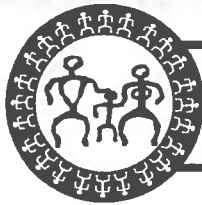


DEC 28 2015



## NĀ KUPA ALO ANA O HAWAI'I

December 21, 2015

Ms. Kayle Perez  
Child Welfare Services Branch Administrator  
810 Richards Street, Suite 400  
Honolulu, Hi 96813

Dear Ms. Perez,

Enclosed you will find *Nā Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai'i Citizen's Review Panel's Annual Report 2015*. The Panel has had a productive year, as you will see in our report. We truly appreciate the support that the Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Services, has provided this year to our State CRP, and we look forward to our continued partnership.

If you have any questions for *Nā Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai'i*, please feel free to contact me at 984-3240. Thank you, again.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Perry  
*Nā Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai'i*  
Statewide Citizen Review Panel

---

2015 Annual Report  
State of Hawai`i

Nā Kupa Alo Ana  
O Hawai`i  
December 16, 2015



**NĀ KUPA ALO ANA O HAWAI'I**

*Aloha e*

*Since its inception, four and one-half years ago, Nā Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai`i Citizen Review Panel has worked collaboratively with Hawaii Child Welfare Services on achieving its goals on behalf of Hawai`i's abused and neglected children.*

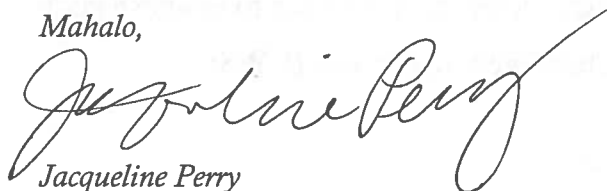
*The Panel, once again, would like to thank Tracy Yadao, Assistant Program Administrator, Program Development, Child Welfare Services' Citizen Review Panel liaison. Her responsibilities include meeting with our panel monthly to share information regarding Hawai`i's child welfare system and to respond to issues and discuss recommendations. Without her efforts, Nā Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai`i would not be able to accomplish its goals.*

*We would also like to thank Kori Nakamura, Secretary to Program Development, Child Welfare Services, who diligently takes minutes during our citizen review panel meetings and coordinates our travel so that the Panel can be effective in addressing issues and achieving goals.*

*Mahalo to Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Center (QLCC) for graciously providing us with delicious lunches and a beautiful meeting room when Nā Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai`i conducts face-to-face meetings on O`ahu.*

*Finally, we would like to thank Blake Jones, Program Coordinator of Citizens Review Panels, College of Social Work, University of Kentucky, for his continuing guidance and support of Nā Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai`i.*

*Mahalo,*



*Jacqueline Perry*

*Nā Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai`i*

### *Who We Are*

Hawai`i's Citizen's Review Panel (CRP) is comprised of citizen volunteers, as mandated by the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). Our mission is to examine the policies, procedures, and practices of Hawai`i's child welfare services system to evaluate agency practice and to enhance the agency's capacity to help Hawai`i's children and families engaged in child welfare services achieve positive outcomes.

Nā Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai`i is comprised of citizens who represent their organization and have knowledge about children from their respective islands. Representatives are committed to meeting the needs of children. Together, we make recommendations to the child welfare system on making improvements to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children and families in our community.

### *Participation in Monthly Meetings*

Nā Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai`i members, representative from each county, have met monthly either through face-to-face visits on O`ahu or through telephone conference to establish goals and discuss projects and issues related to Hawaii Child Welfare Services (CWS).

## *Nā Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai'i*

Stephen Morse, Blueprint for Change, O'ahu, Chairperson

Maylyn Tallett, Department of Health, Hilo, Vice Chairperson

Judy Adviento, Family Programs Hawaii, O'ahu

Jeny Bissell, Department of Health, Maui

Jacque Kelley-Uyeoka, Hale Kipa, O'ahu

Monica Ka'auwai, Partners in Development, Kaua'i

Sharie Liden, Department of Education, Lana'i

Jacqueline Perry, Hawaii Child Welfare Continuous Quality Improvement Project, Maui

Ruthann Quitiquit, Citizen, O'ahu

Dawn Slaten, Attorney, O'ahu

Jay Yukumoto, Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Center, O'ahu



### *Summary of Panel Activities*

#### *Recruitment*

This year, Nā Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai'i added Jacque Kelly-Uyeoka and Judy Adviento to the Panel. We continue our efforts to enhance our CRP by promoting the goal of having a diverse membership.

#### *Participation in 2015 National Citizen Review Panel Conference—Portland, Oregon*



#### *Monica Ka'auwai and Maylyn Tallett (with Blake Jones, National President) in Oregon*

*Two members of Nā Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai'i, Monica Ka'auwai and Maylyn Tallett, attended the 2015 National Citizen Review Panel Conference in Portland, Oregon on May 18-20, 2015. The theme of the conference was *People, Programs & Performance: Piecing Together Successful Citizen Review Panels*. They participated in group sessions and workshops. One interesting workshop was called *The Child and Family Services Review Process—How to Engage CRPs in CFSR efforts*. Members were updated on Federal child welfare laws and were able to network with other States' CRP members.*

*Hawaii Child Welfare Services Reporting Line Public Survey—2014/2015 Project*



*Dawn Slaten and Jay Yukumoto at SMS Research*

In response to community concerns about Hawai'i Child Welfare Services centralized intake hotline, Nā Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai'i created a consumer satisfaction survey. A project created by the Panel this year is an evaluation of Hawai'i's CWS intake of reports of child abuse or neglect, from the caller's perspective. Nā Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai'i worked with SMS Research to survey two mandated reporter groups—the Department of Education and the National Association of Social Workers, Hawai'i. SMS administered the survey in October, by sending out an email link to those groups of mandated reports. The survey was

generated after callers completed a report to the hotline. Responses were analyzed by SMS Research and overall results are shared as a separate document in this Annual Report (see appendix 1). The purpose of the survey and post-study is to provide a means for callers who report child abuse and neglect to the CWI hotline, have a voice in sharing their experiences in utilizing the hotline and to provide ongoing information to CWS to improve the centralized intake system.

