

2020-2024



# ALASKA'S CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES PLAN

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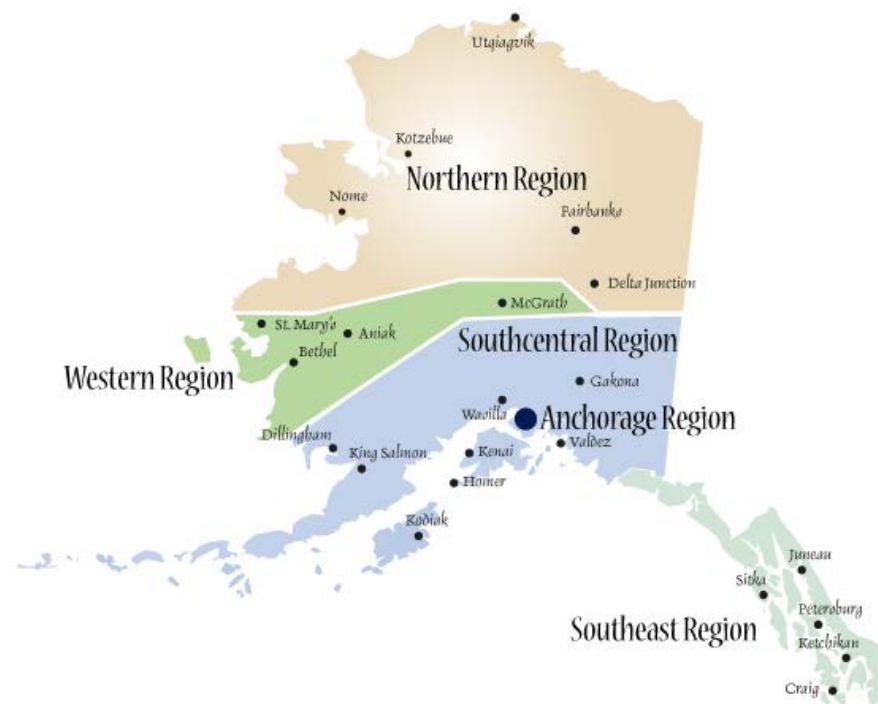
# 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan

## SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

### STATE AGENCY ADMINISTERING THE PROGRAMS

The Governor of Alaska has designated the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Office of Children’s Services as the single state agency responsible for administering Child Welfare Services (IV-B, subpart 1), Promoting Safe and Stable Families (IV-B, subpart 2), Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, Chafee Foster Care Independence and Education and Training Vouchers. The Office of Children’s Services has administrative responsibility for development and implementation of the Child and Family Services Plan, including all policies and procedures relating to child protection services in Alaska. In addition, the Office of Children’s Services administers the Early Intervention Programs and Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Planning.

The Office of Children’s Service (OCS), located in the Department of Health and Social Services is responsible for child protection services in the State of Alaska. OCS has 23 child protection field offices and approximately 589 employees with five regional headquarters in Anchorage, Bethel, Fairbanks, Juneau and Wasilla. Only nine of the OCS offices are accessible by the road system. The staffing at OCS field offices varies across the state from one person generalist offices to multi-unit offices offering a full range of services. All fiscal and program support and oversight are based in Juneau, the state’s capital. Organizational charts are included in Appendix A.



*Child Protection Offices in Alaska. Note: Highlighted areas are offices on Alaska’s road system.*



## OVERVIEW OF OCS CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES PRACTICE MODEL

The Alaska Office of Children’s Services, Child Protection Services (CPS) program utilizes a family intervention system with a focus on child safety. The OCS Child Protection Practice Model focuses on those families where a formal intervention by the state is necessary. This model emphasizes a strengths-based, family-centered approach through the standardization of information gathering, enhanced assessment and critical thinking skills by the CPS staff. Decisions regarding needed interventions with families are based on thorough processes for initial and ongoing assessment of safety, risk, and protective factors. The CPS program serves families who are identified as having children who are “unsafe” or at “high risk” for future maltreatment.

### MISSION / VISION/ GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Fundamental to the provision of OCS services is that every family served is treated with dignity and respect, and with consideration to their family and cultural values. Intervention and services to families are in the least restrictive, least intrusive and most sustainable manner possible. In the case of Alaska Native or American Indian children, the diligent compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) is critical and can only be done through full partnerships with Tribes and Tribal organizations associated with the child’s family. OCS works in partnership with families and communities to support the well-being of Alaska’s children and youth. Services are designed to enhance families’ capacities to give their children a healthy start, to provide them with safe and permanent homes, to maintain cultural connections, and to realize their potential.

#### MISSION STATEMENT

Ensuring the safety, permanency and well-being of children by strengthening families, engaging communities, and partnering with tribes.

#### VISION STATEMENT

Safe Children, Strong Families

#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Safety** - Every child has the right to be safe.
- **Family** - Children remain in their home whenever possible.
- **Strength** - Families have specific strengths and cultures that are valued.
- **Success** - Empower children and youth to succeed.
- **Permanency** - Foster care is temporary. Every child deserves a safe and permanent home.
- **Community** - Community Partnerships are essential to engage and support families.
- **Connection** - Children need lifelong connections to their family, community and culture.
- **Tribes** - Tribes and OCS have a respectful government-to-government relationship.

#### CORE VALUES OF AN EFFECTIVE WORKFORCE

- **Hope – Motivates us**

We anticipate success. We are a strengths based organization. We support and empower people on their journey to success.

➤ **Integrity – Directs us**

We are trustworthy. We are reliable, authentic, and loyal. We do what we say we will do. We have the courage to do the right thing.

➤ **Respect – Guides us**

We honor all people. We value the intrinsic dignity and worth of all people. We treat others the way we want to be treated.

