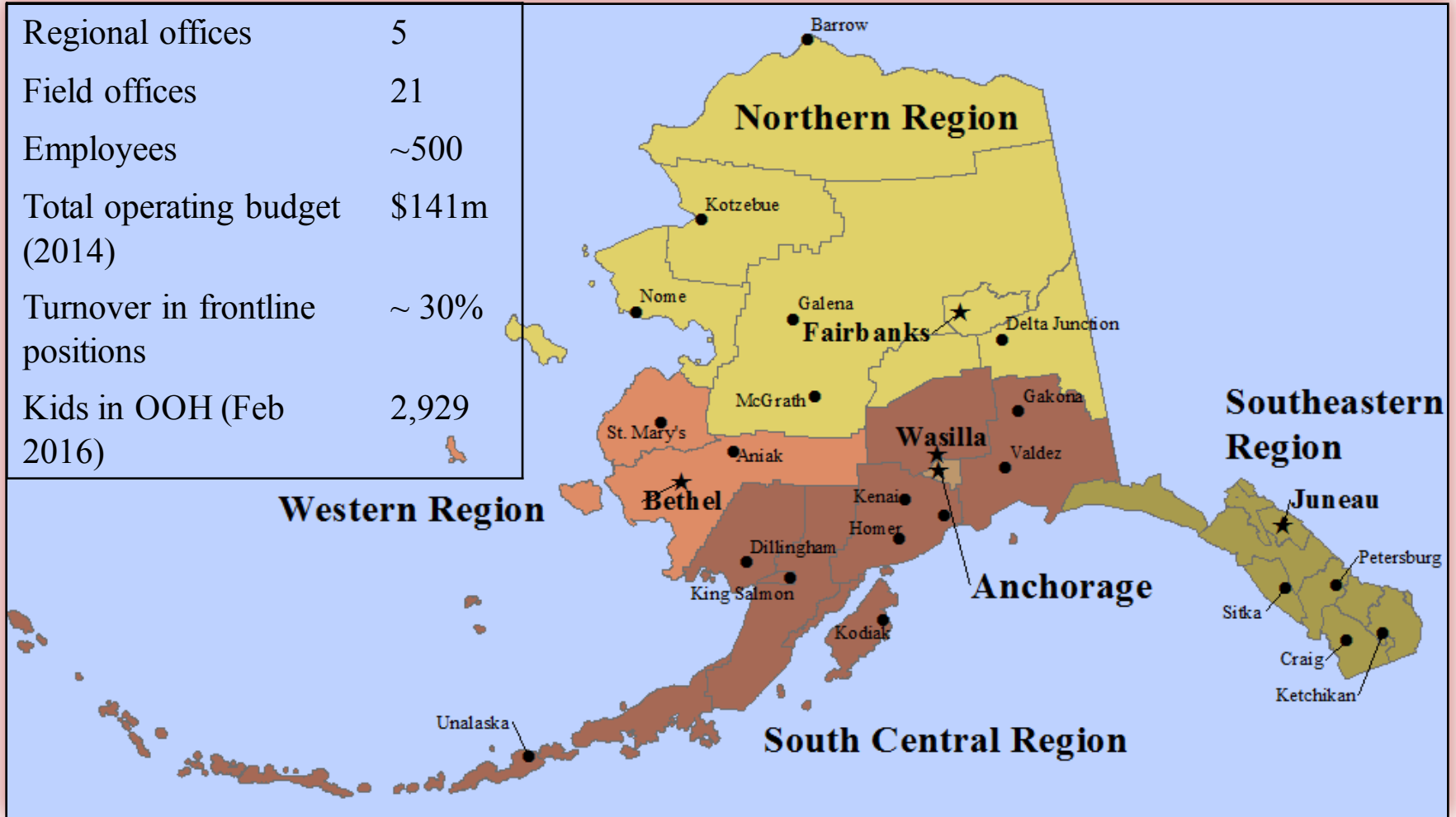
# PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Structure of Alaska CRP
- Functions of Alaska CRP
- Foundation, Methods, and Means
- Principles of Participatory Evaluation
- Lessons learned from experience