### *Recommendations CWI Intake Project*

Overall, callers to the Child Welfare Intake Center were positive about their experience. However, there are some concerns and recommendations that the Panel would like to convey to CWS with regard to CWI Intake Project results:

- ❖ Callers surveyed were asked, ‘Did you give or were asked about the following types of information?’ For the topic of Domestic Violence, the results showed that 56% of callers surveyed were not asked about whether domestic violence was a concern in the subject of the report call (see p. 9 of the *CWI Reporting Line Report*). The Panel recommends CWI staff be trained (or re-trained) to inquire of the caller whether domestic violence is involved in the child neglect or abuse report, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children.
- ❖ The open-ended questions that were answered by respondents provided insight on areas that may need to be addressed by CWS. Coded was a response that received 20% response rate, and that response related to callers wanting to see a ‘consistent protocol for addressing reports—protocol is unclear or seems to vary by staff person’ (see p. 7 of the *CWI Reporting Line Report*). The open-ended comments support the concern that there are inconsistencies in how calls are being handled because different CWI staff members responded to similar reports in different ways. Some respondents reported that they wait for certain CWI staff members to come on duty before calling in their reports because they feel their report call will be addressed appropriately. The Panel would like to recommend that CWS address this concern with training (or re-training) with CWI staff with regard to intake protocol.
- ❖ While overall respondents agreed that the service factors for the reporting line were positive (see p. 6 of the *CWI Reporting Line Report*), one of the lowest levels of agreement, was that ‘staff was polite.’ Along the same lines of response, and one with a significant



response rate of 15% (see p. 7 of the *CWI Reporting Line Report*), was that 'staff was rude or inconsiderate.' The Panel would like to recommend that CWS address this concern with training (or re-training) with CWI staff on how to respond to callers appropriately (*with Aloha*), and perhaps training (or-retraining) on 'how to handle difficult customers.' It is important that callers feel respected and supported, so that they feel comfortable making a report of child neglect or abuse.

### *Caseworker Visits with Children Project*



### *Jacqueline Perry, Maylyn Tallett, and Jay Yukumoto at UH Maui College*

Another project created by Nā Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai'i was designed to capture strengths and barriers to quality monthly caseworker visits with children. The Project started in August 2014, the start of the Hawaii Child Welfare Continuous Quality Improvement Project (HCWCQI) case reviews calendar, and ended in May 2015. For seven of the CWS sections in Hawai'i, members of the Panel in this group project conducted a caseworker focus group with workers whose cases had been selected by HCWCQI for case review. On the Friday, at the end of each CWS section's review, a facilitator on the Panel lead

caseworkers in a discussion regarding support and systemic improvements that can be made in order for caseworkers to be able to conduct quality visits with the children in their cases. Seven CWS sections have been reviewed, and about 30 caseworkers participated in engaging and informative discussions regarding strategies for improvement. The Panel members from this project share the results of their research and recommendations with the CWS Branch in a separate document as part of this Annual Report (see appendix 2).

### *Engaging Fathers Project*

*Engaging Fathers Project* has two goals. The first one is to analyze if after the *Engaging Fathers* training by the agency, CWS caseworkers have been successful in locating and identifying fathers in their cases. The second goal is to analyze whether caseworkers have been successful in engaging fathers in their cases, after fathers have been located. CRP Panel members in this work group analyzed a random sample of local CFSR case reviews' completed instruments (from July 2014 to present) to gain information needed to draw conclusions regarding strategies and barriers of caseworkers' efforts to engage fathers. With the assistance of the Department of Human Services' liaison to the Panel, the group is in the process of organizing caseworker focus groups to gather more in-depth qualitative information regarding agency efforts to engage fathers in the selected CSFR case reviews. It has also developed an eight-question survey that will be administered to caseworkers via Survey Monkey. Results from this group's work will be shared with the CWS Branch in 2016, when it will be completed.

### *Summary*

Nā Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai'i worked diligently this year to reach some of the Panel's goals and complete the CWI Survey Project and the Caseworker visits with Children Project. The Panel looks forward to continued work with Hawaii Child Welfare Services to address issues and topics of interest and continue to help children and families involved in the child welfare

system have positive outcomes. We appreciate the opportunity the CRP has in continued dialogue with the community and the Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Services Branch. We hope in the upcoming year, 2016, to complete the Engaging Father's Project, and to propose and develop a new project of interest to child welfare, in our efforts to support and enhance Hawai'i's child welfare service agency's capacity to help Hawai'i's children and families achieve positive outcomes.