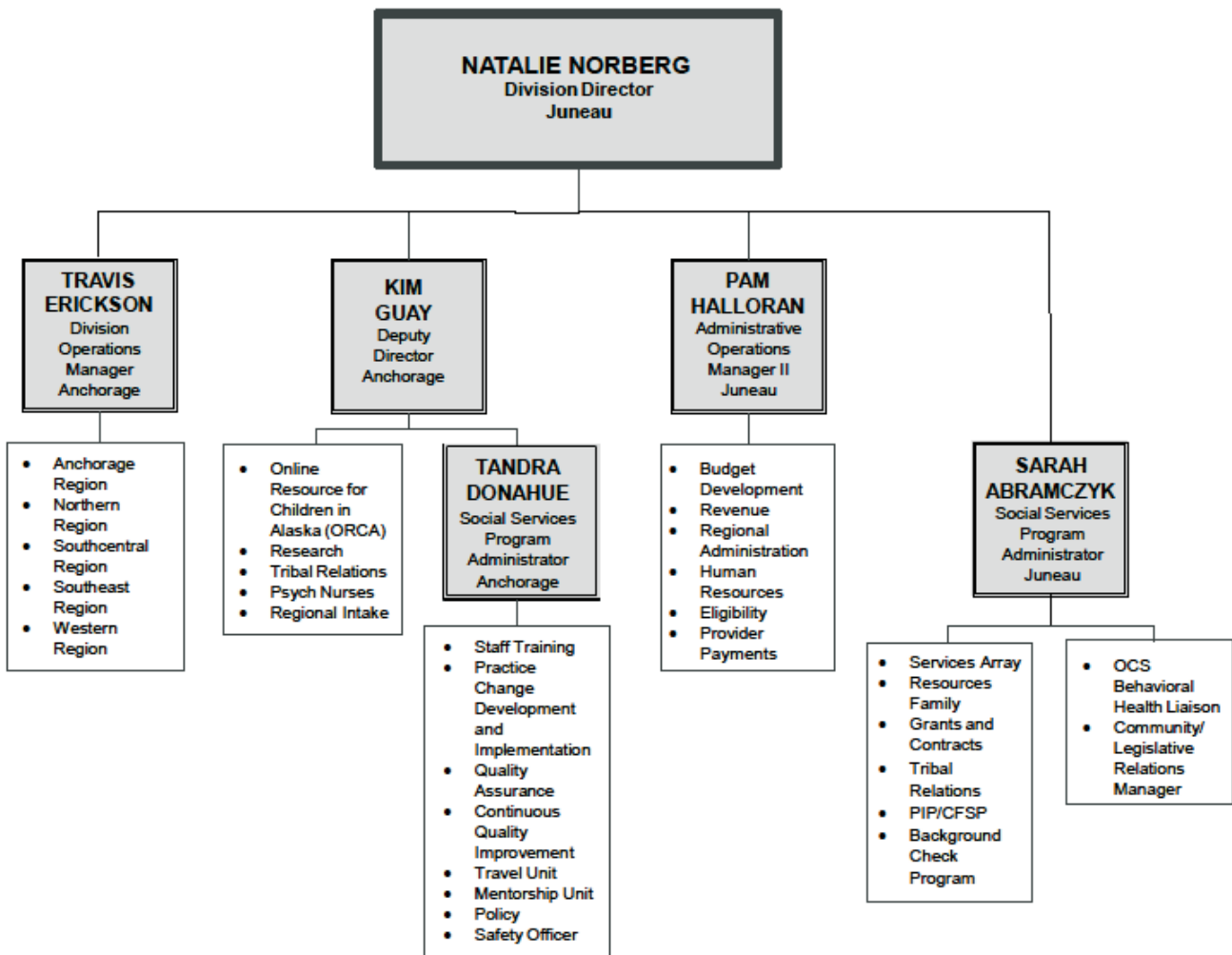
➤ **Empathy – Leads us**

We seek to understand. We work to listen and understand the unique perspectives and feelings of others.

Additionally, the Office of Children’s Services’ Child Protection Practice Model works in concert with the seven federal outcomes:

- Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
- Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.
- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
- The continuity of family relationships and cultural connections is preserved for children.
- Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs.
- Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
- Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

# OCS LEADERSHIP ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Updated: 6.20.2019

## COLLABORATION

The Office of Children's Services is highly invested in collaboration and coordination with our Tribal partners and stakeholders. In preparation for the development of the 2020-2024 CFSP, OCS has collaborated with several stakeholders to create a shared vision across the child welfare system. Stakeholders included The Court Improvement Project, Rock Mat-su, the Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force, Tribal Representatives, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, Alaskan Children's Trust, legal parties, and more. Throughout the year OCS has facilitated teleconferences and face to face meetings to gather feedback and ideas regarding community responsiveness to the spectrum of child welfare needs. During targeted stakeholder meetings, participants were briefed on current CFSR outcomes related to strengths and concerns; and OCS identified targeted priorities and goal areas for the 2020-2024 CFSP.

OCS partnered with the Division of Behavioral Health and the Center for States to conduct a statewide gap analysis for the purpose of determining existing service provider capacity to implement Alaska's 1115 Behavioral Health Medicaid Waiver program and the Family First Prevention Services Act. Between January and May, 2019, the Office of Children's Services State Office team conducted a comprehensive needs assessment of the Alaska service array. The assessment included in-person onsite facility visits to 73 Medicaid providers across Alaska, including 20 Tribal organizations providing behavioral health services, participation in a joint DBH/OCS survey of Medicaid providers, and surveys of OCS frontline staff in 13 OCS Field Offices. The full report of the analysis is expected in fall of 2019. Results of the report will help to inform how OCS will invest and partner with Tribes and community partners in service array development and capacity building for Medicaid reimburseable and evidenced based services over the next five years. In addition to the CFSR findings and the OCS Statewide Assessment, Alaska also relied on the following areas in the development of the CFSP:

- Presentation of CFSR findings and data to internal and external stakeholders
- Data analysis comparing the CFSR report, Quality Assurance case reviews and ORCA data
- Review of Citizen's Review Panel reports
- Workforce recruitment and retention data
- Problem exploration with internal and external stakeholders including, but not limited to, youth, foster parents, birth families, lawyers, GALs, judges, parents, Tribal representatives and legislators.
- Discussion of proposed practice improvements, key strategies and key activities rooted in the problem exploration and root cause analysis
- Discussions of barriers to program improvement change
  - Workforce challenges
  - Legal challenges
  - Resource and services access challenges
- AFCARS considerations as contextual information only

# Alaska's Vision for Child Welfare

## Empower Communities to Strengthen Families and Prevent Child Abuse

### **Develop** a skilled and stable child protection workforce

- Recruit and develop workforce with continued enhancement of competencies and core values.
- Promote workforce wellness and retention.

### **Partner** with Tribes and community agencies to provide support and services to families.

- Strengthen families through Community engagement and connection to services.
- Statewide expansion of cultural services.



OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES  
Safe Children, Strong Families

### **Prioritize** identified essential child protection services.

- Ensure early placement with relatives, timely initiations, monthly caseworker visits are conducted, and case planning is family centered and timely.
- Create a culture that values the prioritization of essential services.

### **Build** a culture dedicated to evaluation and continuous quality improvement (CQI) informed by data driven decision making.

- Implement best-practices and agency activities based on CQI.



## SECTION 2 – ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE

### CHILD AND FAMILY OUTCOMES

During the 2017 Child and Family Services Review there were significant areas of concern identified. The CFSR findings outline that Alaska was found to not be in substantial conformity with the Seven Outcome areas of Safety, Permanency and Well-Being; and six of the seven Systemic Factors: Statewide Information System; Case Review System; Quality Assurance; Staff and Provider Training; Service Array and Resource Development and Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. The Alaska Program Improvement Plan builds on the information, data analysis and findings from both the CFSR findings and the 2017 Statewide Assessment, as well as root-cause analysis and stakeholder involvement to target sustainable practice improvements in meeting the overall outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being for families and children in Alaska.

#### SAFETY OUTCOME 1: CHILDREN ARE, FIRST AND FOREMOST, PROTECTED FROM ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Alaska did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1 during the 2017 CFSR as OCS received a Strength rating in 72% of the 32 applicable cases.

#### ITEM 1: TIMELINESS OF INITIATING INVESTIGATIONS OF REPORTS OF CHILDREN MALTREATMENT

This item determines whether responses to all accepted child maltreatment reports received during the period under reviewer were initiated, and face-to-face contact with child(ren) made, within the time frames established by agency policy and state statutes. Item 1 was rated as an Area in Need of Improvement in the 2017 CFSR. Reviewers found that of the 32 applicable cases, 72% were rated as a Strength.

#### STRENGTHS

During the process of developing the PIP, a review of Alaska’s performance with Safety Outcome 1 revealed that generally, Alaska does a better job with meeting the response times to Priority 1 and Priority 2 cases. Generally, reports that are Priority 1 or 2 involve reports of physical or sexual abuse to the child, whereby an immediate or urgent response to the report is necessary.

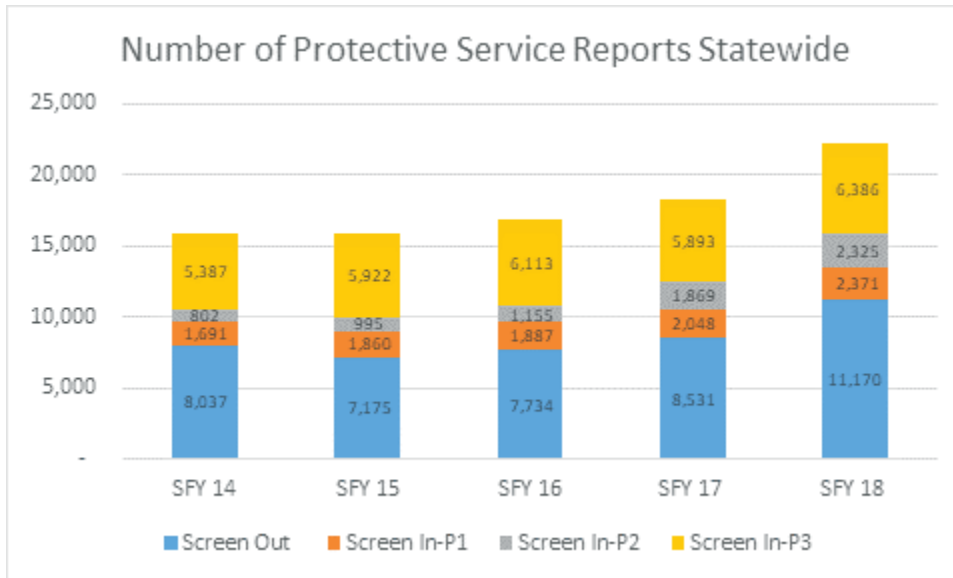
Item	CFSR 2008	CY 2012	CY 2013	CFSR 2017
Outcome Safety 1	47.1%	57%	63%	72%
S1- Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	56%	65%	73%	72%