# STRUCTURE - CPS OFFICES

Regional offices	5
Field offices	21
Employees	~500
Total operating budget (2014)	\$141m
Turnover in frontline positions	~ 30%
Kids in OOH (Feb 2016)	2,929





# STRUCTURE - BRIEF HISTORY

- One functioning panel since 2002
- Increased resources
  - (little over \$50,000 to \$100,000 per year over the last 12 years)
- Increased autonomy
  - Staff support was from within CPS; an independent contractor since 2005



# STRUCTURE – ORGANIZATION AND CALENDAR

- Alaska CRP operates under a set of “operational guidelines” adopted in January 2015.
- Has 8 members – but no limit – from diverse professional and personal backgrounds.
  - Chair and Vice Chair are elected by members. No term limits.
- Functions from August through June
  - Annual report is due by June 30<sup>th</sup>
  - CPS response is due by December 31<sup>st</sup>
  - Four quarterly public meetings, and monthly meeting with CPS leadership



# FUNCTIONS - MANDATES

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

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

## State Mandate (AS 47.14.205):

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



# FUNCTIONS - 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



# FUNCTIONS – WHAT WE DO NOT DO

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





# FUNCTIONS – WHAT WE DO

- Any component of the practice model
- Institutional practices
- Practice behaviors

All review and evaluation is from a citizen's perspective.

Bottom line for CRP: How responsive is CPS to our community's needs?



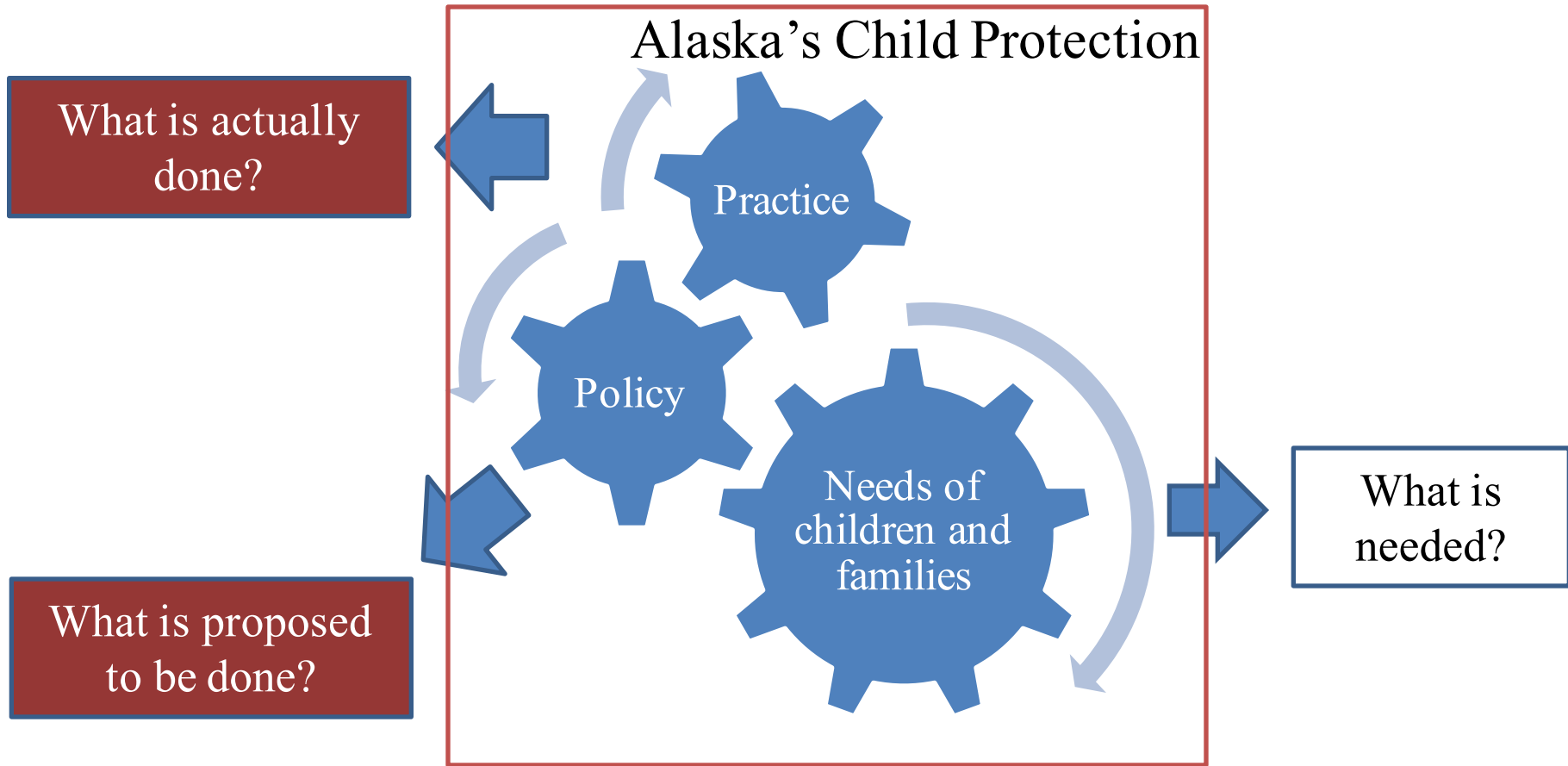
# FUNCTIONS - RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel produces an *annual report* every June, with specific recommendations:

- That address policy-practice gaps, inadequate policy, or systemic issues
- That deal with issues within CPS control
- That are based on meaningful and real information
- That are based on the Panel's work through the year



# FOUNDATIONS



CRP tries to know the answers to these *questions*.



# FOUNDATIONS

- Alaska CRP operates under four primary principles:
  - Public participation
  - Constructively critical perspective
  - Transparency and Predictability
  - A network approach to relationships



# METHODS AND MEANS

- Annual work plan with goals (prepared in august/September)
- CRP pursues these goals through:
  - Site visits
  - Data collection through surveys
  - Data collection and compilation from various agencies
  - Research
- Deliberates and conducts business through quarterly meetings, and two annual retreats.
- Release an annual report (released on June 30)



# PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

- Driven by community or stakeholders
- Outcome measures are determined by community
- Community is responsible for data collection and analysis
- The focus is on service provision and its impact
- There is potential for conflict with so many stakeholders involved
- Benefits the community by increasing knowledge, building skills, encouraging partnerships and participation



# PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION – CRP ROLE

- CRP is the evaluator
  - Sets the stage
  - Identifies and invites participants
  - Provides venues for input
  - Facilitates public discourse
  - Negotiates between differing perspectives
  - Is a “critical friend” of all parties
  - Provides the resources through volunteer time and effort to conduct the evaluation
  - Coaches various stakeholders in understanding the challenges



# LESSONS LEARNED

- Alaska CRP used to be a small group of committed individuals dissatisfied with the status quo.
- We transformed into a professional group that
  - Conducts evaluation
  - Facilitates public discourse
  - Brokers consensus
  - Informs public
  - Produces actionable information





# LESSONS LEARNED

- Along the way, we learned to
  - Position CRP as a mechanism for public participation
  - Improve CRP's legitimacy as a community tool
  - Improve CRP's visibility through extensive communication
  - Improve CRP's credibility by sticking to real information and data instead of anecdotal and speculative information
  - Improve CRP's transparency and predictability by following a schedule
  - Improve CRP's overall utility by cultivating a critical but constructive perspective



# WAY FORWARD

- Participatory evaluation tools
  - We have some work in developing structured tools for enhanced participation
  - We need better strategies to improve the panel's capacity
  - We need recognition from the Children's Bureau to be a legitimate partner in processes like CFSR
  - We need more technical expertise to conduct the research and analysis necessary for meaningful products



# WAY FORWARD

CRPs need a theoretical basis for their existence and work, to better define their roles, and to meaningfully contribute to child protection enterprise.

Participatory evaluation seems to be a natural fit.

Alaska CRP's natural evolution over the years has certainly gravitated in that direction.

# THANK YOU!



For more information

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