***Beyond Information. Intelligence.***

*appendix 1*

*Database Marketing*

*Economic & Social Impact  
Studies*

*Research*

*Training*

**SMS**

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Suite 200  
Honolulu, HI 96813  
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**Report on Child Welfare  
Services Reporting Line**

Prepared for: Citizen's Review Panel

November 2014

**SMS Affiliations and Associations:**

Warren Dastrup – Kauai Affiliate  
Experian  
International Survey Research  
Interviewing Service of America  
Solutions Pacific, LLC  
Ka'ala Souza Training  
3i Marketing & Communications  
SMS Consulting LLC

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ❖ To benchmark the level of service provided to callers to the Child Welfare Intake Centers (CWIC), an E-survey was conducted among *mandatory reporters* at the State of Hawaii Department of Education (DOE) as well as social workers in Hawaii. 127 responded to the survey; most were associated with the DOE.
- ❖ Respondents were frequent callers to CWIC, with over 60% calling more than once a year. Because these mandated callers use the hotline regularly to ensure child safety, it's important that callers feel comfortable calling the hotline.
- ❖ Overall, callers to the Child Welfare Intake Centers were positive about their experience, with more than 50% *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with the basic service factors asked about in the survey.
  - However, there should be some concern that 10% to 20% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with some of the statements:
    - The reporting line staff was professional receiving the report. (10% *disagree and strongly disagree*)
    - The questions asked by the reporting line staff were related to the situation being reported. (16% *disagree and strongly disagree*)
    - The reporting line staff was polite. (16% *disagree and strongly disagree*)
    - The reporting line staff was thorough in asking for additional information. (17% *disagree and strongly disagree*)
  - Given that it is often difficult or uncomfortable to report child abuse and neglect, it is essential that callers be made to feel their call is treated with respect and professionalism.
  - The open-ended comments support the concern that there are inconsistencies in how calls are being handled. The most prevalent comment was that there did not seem to be a standard protocol in how reports were addressed because different staff members responded to similar reports in different ways.
- ❖ When respondents were asked if they felt that CWIS had the appropriate information needed to make the *right decision*, 46% of the respondents said they didn't know or were sure CWS didn't have sufficient information.
  - It's possible that respondents are not aware of standard information needed to be gathered with regard to intake, or that there is no standard protocol, or both.

## BACKGROUND

The State of Hawaii Department of Human Services Child Welfare Services (CWS) programs include family strengthening and support, child protection, foster care, adoption, independent living and licensing of resource family homes, group homes and child-placing organizations. Services are available on Oahu, Hawaii, Kauai, Maui, Molokai and Lanai, with 36 units/sub S units and a staff of over 500. The statewide Citizen's Review Panel (CRP) is tasked with monitoring the Child Welfare Services system in the state of Hawaii to improve and maintain quality service to our community. Their focus at this time is the Child Welfare Intake Centers (CWIC) that receives the calls of child abuse and neglect from the public and mandated reporters. This project was designed to evaluate caller satisfaction while at the same time maintaining caller confidentiality.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this project were to:

- ❖ Benchmark caller satisfaction based on their experience when contacting the CWIC; and
- ❖ Identify possible areas for improvement.

## METHODOLOGY

The challenge for this project was to determine the best way to maintain caller confidentiality and at the same time keep within a limited budget. Given these constraints, it was determined that the following was the best approach possible.

The *Source of Report Description 2011 to 2013* provided by CWIC and aggregated by SMS identified those types of organizations that called CWIC by number of calls. As shown in Table 1, the most frequent callers were from the courts, schools, law enforcement and hospitals. As a result, the State of Hawaii Department of Education (DOE) and the National Association of Social Workers Hawai'i Chapter (NASW) were contacted, and they agreed to participate in this project.

The content of survey was provided by the CRP based on similar national studies. SMS made minor adjustments to the instrument and programmed the survey into an electronic version that could be accessed and completed online. A copy of this survey that includes summary results can be seen on page 8. SMS sent an email with a link to this survey to the DOE and the NASW.

The DOE then prepared an email that included a the survey link and sent it to Principals at each of the public schools in State asking for their assistance in completing the survey and forwarding the email to the appropriate people within their school. The NASW prepared an email with a link and forwarded it to NASW members who live in Hawaii.

The survey was launched in August 2014, and as of October 31, 2014, SMS received 127 responses. Assuming that the total number of calls made was 15,838, then the variance due to sample size is +/-8.7% at the 95% confidence level.

The number of responses broken out by self-identified relationship category of the respondent was as follows. The numbers add up to more than 127 because respondents could indicate more than one category of relationship. Based on the date of those who responded to the survey, it is assumed most of the responses were from school-related professionals.

**TABLE 1: CATEGORY OF RELATIONSHIP OF THE RESPONDENT TO THE CHILD FOR THEIR MOST RECENT REPORT**

Category	# of Respondents
School	82
Social Worker	31
Mental Health Professional	16
No Relationship	11
Other	10
Other Professional	5
Law Enforcement	3
Friend	3
Court	2
Other Relative	1
Parent	0

**TABLE 2: SOURCE OF REPORT DESCRIPTION 2011 – 2013 CWIC**

Source of Report Description	Number of Counts	Percentage %
COURT	3190	20.14%
SCHOOL	2593	16.37%
LAW ENFORCEMENT	1547	9.77%
HOSPITAL	1433	9.05%
PUBLIC SOCIAL AGENCY	1076	6.79%
RELATIVE	930	5.87%
ANONYMOUS	731	4.62%
PRIVATE SOCIAL AGENCY	694	4.38%
OTHER	686	4.33%
PARENT	612	3.86%
NOT SPECIFIED	610	3.85%
NEIGHBOR	578	3.65%
PSYCHOLOGIST/THERAPIST	399	2.52%
PRIVATE PHYSICIAN	310	1.96%
FRIEND	187	1.18%
DAY CARE PROVIDER	68	0.43%
NURSE	61	0.39%
CORONER (MEDICAL EXAMINER)	51	0.32%
VICTIM	32	0.20%
SIBLING	15	0.09%
DENTIST	13	0.08%
PRESENT CARETAKER OTHER THAN PARENT	11	0.07%
CLERGY	5	0.03%
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH	3	0.02%
FORMER SPOUSE	2	0.01%
FINANCIAL INSTITUTION	1	0.01%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15838</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STUDY