#### CONCERNS

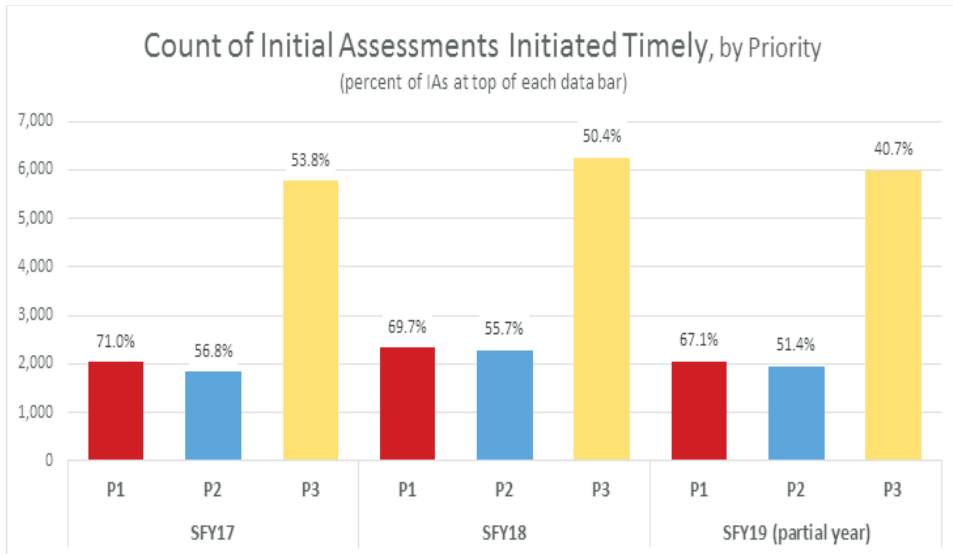
Alaska does not do as well with Priority 3 responses. These are cases where the child may be in a neglectful or marginally safe situation, and a response within a 7-day timeframe can meet the safety need of the child. With Priority 3 matters, since workers have a longer period of time to meet the mandated timeframe, it is not uncommon for workers to wait until day 3 or longer to respond to the

report. By waiting longer to respond, other factors such as the inability to locate the parents or the child, subsequent reports for the same concern may come in necessitating a re-evaluation of the priority response time.

Location of the family in Alaska can also present a challenge in responding within the appropriate timeframes. In Alaska’s more urban communities, where travel by vehicle is possible, response times are more likely met as opposed to reports for families residing in more remote locations in Alaska, where delays can occur due to air travel delays related to inclement weather and other factors.



Source: ORCA, May 2019



## SUMMARY

Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment was identified in the 2017 CFSR as an Area Needing Improvement for Alaska. OCS generally does well in initiating investigations on Priority 1 and 2 reports of child maltreatment, the state struggles with timely initiations of priority 3 reports. Addressing responsiveness to Priority 3 reports will be a focus in

Alaska’s 2020-2024 CFSP. Strategies for improvements to the response times with priority levels have been developed, utilizing adaptive changes involving the changes in agency culture around the importance of safety concerns with Priority 3 responses. Priority 3 reports will also be a focus for OCS due to the high volume of Priority 3 screen in reports compared to Priority 1 and 2. Training through webinars as well as improved supervision efforts are utilized, with an Implementation framework for CQI to measure improvements with the priority level response efforts

**SAFETY OUTCOME 2: CHILDREN ARE SAFELY MAINTAINED IN THEIR HOMES WHENEVER POSSIBLE AND APPROPRIATE.**

Alaska did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2 during the 2017 CFSR as OCS received a Strength rating in 38% of the 65 cases reviewed.

**ITEM 2: SERVICES TO FAMILY TO PROTECT CHILD(REN) IN HOME AND PREVENT REMOVAL OR RE-ENTRY INTO FOSTER CARE.**

This item determines whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to provide services to the family to prevent children’ entry into foster care or re-entry after a reunification. Item 2 was identified as an Area Needing Improvement in the 2017 CFSR as 38% of the 26 applicable cases were rated as a Strength. OCS received a Strength rating in 58% of the 12 applicable foster care cases and 21% of the 14 applicable in-home services cases.

**ITEM 3: RISK AND SAFETY ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT.**

This item determines whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to assess and address the risk and safety concerns relating to the child(ren) in their own homes or while in foster care. Item 3 was identified as an Area Needing Improvement as 40% of the 65 applicable cases were rated as a Strength. OCS received a Strength rating in 50% of the 40 applicable foster care cases and 24% of the applicable in-home services cases.

Item	CFSR 2008	CY 2012	CY 2013	CFSR 2017
<b>Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate</b>	38.5%	61%	59%	38%
<b>S2 - Item 3:</b> Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal	51%	68%	60%	38%
<b>S2 - Item 4:</b> Risk of harm to child(ren)	39%	62%	63%	40%

Source: Case Review Data 2014, Alaska’s Quality Assurance Unit

**STRENGTHS**

A new and particularly promising service category proposed under Alaska’s 1115 Behavioral Health Medicaid Demonstration Project is *Home-based Family Treatment*. This service category was designed to specifically address children and their parents for whom OCS has determined the children to be at risk for out-of-home placement, or the children are in placement and family reunification services are needed. These services include individual and family therapy, crisis

intervention, medication services, parenting education, conflict resolution, anger management, and ongoing monitoring for safety and stability in the home.

Paramount to Alaska's ability to achieve Safety Outcome 2, is the ability for OCS to partner with State, Tribal and community agencies in order to leverage the reform initiatives occurring at this time at both a state and federal level to ensure that the new services are designed and prioritized to meet the needs of families involved in the child welfare system and to ensure that OCS caseworkers have the tools and information needed to broker the services appropriately.

## CONCERNS

For Safety Outcome 2 key factors that are impacting upon the safety assessment include the timely resource availability, especially for mental health and substance abuse treatment services, and monitoring of safety at key junctures of a case at initial assessment and at trial home visits.

A historical lack of a continuum of community based behavioral health services, including home-based services for individuals and families is a pervasive systemic issue in Alaska and is well-recognized as a major concern that has far reaching negative consequence not isolated to the child welfare system. Fortunately this is an issue that is beginning to be addressed on a statewide, systemic level through major initiatives such as the legislature's passage of Senate Bill 74 (a comprehensive medical and behavioral health reform bill) and the Governor's decision to pursue the Affordable Care Act Medicaid Expansion provision in 2016.

Meeting the initial assessment timeframes for a completed initial assessment is 45 days; however, often the 45 day timeframe is not met. Here, the impacts of workforce vacancy and turnover are most acute, and the revolving changes in the workforce for initial assessment compliance is delayed due to families having multiple workers, which impact upon the family's relationship and engagement with the agency. With each successive worker change, the case delays become more acute, leaving children in situations for which adequate safety planning and monitoring does not occur timely or consistently.

The CFSR findings noted that safety assessments are generally completed in initial assessment cases and monitoring is better at this stage of the case, but when safety concerns arise, modifications of safety plans occur less often, leaving a child at risk of harm. Similarly, at trial home visits, when a child is beginning the process of returning to the parents' care, data has shown that recurrence of maltreatment of a child by a parent is more likely to occur at this juncture of the case. When active safety planning, follow-up and monitoring occur, the chances of recurrence of maltreatment is reduced, but in cases where the child is returned home with no solid safety planning, follow up, or monitoring, recurrence of maltreatment increases.

