

From: Kappeler, Evelyn (HHS/OASH)
To: Kappeler, Evelyn (HHS/OASH)
Subject: Note to the File - July 21
Date: Wednesday, June 21, 2017 4:06:00 PM
Attachments: Image002.png
Image003.png

Note to File:

At 3:00 pm today I had a phone conversation with Dr. Wright, Steven Valentine and Carter Blakely regarding the status of the pending OAH grant continuation and new competitive awards. Carter did not speak during the meeting.

Dr. Wright opened the conversation with acknowledging that OAH has a large portfolio and there is great curiosity about the policy team input for our July 1 grant starts. He noted that Steven has taken the lead in the discussions with the policy team and the direction to be taken.

Steven thanked me for my patience with the process and the feedback we provided to the policy team. He described the current situation – where things were going – and noted that no final determinations had yet been made.

(b) (5)

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I offered to make OAH available to provide a briefing on our program evaluation results which he indicated he would like to happen; however, with workloads and vacations, he didn't see that happening for at least a few weeks.

Dr. Wright then mentioned that in 2010, the Obama Administration sought to (b) (5) and what did I think of that? I responded that that was a policy/political decision and as a civil servant I didn't have a comment but I could speak to the TPP program evaluations.

It was a short (~20 minute) meeting with no real outcome other than to confirm that he thinks the (b) (5) based on OMB's assessment and what he had heard from the policy team); however, he has not actually reviewed the materials.
Evelyn

From: Kappeler, Evelyn (HHS/OASH)
Sent: Monday, August 07, 2017 12:02 PM
To: Wright, Don (HHS/OASH)
Subject: RE: AP Article published in the New York Times 7 25 2017 - INFORMATION

Hi Don,

I will be at HHH on Wednesday for the OASH Senior Staff meeting. Do you have any time to share with me (b) (5) or sometime for a phone call before you go on vacation?

Thanks,

Evelyn

From: Wright, Don (HHS/OASH)
Sent: Friday, July 28, 2017 5:13 PM
To: Kappeler, Evelyn (HHS/OASH)
Subject: RE: AP Article published in the New York Times 7 25 2017 - INFORMATION

Thanks Evelyn

This will be helpful over the weekend when I review all information.

On a related note, we had a call today with OMB about the TPP program at their request. They had received comments from the Hill related to some grants expiring in one year and wanted to understand HHS rationale.

Steven led the discussion as I have not been involved except tangentially. Unknown to us, OMB had

(b) (5)

After discussing my agenda items, Dr. Wright then turned to an issue he wanted to discuss with me. He has a copy of the article in REVEAL by the Center for Investigative Reporting and stated that (b) (6) was upset about a statement in the article describing what a grantee attributed to an OAH staff member. The statement indicated that recent decisions with regard to shortened or discontinued grants was made outside of OAH. While a true statement in my opinion, he was angry about the fact that the Secretary's picture was prominently displayed on the cover of the article and that the as civil servants we need to talk with one voice and not appear to pointing fingers to the ASH or the Secretary. I reminded him that the POs were surprised by the decision that was handed down to OAH and that they have ongoing working relationships with the grantees and that they did not have talking points to work from at that point. He expressed surprise that POs weren't politically savvy enough to know that change was coming. I reminded him that POs are just that project officers managing grant programs and not policy experts nor did they have any advance notice of the decision, so were caught by surprise as were the grantees. He stated that they should have expected change and that we all know change comes with any new Administration – and then mentioned the fact that the CBAE training grants were cut by the previous administration. (I found this curious because he is not very steeped in our program issues. I have to assume that this is information he got from (b) (6) has her organization held those grants at the time.)