Most respondents contact the Hawaii Child Welfare Services Reporting Line (CWS) between one and 25 times. Note that if a respondent answered *never*, they were terminated from the survey. (Figure 1) On average within a 12-month period, most respondents call two to five times followed by one call. (Figure 2)

FIGURES 1 & 2: FREQUENCY OF CALLS

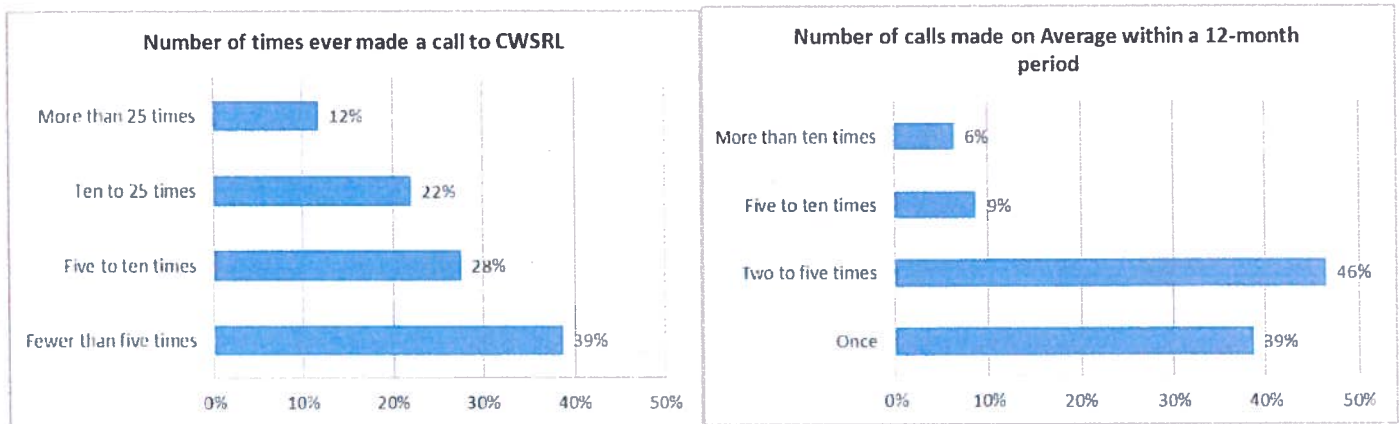
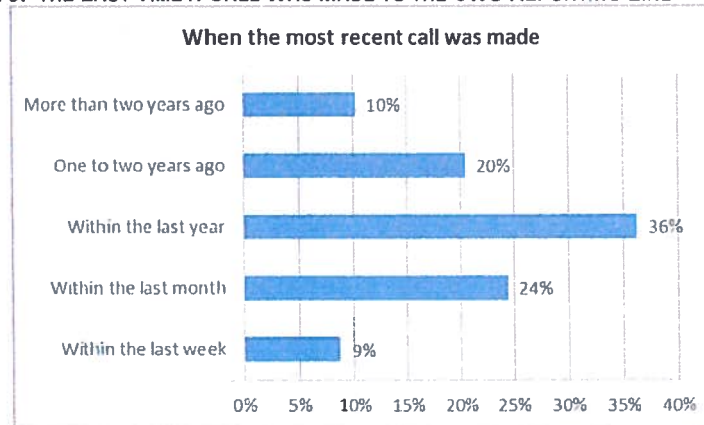


FIGURE 3: THE LAST TIME A CALL WAS MADE TO THE CWS REPORTING LINE

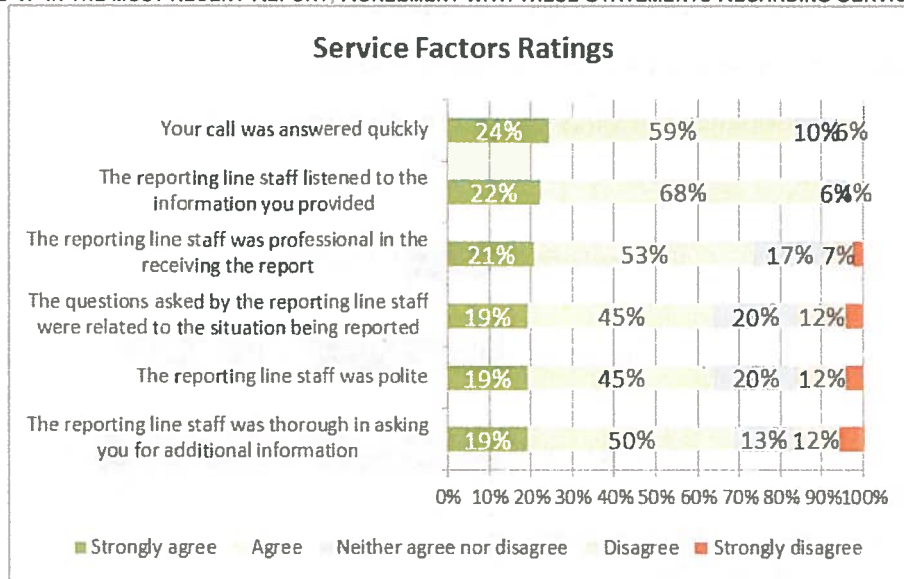


For 69% of respondents, the last call to the CWS was within the last year. (Figure 3) However, for 30% of respondents the last time was over a year ago.