## SUMMARY

Safety Outcome 2, children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate, is an Area Needing Improvement for Alaska. Through Alaska's 1115 Behavioral Health Medicaid Demonstration Project, and FFPSA, OCS aims to leverage funding available through Medicaid and Title IV-E to significantly expand the availability of mental health, substance abuse and family support services for child welfare involved families. OCS will also be reviewing and evaluating

promising in-home services to implement a comprehensive statewide in-home practice model. This is paramount for Alaska to achieve Safety Outcome 2.

**PERMANENCY OUTCOME 1: CHILDREN HAVE PERMANENCY AND STABILITY IN THEIR LIVING SITUATIONS.**

Alaska did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1 during the 2017 CFSR as this outcome was substantially achieved in 15% of the applicable cases reviewed.

**ITEM 4: STABILITY OF FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT.**

This item determines whether the child in foster care is in a stable placement at the time of the onsite review and that any change in placement that occurred during the period under review were in the best interest of the child and consistent with achieving the child’s permanency goal(s). Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 4 as 80% of the 40 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

**ITEM 5: PERMANENCY GOAL FOR CHILD.**

This item determines whether appropriate permanency goals were established for the child in a timely manner. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 5 as 50% of the 40 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

**ITEM 6: ACHIEVING REUNIFICATION, GUARDIANSHIP, ADOPTION OR OTHER PLANNED PERMANENT LIVING ARRANGEMENT.**

This item determines whether concerted efforts were made, or are being made, during the period under review to achieve reunification, guardianship, adoption or other planned permanent living arrangement. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 6 as 25% of the 40 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

Item	CFSR 2008	CY 2012	CY 2013	CFSR
<b>Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.</b>	15%	39%	38%	15%
<b>P1 - Item 4:</b> Stability of foster care placement	73%	73%	77%	80%
<b>P1 - Item 5:</b> Permanency goal for child	45%	63%	72%	50%
<b>P1 - Item 6:</b> Reunification, guardianship, adoption or other planned permanent living arrangement	33%	53%	52%	25%

Source: Case Review Data 2014, Alaska’s Quality Assurance Unit

**STRENGTHS**

OCS has established requirements for early identification of relatives in efforts to maintain children with family, increase stability of foster care placement, and shorten time to permanency. Through



Tribal Compacting, Tribal co-signers are completing initial and on-going relative searches for Alaska Native children in State custody. OCS has implemented an automated notice of Right to Request Placement and notice of Right to Request Permanent Placement through the ORCA system.

OCS has partnered with the Court Improvement Project (CIP) to pilot a permanency project that would include an additional court hearing following the initial 12 month permanency hearing, updated benchcards with permanency timelines and parent engagement tips for judges, and updated court orders.

In efforts to reduce barriers to service provision, OCS has been in the process of developing a Cultural Resource Guide to be utilized by staff when case planning with parents. This guide will provide a list of culturally appropriate services in each region of Alaska.

## **CONCERNS**

For Permanency Outcome 1, the timely creation and documentation of permanency goals and meeting the ASFA 15 month standards for filing a petition for termination of parental rights or documenting compelling reasons were the primary reasons that Alaska was not in substantial conformity. Primary drivers for this, included: workforce challenges, vacancy and turnover rates, cases being unattended or covered by workers and/or supervisors with already high caseloads. Additionally, coordination with the courts and worker preparedness for hearings (for instance, timely completion of permanency reports, petitions for termination of parental rights, and completion of home studies) led to further delays with permanency. OCS's strategies aimed at worker retention and caseload caps are anticipated to improve OCS's timely preparedness for hearings.

Of significance to delays for permanency, are delays in the provision of timely services to parents. The biggest cause of this is systemic service deficiency internal and external to Alaska's OCS. The greatest need for immediate services is in community based substance abuse and mental health services. Over 70% of all OCS families are impacted by substance use/misuse and equally as many are impacted by mental health concerns. The service needs spread the gamut in age from very young to older grandparents caring for their grandchildren. A promising and emerging strategy is the utilization of more peer and elder support providers as supported in the 1115 Waiver and described in the Cultural Resource Guide, to increase access to community based services providers even in remote areas of Alaska.

## **SUMMARY**

Permanency Outcome 1 is an Area Needing Improvement for Alaska. Strengths for the agency include updated policies and procedures for early relative identification and placement, Tribal Compacting, and joint permanency efforts with the CIP. Alaska's struggles with record staff turnover and chronic high caseloads impact the agency's ability to meet the AFSA timelines for permanency. The provision of timely services to Alaska's families will also be a focus area for the state.

## **PERMANENCY OUTCOME 2: THE CONTINUITY OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTION IS PRESERVED FOR CHILDREN.**

Alaska did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2 during the 2017 CFSR as the outcome was substantially achieved in 65% of the applicable cases.

#### **ITEM 7: PLACEMENT WITH SIBLINGS.**

This item determines whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to ensure that siblings in foster care are placed together unless a separation was necessary to meet the needs of one of the siblings. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 7 as 89% of the 27 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

#### **ITEM 8: VISITING WITH PARENTS AND SIBLINGS IN FOSTER CARE.**

This item determines whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to ensure that visitation between a child in foster care and his or her mother, father, and siblings is of sufficient frequency and quality to promote continuity in the child's relationship with these close family members. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 8 as 55% of the 29 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

In 47% of the 17 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that both the frequency and quality of visitation with a sibling(s) in foster care who is/was in a different placement setting was sufficient to maintain and promote the continuity of the relationship.

In 76% of the 21 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that both the frequency and quality of visitation between the child in foster care and his or her mother was sufficient to maintain and promote the continuity of the relationship.

In 75% of the 16 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that both the frequency and quality of visitation between the child in foster care and his or her father was sufficient to maintain and promote the continuity of the relationship.

#### **ITEM 9: PRESERVING CONNECTIONS.**

This item determines whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to maintain the child's connections to his or her neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, Tribe, school, and friends. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 9 as 75% of the 40 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

#### **ITEM 10: RELATIVE PLACEMENT.**

This item determines whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to place the child with relatives when appropriate. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 10 as 76% of the 37 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

#### **ITEM 11: RELATIONSHIP OF CHILD IN CARE WITH PARENTS.**

This item determines whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to promote, support, and/or maintain positive relationships between the child in foster care and his or her mother and father or other primary caregiver(s) from whom the child had been removed

through activities other than just arranging for visitation. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 11 as 64% of the 22 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

In 67% of the 21 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to promote, support, and otherwise maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the child in foster care and his or her mother.

In 69% of the 16 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to promote, support, and otherwise maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the child in foster care and his or her father.

## STRENGTHS

The CFSR findings for Permanency Outcome 2 indicated that Alaska was not in substantial conformity as Alaska did not meet the 95% national performance indicator; however, this was an outcome where Alaska measured the strongest in most areas. Alaska has placed a significant focus over the past several years on improvements with relative placements, identification of relatives early in the case, and stronger use of ICWA placement preferences for Alaska Native children in care. With the passing of the Every Student Succeeds Act, OCS has implemented procedures and policies for maintaining children in care in their home school for the duration of their time in foster care.