He then told that I needed to talk with two staff members about their attitude. While I was on leave, he had convened a series of daily meeting regarding the status of OPA and OAH grant decisions coming from the "policy team." The meeting, held late on a Thursday afternoon (July 6?) was held in the ODPHP conference room with the following attendees: (b) (6)

(b) (6) joined by conference call from HHH and (b) (6) joined by phone since she was in Hawaii. He states that (b) (6) were extremely professional the whole time and expressed his displeasure at the behavior of the OAH staff in attendance. At some point during the meeting he had to step out; however, when he returned he was told that (b) (6) had displayed clearly inappropriate attitude. He stated that he was embarrassed by the behavior and that in his opinion it warranted a reprimand. He encouraged me to discuss the matter with the three staff who were in the room when the meeting ended (b) (6) who all described the behavior as "inappropriate" to him and urged him to address the issue. He described (b) (6) opening comments as "barbed" and that (b) (6) attitude was "clearly inappropriate" in her statements that "they can't do that with the CBA money." He stated that telling people how to use the money is not the appropriate civil servant response and that her comments were "over the line." When I asked if he had addressed it at the meeting, he said it was not the forum for addressing that behavior. He stated that as civil servants, our responsibility is to implement the Administration's agenda whether we like it or not, as long as it is legal. And if we can't, we should consider other options. He was angry and stated that I we needed to get in line and that I set the tone for the office and the office attitude. I told him that I would speak with the two OAH staff members which I did this afternoon. Both expressed concerns about being able to ask questions in this environment and the lack of engagement by policy staff directly with the program office

(b) (6)

(b) (5)

I then asked about the \$150K that was previously approved in the OASH Evaluation Set Aside process and what happens to those monies. (b) (6) voice became agitated and he said that I should know the process – that I was part of the review process and that the funds will go to other unfunded projects. He then stated that it's not by business and I should not be weighing in on it. I responded by saying I was curious.

I asked to be updated if any decisions became available in the afternoon. The call concluded at about 10:50 am.

I went to my desk and found an email from (b) (6) scheduler, asking if I was available for a 1:1 meeting with (b) (6). I wrote back to say when I was available and she asked if I was available right then. So, I called (b) (6). Unfortunately, I was so rattled by our previous call, that my reaction when I got on the phone was to cry. I asked if I could call him back; I composed myself and called him back within a few minutes.

He started the call by saying that he guessed he is a little frustrated and asked me to share my frustrations and then he would share his. I mentioned that I was frustrated about the time this process is taking and the fact that OAH has not been part of the discussions. I also expressed my continuing concern about the potential for funds to lapse given we are so late in the fiscal year. In response, he noted that I am a stickler for deadlines and, in that regard, I am an outstanding manager. He acknowledged that I had valid concerns about timing. He also noted that we have to understand that we have new priorities (which I have not been articulated to me), but we have systems we have to work within. He noted that there have been lots of discussions about OAH how monies can be utilized differently and within the statutory language and this process has been slower than expected (b) (6), (b) (6).

He then stated his concern about what the civil service is all about, priorities change, and our job as civil servants is to help them reach their priorities. Changes in priorities can include financial and HR resources. He stated that if they tell me the monies are being used consistent with the statutory authority, I should not be raising questions. He admonished me for asking a question about the planned use of the \$150,000 in PHS Evaluation Set Aside monies and that there are always unfunded projects to which the money can go back to fund other things. I stated that I asked the question out of curiosity to understand the bigger picture.

He reminded me that as a leader, I need to set the tone at the top, and that my office did not seem to be setting the correct tone. When I asked what he was referring to, he mentioned the news article that stated OASH was the decision maker for the shortened grant period (the statement that appeared in the July 14th Reveal article, "Several grantees were told by officials at the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Adolescent Health that the decision to eliminate funding came from the office of the assistant secretary for health." I reminded him that OAH were not aware of the grant action until the last minute and staff were provided with the official talking points on July 13 at an OAH All Hands meeting). I asked him if there were other issues that I should be aware of. He again mentioned the tone taken by two of my senior staff at a meeting they attended while I was on leave in late June. He reminded him that I have spoken with both