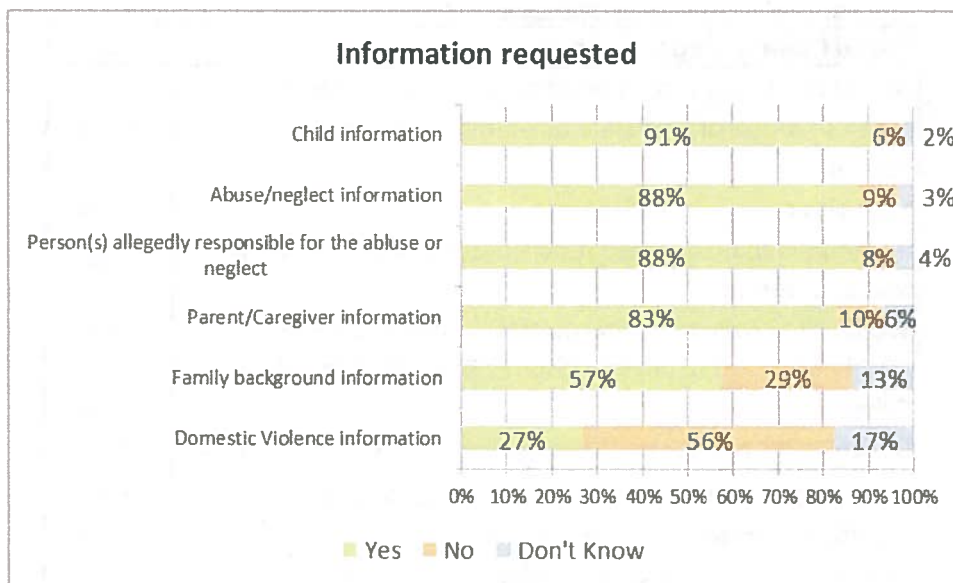
Overall respondents agreed that the service factors for the reporting line were positive. The factors with the strongest level of agreement were: call answered quickly (83% agreement); and staff listened to the information (90% agreement). The lowest levels of agreement were: staff was thorough in asking for additional information (69%) and staff was polite (64%).

FIGURE 4: IN THE MOST RECENT REPORT, AGREEMENT WITH THESE STATEMENTS REGARDING SERVICE FACTORS



As shown in Figure 5, when asked about the type of information that was requested in the last call, respondents answered positively for all categories except for domestic violence information.

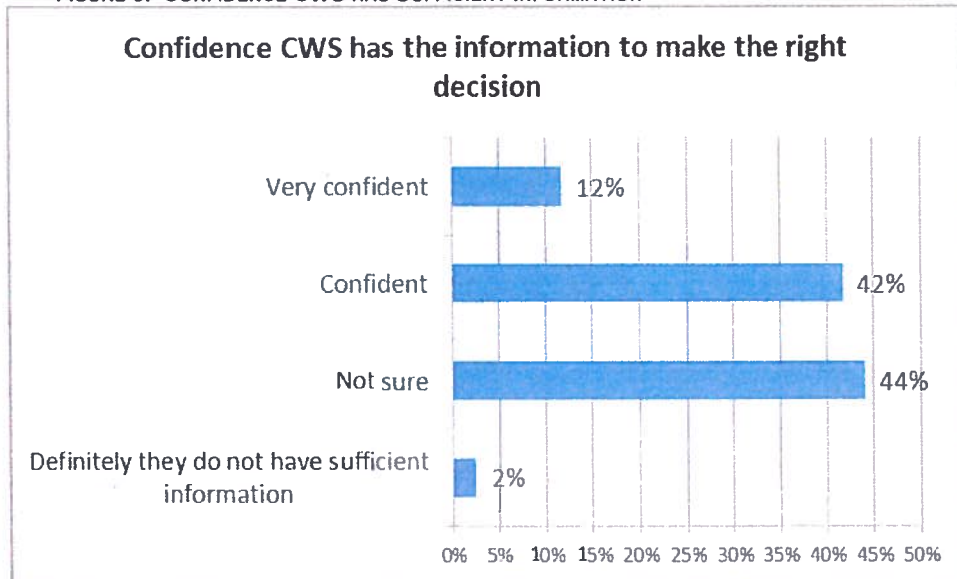
FIGURE 5: IN THE MOST RECENT REPORT, THE TYPE OF INFORMATION THEY WERE ASKED FOR



Ninety-five percent of all respondents usually make their report to whoever answers the reporting line. Only 3% ask to speak to a specific person.

When asked about how confident respondents were that the CWS has the information it needs to make the *right decision*, only 12% responded “very confident” and 42% *confident*. Forty-six percent of respondents were *not sure* or felt that CWS did not have sufficient information.