Item	CFSR 2008	CY 2012	CY 2013	CFSR 2017
<b>Outcome P2:</b>	<b>62.5%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>65%</b>
<b>P2 - Item 7:</b> Placement with siblings	91%	92%	95%	89%
<b>P2 - Item 8:</b> Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	62%	85%	81%	55%
<b>P2 - Item 9:</b> Preserving connections	78%	95%	94%	75%
<b>P2 - Item 10:</b> Relative placement	83%	92%	93%	76%
<b>P2 - Item 11:</b> Relationship of child in care with parents	47%	61%	64%	64%

Source: Case Review Data 2014, Alaska's Quality Assurance Unit

## CONCERNS

Relationship of children in care with parents, and visiting parents and siblings in care rated the lowest in this outcome which speaks to the workforce challenges and the impacts on family engagement. At the time of the 2017 submission of the Statewide Assessment staff vacancy and turnover was at 34%, with most new Protective Services Specialists (PSS) staying on the job for a short 18 months. Since the submission of the Alaska Statewide Assessment, the Alaska State Legislature, has been pursuing state of the art welfare reforms for Alaska's child welfare system. Some of these statutory changes have included direct benefits to children and families, through casework reforms, but significantly the caseload challenges were addressed through legislation to improve the quality of work that OCS frontline staff face each day. As a part of a legislative analysis, Alaska determined that by the end of calendar year 2018, the vacancy and turnover rate at OCS was

approximately 50%, with some offices having as high as 80-100% turnover in calendar year 2018. This significant instability in case-carrying workers has raised serious concerns for safety, permanency and well-being to children and families.

## **SUMMARY**

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Permanency Outcome 2. Strengths include efforts to improve relative search and placement, maintaining children in their home schools, and stronger use of ICWA placement preferences for Alaska Native children in care. Concerns are directed related to record high staff turnover and high caseloads. Central to improved child welfare performance on all outcomes for families and children in Alaska is a strong and stable workforce focused on safety, permanency and well-being. Alaska looks to the key elements of staff recruitment strategies, retention efforts primarily through training, supervision and staff mentorship as key to reducing the workforce challenges with OCS.

### **WELL-BEING OUTCOME 1: FAMILIES HAVE ENHANCED CAPACITY TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR CHILDREN'S NEEDS.**

Alaska did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1 during the 2017 CFSR as the outcome was substantially achieved in 31% of the 65 cases reviewed. The outcome was substantially achieved in 38% of the 40 foster care cases and 20% of the 25 in-home services cases.

### **ITEM 12: NEEDS AND SERVICES OF CHILD, PARENTS, AND FOSTER PARENTS.**

This item determines whether, during the period under review, the agency (1) made concerted efforts to assess the needs of children, parents, and foster parents (both initially, if the child entered foster care of the case was opened during the period under review, and on an ongoing basis) to identify the services necessary to achieve case goals and adequately address the issues relevant to the agency's involvement with the family, and (2) provided the appropriate services. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 12 as 33% of the 63 cases were rated as a Strength. Item 12 was rated as a Strength in 40% of the 40 foster care cases and 22% of the 23 in-home services cases.

#### ***SUB-ITEM 12A: NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND SERVICES TO CHILDREN.***

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 12A as 63% of the 63 cases reviewed were rated as a Strength. Item 12A was rated as a Strength in 80% of the 40 foster care cases and 35% of 23 in-home services cases.

#### ***SUB-ITEM 12B: NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND SERVICES TO PARENTS.***

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 12B as 30% of the 47 applicable cases reviewed were rated as a Strength. Item 12B was rated as a Strength in 38% of the 24 foster care cases and 22% of 23 in-home services cases. In 43% of the 47 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts both to assess and address the needs of mothers. In 26% of the 39 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts both to assess and address the needs of fathers.

### ***SUB-ITEM 12C: NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND SERVICES TO FOSTER PARENTS.***

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 12C as 56% of the 39 applicable foster care cases reviewed were rated as a Strength.

### **ITEM 13: CHILD AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN CASE PLANNING.**

Item 13 determines whether, during the period under review, concerted efforts were made to involve parents and children (if developmentally appropriate) in the case planning process on an ongoing basis. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 13 as 39% of the 59 applicable cases were rated as a Strength. Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 50% of the 36 applicable foster care cases and 22% of the 23 applicable in-home services cases. In 47% of the 36 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to involve child(ren) in case planning. In 49% of the 47 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to involve mothers in case planning. In 30% of the 37 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to involve fathers in case planning.

### **ITEM 14: CASEWORKER VISITS WITH CHILD.**

Item 14 determines whether the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the child(ren) in the case are sufficient to ensure safety, permanency and well-being of the child(ren) and promote achievement of case goals. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 14 as 48% of the 65 cases were rated as a Strength. Item 14 was rated as a Strength in 55% of the 40 foster care cases and 36% of the 25 in-home services cases.

### **ITEM 15: CASEWORKER VISITS WITH PARENTS.**

Item 15 determines whether, during the period under review, the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the mothers and fathers of the child(ren) are sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child(ren) and promote achievement of case goals. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 15 as 28% of the 50 applicable cases were rated as a Strength. Item 15 was rated as a Strength in 32% of the applicable foster care cases and 24% of the 25 applicable in-home services cases. In 39% of the 49 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that both the frequency and quality of case worker visitation with mothers were sufficient. In 14% of the 37 applicable cases, the agency made concerted efforts to ensure that both the frequency and quality of case worker visitation with fathers were sufficient.

### **STRENGTHS**

At the heart of child welfare work is the relationship that OCS workers and supervisors have with the families and children that are served. Well-being outcomes, particularly Well-being Outcome 1, targets areas involving caseworker engagement with the family and the child. Caseworker engagement is an area that OCS continues to enhance and refine in the new worker SKILLS training, which is being expanded to six weeks, and through the mentorship program, provided to new workers during the first six months on the job. To embed and advance their skills in this area, workers are taught motivational interviewing skills, stages of change, required to practice interviewing skills with paid actors, and exposed to parent and youth panels.



Item	CFSR 2008	CY 2012	CY 2013	CFSR 2017
<b>Outcome WB1:</b>	<b>23.1%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>WB1 - Item 12:</b> Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents	32%	54%	62%	33%
<b>WB1 - Item 13:</b> Child and family involvement in case planning	37%	41%	37%	39%
<b>WB1 - Item 14:</b> Worker visits with child	26%	49%	37%	48%
<b>WB1 - Item 15:</b> Worker visits with parents	20%	22%	16%	28%

Federal Fiscal Year	Goal for Percentage of Caseworker Visits	Actual Percentage of Caseworker Visits
2015	95%	78%
2016	95%	73%
2017	95%	67%
2018	95%	68%

## CONCERNS

Involvement of the child and the parents in the case planning process is crucial, as are the case worker visits with the child and the parents in which the case planning progress is an important element that is assessed during these visits. Alaska’s performance with Well-being Outcome 1, was low. Factors that have impacted OCS low scores in this area include high caseloads for which it is more difficult for workers to meet with every child and parent in every case, as mandated. Vacancy and turnover of staff all has a significant bearing in the scores as well, as each time a worker or supervisor changes for a child and family, new relationships have to be established which take time. Initial data on added staff in the Wasilla office have shown early improvements in caseworker visits, which then lead to improved safety and permanency outcomes for children; however, statewide declines are noted in caseworker visits.

Many parents and relatives experience the child welfare system as complex and traumatizing. Additionally, historical trauma due to colonization, the boarding school era and the systematic elimination of traditional language and cultural practices in Alaska results in the understandable distrust of Alaska Native people towards state officials. These factors lead to parents avoiding or resisting OCS interventions.

Foster Parent Opinions on Whether they are Able to Reach Caseworkers When Needed By Number and Percent					
Region	Total Respondents	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
Northern	44	21%	18%	57%	5%
Southcentral	150	19%	33%	43%	5%
Western	37	27%	19%	43%	11%
Anchorage	183	22%	32%	42%	4%

Southeast	29	24%	31%	38%	7%
Total	443	22%	30%	44%	5%

SOURCE: OCS QUALITY ASSURANCE UNIT 2018 FOSTER PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

## SUMMARY

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Well-Being Outcome 1. OCS aims to address permanency and well-being through activities designed to improve the engagement and relationships between clients and case workers by providing staff with more support and accountability through enhanced supervision, quality and consistent visits with children and parents and through the exploration and inclusion of cultural activities in the case planning process. Leveraging the influence that courts can have in terms of impressing upon parents the urgency and necessity of early and ongoing engagement in their case plan goals is a strategy through a joint partnership efforts with the courts and the Court Improvement Project members.

