

Spotlight On: Office on Child Abuse and Neglect – transcript

Presenter: Catherine Nolan, Director, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, Children's Bureau, Washington, DC

Catherine Nolan: [00:00:13:27] We have many, many responsibilities in OCAN. We manage the Title II of CAPTA, the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention program. We manage the Children's Justice Act. We have a portfolio of about 87 discretionary grants under CAPTA, including three National Resource Centers. In addition, we work very closely with the States in terms of the State Liaison Officers who have responsibility for the basic State grant under CAPTA.

Our office exclusively focuses on prevention and upfront child protective services. And we also really seed the field in terms of advancing the knowledge around what is child maltreatment, what are effective interventions, particularly in the prevention arena. The work that we do with our numerous, numerous prevention grantees. We have a rigorous evaluation of existing prevention programs cluster. We have now in collaboration with HRSA, 17 evidence-based home visiting programs. We have the Tribal migrant CBCAP program. And so I think that just our support of all that work at the local level really helps to inform us in terms of what our future policies need to be but we really use that work that's done at the local level. And the funding that we give to those organizations to really advance the field. We have a huge emphasis on dissemination. What are the lessons learned, how can we inform the next generation of work. We balance the knowledge development and the level of sophistication around our work with what do our constituents need, what does our leadership need, what does the field need, and what are the political realities of the day.

My staff works very hard with their respective grant clusters in terms of not only just, you know, the--helping them to carry out the requirements of the grant but really, this level of sophistication around, you know, what is the substance of the work that they're doing and what are the lessons learned, good or bad. Which then we can disseminate to the field and we ask them, we have a very substantial dissemination requirement now on all of our discretionary grants. And that's the way that we can help move the field along.

We do require each grantee in all of our discretionary grants to have an evaluation component. And we have technical assistance through another contract to help those grantees with that requirement. And really I think that all of those evaluation findings are just so helpful to us and so I think it's not just research but research and evaluation and again, as I say that the rigor of those has really improved over the years. And I think for the grantees, they also are very engaged in the whole research and evaluation process.

When I think about collaboration and the work that OCAN does within the Children's Bureau and with our partners, our Federal and non-Federal partners, the phrase that I often use is that child abuse and neglect is a multidisciplinary problem. No one person or one agency or one grant can solve the problem of child abuse and neglect. And again, we've learned this from our research over the years. We know that there are many factors that impact families-- substance abuse, mental health problems, domestic violence, homelessness or substandard housing issues, poverty in some instances. So we know that there are many, many issues. We know that there are many disciplines that need to be involved and at the community--at our level, at the Federal level, I think not only are we mandated by our legislation to, you know,

have this collaboration but we hope that it's a way to model for the State and local communities that same spirit of collaboration.

For me personally and in my role with OCAN, within the Children's Bureau, I envision a steadily improving way of operating--improving that collaboration just across the Children's Bureau as well as across the spectrum. When you look at the spectrum of child welfare, from prevention to upfront child protective services, foster care, adoption, independent living, I mean, the whole spectrum of all the programs that we run, my wish and my vision is that the ability for all of those segments of the spectrum really increases in terms of their communication with each other. Really having that systems interface, even though they have responsibilities for different pieces of the sequence of events, to really improve that.

We talk a lot about well-being and ultimately all of us have that as an ultimate goal. We want the children to be doing well. And so how do we make that happen? And I think we make it happen here, within the Children's Bureau, with all of the interdivision, inter-Bureau work that we do, and then I think we really, you know, need to continue to support the field and their ability to do that at the State and local level across the entire spectrum, you know, of the child welfare system.

[end audio]