FIGURE 6: CONFIDENCE CWS HAS SUFFICIENT INFORMATION



The open-ended comments that were provided were grouped by type of comment to provide additional insight on areas respondents believe need to be addressed:

TABLE 3: CODED OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS

Coded Open-ended Comments	%
Would like to see a consistent protocol for addressing reports - protocol is unclear or seems to vary by staff person.	20.6%
Staff was rude or inconsiderate	14.7%
Intake person discounted report being made or didn't want to accept report	11.8%
Would like a way to follow up after a report is made	8.8%
Need more staff to answer phones & respond to callers	8.8%
Other	7.4%
Decentralize call center, have centers on the other islands	5.9%
Have calls answered by more knowledgeable people	4.4%
Insufficient information requested	4.4%
Would like to ensure confidentiality of reporter	4.4%
Would like more timely responses	4.4%
Positive	4.4%

## HAWAII CHILD WELFARE SERVICES REPORTING LINE PUBLIC SURVEY

Aloha, your participation in this confidential survey is very important. The information you provide will be reported in aggregated categories. To ensure confidentiality all responses are being directed to a SMS secure website. The survey will only take a few minutes to complete. Thank you for your time.

[One or two of the following questions will be on a separate screen]

1. How many times have you ever made a call to the Hawaii Child Welfare Services Reporting Line?

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Never                 | [Survey will skip to Q.11] |
| <input type="radio"/> Fewer than Five Times | 38.3%                      |
| <input type="radio"/> Five to Ten Times     | 27.3%                      |
| <input type="radio"/> Ten to 25 Times       | 22.7%                      |
| <input type="radio"/> More than 25 Times    | 11.7%                      |

2. On average within a 12-month period how many calls do you make to the CWS Reporting Line?

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| <input type="radio"/> Once                | 38.3% |
| <input type="radio"/> Two to Five Times   | 46.9% |
| <input type="radio"/> Five to Ten Times   | 8.6%  |
| <input type="radio"/> More than Ten Times | 6.3%  |

3. When was the last time you made a call to the CWS Reporting Line?

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| <input type="radio"/> Within the last week    | 8.6%  |
| <input type="radio"/> Within the last month   | 25.0% |
| <input type="radio"/> Within the last year    | 35.9% |
| <input type="radio"/> One to two years ago    | 20.3% |
| <input type="radio"/> More than two years ago | 10.2% |

4. Thinking about your most recent experience reporting child abuse or neglect, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Please mark one response per line.)

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
a.	Your call was answered quickly	24.2	59.4	10.2	6.3		
b.	The Reporting Line staff listened to the information you provided	22.0	68.5	5.5	3.9		
c.	The Reporting Line staff was professional in receiving the report.	20.5	53.5	16.5	7.1	2.4	
d.	The Reporting Line staff was thorough in asking you for additional information	18.9	50.4	13.4	11.8	4.7	0.8
e.	The Reporting Line staff was polite	19.0	45.2	19.8	11.9	4.0	
f.	The questions asked by the Reporting Line staff were related to the situation being reported.	24.4	59.8	12.6		2.4	0.8

5. In your most recent report, did you give or were you asked for the following types of information? (Please mark one response per line.)

		Yes	No	Don't Know
a.	Family background information	57.8	28.9	13.3
b.	Child information	91.4	6.3	2.3
c.	Parent/Caregiver information	83.6	10.2	6.3
d.	Person(s) allegedly responsible for the abuse or neglect	88.3	7.8	3.9
e.	Abuse/neglect information	88.3	8.6	3.1
f.	Domestic Violence Information	27.3	55.5	17.2

6. Usually the reports you make to the Reporting Line are to... (Please choose just one response below.)

- Whoever answers the Reporting Line 95.3%
- Only to a specific Reporting Line staff member 3.1%
- Only to the Reporting Line supervisor
- Other: (Please specify) 1.6%

7. How confident are you that the CWS Reporting Line staff has the information needed to take the right action(s)? (Please choose just one response below.)

- Very Confident 11.7%
- Confident 42.2%
- Not Sure 43.8%
- Definitely they do not have sufficient information 2.3%

8. Do you have any specific recommendations for change that you would like to see in the CWS centralized intake system?

Just a couple questions for classification purposes:

9. Please indicate the category(s) that best describes the relationship you had with the child(ren) you reported being abused or neglected. (Mark all that apply.)

- |      |                            |                     |
|------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 18.9 | School                     | Parent              |
| 1.6  | Court                      | 0.8 Other Relative  |
| 2.4  | Law Enforcement            | 2.4 Friend          |
| 64.6 | Social Worker              | 8.7 No Relationship |
| 12.6 | Mental Health Professional | 7.9 Other           |
| 3.9  | Other Professional         |                     |

10. Please indicate your position:

38.3 School Administration (Principal/Vice Principal)

20.3 School Counselor

3.1 Teacher

8.6 Behavioral Health Specialist

1.6 School Health Aide

28.1 Other (Please indicate)

Most of these were non-education positions noted in Q9

11. What is your School Zip code?

--	--	--	--	--

12. Mahalo for your time.

# Caseworker Visits with Children: A conversation with CWS workers



**NĀ KUPA ALO ANA O HAWAI'I**

appendix 2

## Caseworker Focus Group Report

Jeny Bissell, Sharie Liden, Jacqueline  
Perry, Maylyn Tallett, and Jay Yukumoto

August 14, 2015





## Introduction

On behalf of *Na Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai'i Citizen Review Panel*, members of the *Caseworker Focus Group Project* invited Hawaii CWS caseworkers to participate in focus groups to address strategies and barriers with regard to efforts in making quality monthly caseworker visits with children involved in child welfare services (as required by Federal standards). The purpose of the *Caseworker Focus Group Project* was to give caseworkers a voice regarding their experiences in their efforts to visit with the children they service, to share information gathered to assist the Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Services, to fulfill the agency's goal to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children and families in our community.