As identified earlier under the Safety Outcomes, OCS recognizes that strong engagement of practices by OCS workers and supporting staff, require the most intensive training and resources to insure that parents and children remain engaged, and for safety and permanency outcomes to improve. For the CFSP, OCS will focus on family engagement in:

- Safety planning and monitoring
- Completion of assessments for safety, risk and services needs
- Accurate identification of appropriate services and resources to address the needs of both safety and assessments.

## WELL-BEING OUTCOME 2: CHILDREN RECEIVE APPROPRIATE SERVICES TO MEET THEIR EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Alaska did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 during the 2017 CFSP as the outcome was substantially achieved in 85% of the 41 applicable cases reviewed.

### ITEM 16: EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF THE CHILD.

This item determines whether, during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to assess children's education needs at the initial contact with the child (if the case was opened during the period under review) or on an ongoing basis (if the case was opened before the period under review), and whether identified needs were appropriately addressed in case planning and case management activities. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 16 as 85% of the 41 cases were rated as a Strength. Item 16 was rated as a Strength in 92% of the 36 applicable foster care cases and 40 % of the 5 applicable in-home services cases.

Item	CFSR 2008	CY 2012	CY 2013	CFSR 2017
<b>Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs</b>	76.1%	91%	96%	85%
<b>WB2 - Item 16:</b> Educational needs of the child	76%	91%	96%	85%

## STRENGTHS AND CONCERNS

While Alaska continues to not meet substantial conformity with the national performance standard of 95% for educational needs of children, Alaska scored at 83% in this area. Alaska attributes this to the high involvement of the school districts across the state in the child’s educational and needs and resources. Additionally, The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), passed in December 2015, reauthorized federal education law for the first time in over a decade. Of significance for children in foster care, ESSA specifically addresses the needs of children in the child welfare system and has provisions ensure school stability. OCS currently has agreements in place with school districts in all five regions to ensure children’s attendance at that school which meets their best interest and needs.

## SUMMARY

Though Alaska has not met substantial conformity, current efforts are showing success in efforts to maintain that children have their education needs met. These efforts will continue and be evaluated through CQI.

## WELL-BEING OUTCOME 3: CHILDREN RECEIVE ADEQUATE SERVICES TO MEET THEIR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS.

Alaska did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3 during the 2017 CFSR as the outcome was substantially achieved in 50% of the applicable cases reviewed. The outcome was substantially achieved in 60% of the 40 applicable foster care cases and 28% of the 18 applicable in-home services cases.

### ITEM 17: PHYSICAL HEALTH OF THE CHILD.

This item determines whether, during the period under review, the agency addressed the physical health needs of the children, including dental health needs. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 17 as 68% of the 47 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

### ITEM 18: MENTAL HEALTH OF THE CHILD.

This item determines whether, during the period under review, the agency addressed the mental/behavioral health needs of the children. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 18 as 45% of the 38 applicable cases were rated as a strength. Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 60% of the 25 applicable foster care cases and 15% of the 13 applicable in-home services cases.

Item	CFSR 2008	CY 2012	CY 2013	CFSR 2017
<b>Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.</b>	52.5%	84%	76%	50%
<b>WB3 - Item 22:</b> Physical health of the child	71%	97%	96%	68%
<b>WB3 - Item 23:</b> Mental health of the child	55%	82%	74%	45%

## STRENGTHS AND CONCERNS

For both of these items, Alaska ranked significantly below the 95% national performance standard; performing better with children in foster care as opposed to children who remained in their parents' home. Of concern with the in-home population is the expectation that parents are taking the lead in their child's physical and mental/behavioral health needs, such that documentation of the parents' efforts may not be fully known or available to OCS workers. Improvements in this area may be seen through improved engagement outcomes with parents.

### SUMMARY

The agency must continue to diligently assess and address the physical and mental health needs of children. Systemic collaborations continue to be an area of need to assure that children are able to access needed trauma-informed mental health. Improvements in this outcome may be seen through improved engagement and partnership with DBH on the 1115 Behavior Health Medicaid Demonstration Project and strategies identified in the CSFP to link families to services.

## SYSTEMIC FACTORS

### SYSTEMIC FACTOR A

#### ITEM 19: STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

This systemic factor examines whether the State is operating a statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care. Alaska is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System and received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement.

### STRENGTHS, CONCERNS AND SUMMARY

Alaska received a rating of Area Needing Improvement for this item due to data lags in timely entry of the data elements into ORCA and the difficulties with verifying the data accuracy on demographic information against other data systems, such as the Bureau of Vital Statistics birth certificate records. The most concerning data entry delays occur at case junctures where placement changes occur, with some placement documentation taking as much as 27 days to complete within the ORCA system. Alaska recognizes that the lack of timely placement documentation in ORCA creates a significant safety risk to children in care. Demographic data verification processes will be

addressed in the CFSP, and will likely involve the development of data interfaces with other data systems as a part of Alaska Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) for which a high reliance of data verification is involved.

#### **SYSTEMIC FACTOR B: CASE REVIEW SYSTEM**

State's performance in Systemic Factor B is assessed using the State's performance on items 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24. Alaska is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. Two of the five items in this systemic factor were rated as a Strength.

#### **ITEM 20: WRITTEN CASE PLAN.**

This item pertains to whether the State adheres to a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan, to be developed jointly with the child, when appropriate, and the child's parent(s), that includes the required provisions. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on information from the Statewide Assessment that children and families were included in case planning in 73% of the foster care cases and 45% of the in home cases. Case review data showed that case plans were established timely in 26.1% of the cases.

#### **ITEM 21: PERIODIC REVIEWS.**

This item pertains to whether the State provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child, no less frequently than once every six months, either by a court or by administrative review. Alaska received an overall rating of Strength for Item 21. Data from the Statewide Assessment showed that Alaska has a fully functioning administrative case review system that ensures a periodic review for each child occurs no less frequently than every 6 months. Data from the 2017 assessment indicated that 99.9% of the periodic reviews for each child were occurring timely.

#### **ITEM 22: PERMANENCY HEARING.**

This item pertains to whether the State provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the State has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date that the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter. Alaska received an overall rating of Strength for Item 22 based on information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews. Information gathered indicated that, on average, permanency hearings occur no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care, and subsequent permanency hearings occur on average every 169 days.

#### **ITEM 23: TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS.**

This item pertains to whether the State provides a process for termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 23 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information indicated that Alaska does not have a standardized process to track or ensure that TPR petitions are filed timely or that compelling reasons not to file TPR are documented.



## ITEM 24: NOTICE OF HEARINGS AND REVIEWS TO CAREGIVERS.

This item examines whether the State provides a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 24 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that statewide, there is no standardized method in place to ensure that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care are consistently notified of, and have a right to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child.

### STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES AND SUMMARY

Since Items 21 and 22 were rated as a Strength for Alaska, strategies in the CFSP will target Items 21, 23, and 24 for Systemic Factor B. Alaska continues to have challenges with engaging parents and children in the case planning process. Strategies will aim to improve caseworker engagement with parents and children alike, particularly as it relates to case planning.

CFSR findings indicated that Alaska does not have a standardized process to track data or ensure that TPR petitions are filed timely or that compelling reasons not to file a TPR are documented. This is an area that will be addressed under the collaborative work with the Court Improvement Project work and through improved training, supervision and mentoring.

<b>On 5/29/19 Children in OOH Care &gt; 15 months</b>	<b>1,439</b>	<b>100%</b>
Children OOH > 15 months with completed TPR <= 15 months	54	3.8%
Children OOH > 15 months with completed TPR <= 24 months	189	13.1%

Source: ORCA Data, May 2019

A solid system is in place for the notification of caregivers of administrative reviews. The success of this process is likely because it has been automated through ORCA and is delegated to State Office support staff. However, the responsibility for the notification of caregivers of court hearings is still a task that the assigned CPS caseworkers must complete; and, due to their heavy caseloads and competing priorities it is not consistently achieved. OCS, in partnership with CIP, will identify strategies to increase compliance with notification requirements.