## Summary

The Caseworker Focus Group Project started in August 2014, during the East Oahu CWS Section Case Review. CWS caseworkers, whose cases were selected for the Hawaii CWS Sections Hawaii Child Welfare Continuous Quality Improvement Project Case Reviews for the State Fiscal Year 2014-2015, were invited by letter to participate in a focus group. (All seven (7) CWS Sections, and about 30 workers interviewed for the Project.) On the Friday of the end of the week of each Section's Review, a facilitator of the CRP led each caseworker group in an informal discussion (which lasted about one and one-half hours) regarding supports and systemic improvements that can be made in order for caseworkers to be able to conduct quality monthly visits with the children in their assigned cases. The *Caseworker Focus Group Project* was completed on May 22, 2015, with the East Hawaii CWS Section Case Review.

### Focus Group Questions for CWS Caseworkers

1. What are some effective strategies for making quality monthly visits?

2. What are some barriers to making quality monthly visits?

3. What are recommendations for agency change to ensure quality monthly visits?

## Findings and Representative Quotes

There were, altogether, seven (7) major themes that were revealed during the *Caseworker Focus Group Project* discussions. These major themes, similar responses, came from more than 50% (4+) of the 7 CWS Sections. There were also 18 minor themes, similar responses that came from at least 2 CWS Sections. Themes addressed effective strategies, barriers, and recommendations by CWS caseworkers for agency change to ensure quality monthly caseworker visits with children:

## Q1 Strategies

### Major Themes

#### Theme #1: Positive, Effective Supervision

Across many focus groups (6 of 7 Sections), caseworkers reported the importance of having supportive supervisors as a strategy in completing quality monthly visits with children. Participants discussed the value of supervisors having an 'open-door' policy, to be able to come in and discuss challenges in making visits. Encouraging workers to communicate develops trust and makes caseworkers feel like the supervisor is a team player. Some participants discussed the respect they have for supervisors who are willing to help out and do visits themselves. Praise and acknowledgment of doing a difficult job helps with motivation and job satisfaction. Some caseworkers also said that they appreciated gentle reminders from supervisors to be sure that visits are made frequently and reminders that emphasize the importance of making monthly visits.

*"If I cannot make 100% of visits, I see my supervisor to talk, and she will find a partner or do it herself. My supervisor encourages us to 'come tell me,' 'come talk to me,' because there is a need to establish trust."*

*"Supervisor reminds workers to 'go see the kids' when they are frustrated with the system. It reminds workers why they do this job."*

#### Theme #2: Partner up with with Co-Workers and other Agencies

Several Sections (4 of 7 Sections) spoke about the value of workers performing as a team, and in particular, some participants spoke of workers tag-teaming visits with children, especially in geographical areas where distance is a challenge. The idea of workers from different units helping to 'cover' each other's visits is efficient and effective especially when the unit is short staffed, according to some workers. Also, teaming up with other agencies, contracting them to make some of the monthly visits, has been a 'major help' in keeping to the required monthly visitation schedule. Working with outside resources could be an effective strategy to meeting Federal requirements with regard to caseworker visits with children.

*"Everyone is aware of their responsibilities, but open to helping each other."*

*"The philosophy is one one of being open, having transparency with one another, have to work as a team."*

#### Theme #3: Use Some Means of Tracking Visits

Many caseworkers reported how vital it is to track monthly caseworker visits with children as a means of managing time. Some said that their Section uses a wall chart that has been effective in making certain all children get monthly visits. Other workers said that a daily and monthly calendar planner

helps them organize their time so that they can make visits with children a priority. Three Sections spoke of the strategy of scheduling many visits on their calendars ahead of time in order to plan to see families in the same area at once.

*"Use a form to record monthly face-to-face visits, which helps keep caseworkers in check and on track."*

#### Minor Themes—Strategies:

- Flexible work schedule needed to accommodate schedule of clients
- Have family member, resource caregiver, or aide bring children to the office for visits

#### Q2: Barriers

#### Major Theme

#### Theme #1: Being chronically understaffed

This theme resonated through almost all CWS Sections (6 of 7 Sections). Caseworkers reported that caseloads are too high and there is 'simply not enough time' to see all children monthly. Some participants responded that some cases are very complex, and there are too many responsibilities placed on workers, as they have to play multiple roles. Several Sections talked about inefficient and lengthy hiring practices of the agency, and how difficult it is to retain staff, which places a burden on existing staff and meeting goals. Some workers expressed that they need to work overtime in order to 'get the job done,' but it is hard or 'impossible' to get overtime approved. If someone calls in sick or goes on vacation, it's a hardship to cover that position.

*"There are too many children to see. It's impossible to see all 30 children [for example] if there are only 30 days on the calendar, in addition to court, new intakes, IEPs, other meetings, and trainings. The expectation of seeing all children is not feasible with a high caseload."*

*"Dealing with the overflow of investigation results in untrained permanency and other workers doing investigations. It also results in workers having to 'drop everything' they are doing, visitations, courts reports, in order to conduct the investigations within mandated timelines."*

#### Minor Themes--Barriers:

- Computer/record keeping system is inefficient
- Not enough State cars
- Administration not supportive of workers, so there is a high turnover
- Worker visits sheet not relevant or helpful in making quality visits
- More investigators are needed
- Difficult to see children in the home when children are in school all day
- If a worker is sick, it's difficult to cover another position

### Q3 Recommendations from Caseworkers

#### Major Themes

##### Theme #1: Reduce the number of forms

Some caseworkers (5 of 7 Sections) spoke about their frustration with the amount of forms and tools that were required, which took up a lot of their time. Specifically, it was hoped that the amount of assessment tools could be decreased, and the *Worker Visit Form* could be modified to be useful in the field. Some forms overlap and others are duplicated (such as the *Worker Visit Form* is handwritten and then needs to be entered in a log). A common suggestion was to have forms be streamlined or be on-line. A few workers said that if there is too much focus on paperwork, the result is a loss of face-to-face social work. Several caseworkers said they would be willing to participate in helping to develop new forms and tools.