### SYSTEMIC FACTOR C, ITEM 25: QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

This systemic factor pertains to whether the state is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies the strengths and needs of the service delivery system, and provides relevant reports and evaluates program improvement measures implemented. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 25 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that some elements of a functioning quality assurance system are in place through the state. While Alaska gathers data from multiple sources, the data does not necessarily drive practice change, nor does the CQI process fully consider all of the data available consistently across the agency and across the OCS service regions. Of concern, the state lacks a process to evaluate the quality of the service delivery system and implemented program improvement measures. Alaska has not yet achieved a consistent, statewide, data driven process that assesses, evaluates, and informs policy and practice improvements and outcomes based on the totality of the data available to the agency.

## **STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES AND SUMMARY**

The Office of Children’s Services recognized in the 2017 Statewide Assessment the strengths of the current QA process. However, OCS processes of CQI are fragmented, disjointed and limited in terms of how data is gathered, assessed, evaluated, interpreted and disseminated across the agency. While Alaska has a CQI team, this team focuses primarily on field and regional related needs and outcomes, and does not readily integrate data findings and results from other areas of the system such as services through grant and contract data findings and summaries, Title IV-E Audit findings, data from financial information as it relates to services, goods and resources availability, and data from external sources both within the Department of Health and Social Services and external resources. While data from external partners, such as the Court Improvement Project, the Courts, the Citizen Review Panel and others, are available to OCS, the analysis of the data and findings are rarely integrated into improvements of overall practice changes and improvements.

OCS does not have a consistent guiding policy, practice or protocols as to the CQI processes, steps and priorities. Most striking is the lack of a consistent, robust and meaningful feedback loop that can inform all areas of practice on necessary changes, improvements and overall direction for children and families.

OCS has specifically selected CQI as a goal for the CFSP to identify needs and opportunities, research solutions, develop, modify, refine and better embed solid CQI at all levels of the agency with a focus on a CQI Implementation framework and improved outcomes for children and families.

## **SYSTEMIC FACTOR D: STAFF AND PROVIDER TRAINING**

This systemic factor of training incorporates an assessment of the State’s performance in Items 26, 27, and 28. Alaska is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training. None of the items in this systemic factor were rated as a Strength.

### **ITEM 26: INITIAL STAFF TRAINING.**

This item pertains to whether the State has a staff and provider training system statewide to ensure that initial training is provided to all staff who deliver services pursuant to the CFSP that includes the basic skills and knowledge required for their positions. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 26 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that while the state provides initial training to state staff who deliver services pursuant to the CFSP that includes the basic skills and knowledge required for their positions, the state is not adequately evaluating the training.

### **ITEM 27: ONGOING STAFF TRAINING.**

This item pertains to whether the State provides ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 27 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that the state has no requirement for ongoing staff training hours or processes and tools to assess staff’s ongoing training needs and evaluate the effectiveness of training offered.

## **ITEM 28: FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT TRAINING.**

This item examines whether the State provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of State-licensed or State-approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E. Additionally, it examines whether the training addresses the skills and knowledge base that they need to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 28 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that while Alaska has training requirements in place for foster parents, tracking and evaluation mechanisms, and opportunities for specialized training, the state does not have training requirements for adoptive parents.

### **STRENGTHS, CONCERNS AND SUMMARY**

Information from the Statewide Assessment showed that while the state provides initial training to state staff who deliver services pursuant to the CFSP that includes the basic skills and knowledge required for their positions, the state is not adequately evaluating the training. While the state requires contracted providers to receive training for performing these services, the state did not provide information regarding training requirements, compliance, and evaluation of initial staff training for Tribal and contracted providers.

Alaska has previously had no requirement for ongoing staff training hours or processes and tools to assess staff's ongoing training needs and evaluate the effectiveness of training offered. The state also did not provide data or information on the effectiveness of the ongoing training offered to Tribal and community providers.

Alaska has training requirements in place for foster parents, tracking and evaluation mechanisms, and opportunities for specialized training, the state does not have training requirements for adoptive parents. Training requirements are in place for Residential Licensed Care Facilities, but there is no data on compliance with the requirements or the effectiveness of the training.

Training will be embedded in several areas of the CFSP for staff initial and ongoing training, as well as foster parent training. CQI and feedback loops, with fidelity to the CQI Implementation framework, will be critical to the enhancement and modification of training for new staff and contracted providers through the Child Welfare Academy. While the initial training includes basic skills and knowledge required for staff, the state still needs to improve the evaluation of the training, not just to OCS staff but to contracted and Tribal providers who provide child welfare services in Alaska.

A stakeholder meeting was held in 2019 that included OCS front line, supervisory and management staff, youth, parents, CWA staff and tribal partners to evaluate the current initial new staff training. Incorporating the input and feedback, the initial staff training was re-designed to align with the core essential services identified by OCS. In addition, the schedule of classroom training was changed to hold initial staff training monthly and an evaluation of learning added to inform transfer of learning needs the mentors would utilize to reinforce training.

Tribal partners and tribal child welfare staff are encouraged to attend initial training and are routinely invited to participate in ongoing training offered by OCS and CWA. Several tribes have sent tribal

staff to participate in training in FY 2019, and continued efforts to encourage participation and messaging of training invitations will continue through the course of the CSFP.

A sixth week of training was added to the training curriculum for State FY20 that will include new staff and ongoing staff training. The sixth week of training is based in the Regions around the state and the curriculum developed around CQI information. The CQI process will inform training needs and curriculum development through ORCA data, essential services scorecard, OSRI reviews and feedback on field office practice from the mentors. The sixth week of training will occur on a yearly basis in each of the Regions and the first trainings are scheduled to begin in July 2019 with evaluation to measure impact to ongoing training and development.

Supervisor Training is being enhanced to include training on the competency based evaluations for staff to provide opportunity for assessment of child protection staff skills and competencies and develop goals to enhance competencies in staff through training, additional mentoring and professional development opportunities. Coaching Supervisors to Best Practice has been adapted to include a case review to thoroughly understand how practice is applied to real cases and create a learning environment for supervisors to critically think about case practice and decision making. By developing supervisor coaching skills, application of the practice model and assessment of staff competencies will further enhance on-going training and is incorporated throughout the CSFP.

The schedule for training is as follows:

1. All new workers in the job class of Protective Services Specialist will attend the Skills, Knowledge and Insights Leading to Success (SKILS) to meet mandated training requirements within the first 12 month of employment.

Course Number	Course Title	Length of Course	Number of Offerings	Location
161	SKILS Training	10 days	10 times/year	Training Academy
162	SKILS Training	10 days	4 times/year	Training Academy
163	SKILS Training	5 days 2 days 3 days	3 times/year Once/per year TBA	Training Academy, Regionally, Electronically
BLC	Provide and Maintain Blended Learning Community	Pre-SKILS, Intersessions A and B	Once/year	Electronically

2. Caseworkers transferring positions, rehired caseworkers, or as assigned by OCS will attend the following training:

Course Number	Course Title	Length of Course	Number of Offerings	Location
171	SKILS: IA Refresher	2 days	TBD	Training Academy
172	SKILS: FS Refresher	2 days	TBD	Training Academy

3. All workers in the job class of Community Care Licensing Specialist will attend the Licensing Training appropriate for their job classification.

Course Number	Course Title	Length of Course	Number of Offerings	Location
115	Licensing	3 days	Once/year	Training Academy

4. All new workers in the job class of Social Services Associate (SSA) will attend the Social Services Associate Training appropriate for their job classification.