*"Administrators promised to take away other forms after implementing the CAN form, but to date have not, and have even added forms. I believe that the continual adding of forms set up non-compliance."*

*"Reports generated should be able to interface with other reporting formats."*

##### Theme #2: Need for better communication between agency administrators and caseworkers

The need for more direct communication between administrators and caseworkers was a constant theme from many CWS Sections (4 of 7 Sections). There was a sense that the administration needs to be more in touch with the line workers because they have lost touch. Some caseworkers felt that the administration needs to have more trust in its workers and be able to "hear us." Workers who felt this way said that they needed to feel more appreciated for what they do. Feeling more supported was important.

*"Have Section Administrators come to line staff to do trainings on new projects, rather than training supervisors, who are new to the materials themselves training their individual staff. Supervisors get one training session and are expected to 'run with it.' Section Administrators should get direct feedback from line staff before developing and implementing projects."*

*"Call workers from each unit periodically and come talk to us, see how we're doing."*

*"There needs to be more support for the 'veterans' of the Department."*

*"Give us some solutions, assistance, better understanding, and support. It would be good just hearing from them."*

##### Theme #3: Provide Reliable, Safe Vehicles

Many caseworkers mentioned that not having enough State vehicles was a barrier to providing frequent caseworker visits with children, and even more responded that they would like to recommend that the agency replace old, unsafe State cars (4 of 7 Sections).

"Vehicles need to be safer and healthier for users, especially since we are transporting children and families."

## *Minor Themes—Recommendations by Caseworkers:*

- *Subcontract for caseworker visits*
- *Increase staffing (perhaps renew relationship with UH School of Social Work)*
- *Subcontract for transportation services so workers have more time for visits*
- *Improve hiring procedures by reducing the lag time from hiring to placing on the line*
- *Provide opportunities for workers to attend trainings on Oahu and on the Mainland*
- *Shadowing is more effective than training*
- *Hire qualified workers who are professional*
- *Hire qualified supervisors who are effective, trustworthy leaders*
- *Offer overtime so workers can be flexible in meeting visitation times convenient to parents and resources caregivers*

## **Conclusion**

It's clear from the responses and discussions from caseworkers that many workers are committed to providing monthly quality visits with the children in their cases. They have implemented some strategies that are effective, but they do want to break down the barriers that prevent them from meeting the needs of children by providing them with frequent, quality face-to-face caseworker visits so that they can effectively assess for risk and safety and provide quality services to meet case goals. Furthermore, caseworkers who participated in these focus groups during the 2014-2015 Case Reviews offered many ideas about the changes that they believe would make them more efficient and effective in providing monthly, quality caseworker visits. Many caseworkers said that they are willing to provide input to the administration, to share what strategies are working and what systemic barriers affect monthly quality visitation with children. *A vast majority of the caseworkers interviewed were also willing to sit on committees with administration, to jointly develop solutions and strategies to address the issue of improving quality caseworker visits.*

## **Recommendations**

*Na Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai'i Citizen Review Panel, members of the Caseworker Focus Group Project, respectfully hopes you will consider and be attentive to the recommendations that the members developed with regard to the information gained through the caseworker focus groups.*

- ❖ **Provide Supervisor training to ensure effective leadership.**
- ❖ **Continue to look at the option of contracting service providers to assist CWS Sections that are understaffed in completing monthly caseworker visits with children.**

- ❖ **Create a plan to recruit viable caseworkers to fill vacant positions. It might be prudent to re-establish a relationship with the University of Hawaii School of Social Work to help recruit BSW and MSW graduates, providing incentives to working for Child Welfare Services.**
- ❖ **Assess current forms/tools to evaluate the effectiveness of these forms/tools, especially the use of the *Monthly Worker Visit* form, which was mentioned by many caseworkers as being time consuming and not effective in ensuring caseworker visits are of quality.**
- ❖ **Provide many opportunities and avenues for communicating directly with line staff so that their voices can be heard. Further, consider including caseworkers' ideas and suggestions when creating and implementing forms, tools, and initiatives that affect their work.**
- ❖ **Evaluate the need for more State vehicles to be used for caseworker visits with children. As soon as possible, evaluate present vehicles, ensuring for the health and safety of caseworkers and clients.**

## Acknowledgements

On behalf of the members of the *Caseworker Focus Group Project* of Na Kupa Alo Ana O Hawai'i Citizen Review Panel, we would like to say Mahalo to the Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Services, for their support of the *Caseworker Focus Group Project*, and to especially thank the Administrators of all the Sections who helped to provide conference rooms so that the focus groups could meet and who supported the Project by encouraging workers to participate. Mahalo to all the caseworkers of Hawaii Child Welfare Services for participating in the *Caseworker Focus Group Project* and sharing with us, wholeheartedly, their ideas and feelings regarding their efforts in making visits with children involved in Child Welfare. We are honored to have spent time with these workers, listening and gathering information in order to provide the agency with feedback. It was clear that Hawaii's caseworkers are dedicated to the children they serve. Said one of the caseworkers, "CWS is not a hopeless system—save one child at a time because you can only do what you can do."