Course Number	Course Title	Length of Course	Number of Offerings	Location
140	Social Services Associate Training	3 days	Once/year	Training Academy

5. All new workers in the job class of Protective Services Specialist or Community Care Licensing Specialist will, in addition to the above requirements, attend the following training within the first 12 months of employment:

Course Number	Course Title	Length of Course	Number of Offerings	Location
229	ICWA II	2 days	8 times/year	Regionally

6. All new workers in the job class of Protective Services Specialist or Community Care Licensing Specialist will, in addition to the above requirements, attend the following training within the first 24 months of employment:

Course Number	Course Title	Length of Course	Number of Offerings	Location
235	Knowing Who You Are (KWYA)	2 days	TBA	Regionally

7. Supervisors as assigned by OCS will attend the following training:

Course Number	Course Title	Length of Course	Number of Offerings	Location
554	Supervisor Training, Part 1	4 days	Once/year	Training Academy
555	Supervisor Training, Part 2	3 days	Once/year	Training Academy

8. Caseworkers as assigned by OCS will attend the following training:

Course Number	Course Title	Length of Course	Number of Offerings	Location
237	ChildFirst Alaska	5 days	3 times/year	TBD
247	ChildFirst Understanding the Forensic Interview	3 days	2 times/year	TBD
285	Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI)	1 day	11 times/year	Training Academy

9. Caseworkers as assigned by OCS will participate in the following training webinars:

Course Number	Course Title	Length of Course	Number of Offerings	Location
Not Assigned	Training Webinars – Topics To Be Determined	TBD	TBD	Webinar/ Blackboard

10. Supervisors as assigned by OCS will attend the following training:

Course Number	Course Title	Length of Course	Number of Offerings	Location
580	Coaching Supervisors to Best Practice	4 Modules	2 Cohorts	Training Academy and Electronically

#### **SYSTEMIC FACTOR D: SERVICE ARRAY**

Systemic Factor D is assessed through the state’s performance on Items 29 and 30. Alaska did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array during the 2017 CFSR.

#### **ITEM 29: ARRAY OF SERVICES.**

This item examines whether the State agency has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families, determines other service needs, that addresses the needs of families in addition to individual children to create a safe home environment, that enables children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and that help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 29 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed significant gaps in service array.

#### **ITEM 30: INDIVIDUALIZING SERVICES.**

This item examines whether the State agency’s service array and resource development system is functioning statewide to ensure that the services in Item 29 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 30 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that the state is challenged to individualize services for several reasons.

#### **STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES, AND SUMMARY**

Due to it’s vast geographical area, Alaska is challenged in ensuring that the array of needed services is accessible in all jurisdictions covered by the CFSP. Alaska does not have an established routine system for collecting needs assessment data from communities regarding service array, resource development and service gaps. Also, the service array is not routinely included as an aspect of the OCS CQI processes. Historically, there are significant gaps in the service array throughout the state, most notably in in-home services and specialized medical, mental health, and substance abuse treatment, both outpatient and residential, especially in rural areas. In addition, there is a statewide shortfall in Independent Living (IL) programs that assess and address the needs of eligible youth. The gaps result in long waitlists for some services. The state is also challenged in individualizing



services to meet the unique needs of families and children because of the limited funding and the lack of availability of community-based services. The flexible funding and the developmentally and culturally appropriate services that exist are not sufficient and do not meet the unique needs of all the children and families in the state, particularly in rural areas. The lack of culturally competent agency workers, turnover in the agency's and Rural Child Welfare grantee staff, lack of universal acceptance of culturally sensitive interventions, and travel restrictions also contribute to the state's inability to individualize services.

Through partnering with the Division of Behavioral Health, and pursuing the opportunities made available through FFPSA, Alaska aims to leverage new revenue streams available through Alaska's Medicaid Waiver and Title IV-E to expand the availability of community based, culturally appropriate mental health, substance abuse and family support services for at risk families and those involved in child welfare. By maximizing federal dollars to pay for clinical services, Alaska will be able to target more state general funds to purchase traditional healing/cultural services provided through traditional healers, tribal members/peer mentors and tribal elders. This service delivery approach is outlined in the Cultural Resource Guide which was developed to be utilized by staff when case planning with parents. Included in the guide is an appendix which provides a list of culturally appropriate services in each region of Alaska, as well as instructions for OCS workers on a process for securing and authorizing the purchase of cultural services through the use of state general funds.

#### **SYSTEMIC FACTOR F: AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Systemic Factor F is assessed by the state's performance in Items 31 and 32. The 2017 CFRS found that Alaska was in substantial conformity for this systemic factor as both Items 31 and 32 were rated as a strength.

#### **ITEM 31: STATE ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS PURSUANT TO THE CFSP AND APSR.**

This item examines if the agency's responsiveness to the community is functioning statewide to ensure that, in implementing the provisions of the CFSP and developing related APSRs, the state engages in ongoing consultation with Tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child and family serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals, objectives and annual updates of the CFSP. Alaska received an overall rating of Strength for Item 31 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that Alaska effectively engages and consults with stakeholders pursuant to the goals and objectives of the CFSP and annual updates to the APSR.

#### **ITEM 32: COORDINATION OF CFSP SERVICES WITH OTHER FEDERAL PROGRAMS.**

This item examines if the agency responsiveness to the community system is functioning statewide to ensure that the state's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population. Alaska received an overall rating of Strength for Item 32 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that Alaska's services under the CFSP are conducted with services and benefits of other federal programs that assist the same service population.

## **STRENGTHS**

Alaska received an overall rating of Strength for Systemic Factor F. The Statewide Assessment showed for Item 31 that the state seeks feedback from internal and external partners to identify concerns, review data, develop strategies, and implement change efforts. The CFSP and Annual Progress and Service Report (APSR) are developed with input and ongoing consultation with Tribal representatives, children and families, service providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies. The Statewide Assessment also showed for Item 32 that, through memoranda of agreement, program coordination and improvements to technology for collaborative efforts, the state's services under the CFSP are being coordinated with services and benefits of other federal programs that assist the same service population. Alaska identified collaborations with the nine divisions of the State's Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Behavioral Health (former foster care youth Medicaid Eligibility), Division of Public Assistance, Department of Revenue, Department of Education, Bureau of Vital Information, Division of Health care Services (Medicaid), Department of Public Safety and 11 Tribes/Tribal entities.

### **SYSTEMIC FACTOR G: FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION.**

This Systemic Factor is assessed by the measurement of state performance on Items 33, 34, 35, and 36. Alaska was found to not be in substantial conformity with systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention as one of the four Items in this Systemic Factor was rated as a Strength.

#### **ITEM 33: STANDARDS APPLIED EQUALLY.**

This item measures whether the State's foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system is functioning statewide to ensure that state standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title Iv-B or Iv-E funds. Alaska received an overall rating of Strength for Item 33 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that standards are applied equally to the licensed foster homes and residential child care institutions.

#### **ITEM 34: REQUIREMENTS FOR CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS.**

This item measures whether the State's foster and adoptive parents licensing, recruitment, and retention system is functioning statewide to ensure that the state complies with federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 34 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Alaska did not provide information to demonstrate that processes were in place for safety planning and monitoring when safety issues are identified in a child's placement.

#### **ITEM 35: DILIGENT RECRUITMENT OF FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE HOMES.**

This item measures whether the State's foster and adoptive parents licensing, recruitment, and retention system is functioning to ensure that the process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of

potential foster and adoptive families who reflect the ethnical and racial diversity of children in the state for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed is occurring statewide. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 35 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that the number of children who cannot be returned home exceed the number of available families.

### **ITEM 36: STATE USE OF CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL RESOURCES FOR PERMANENT PLACEMENTS.**

This item measures whether the State’s foster and adoptive parents licensing, recruitment, and retention system is functioning to ensure that the process for ensuring the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children is occurring statewide. Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 36 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Alaska reported it does not have a fully functioning system to ensure successful placement across regional or state lines.

### **STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES, AND SUMMARY**

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Systemic Factor Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention as only Item 33 was identified as a strength.

Item 34 was identified as an Area Needing Improvement as Alaska did not provide information to demonstrate that processes are in place for safety planning and monitoring or case planning when safety issues are identified in a child’s placement. The Statewide Assessment showed for Item 35 that the numbers of children who cannot be returned home exceed the number of available families. Alaska was not able to provide information for the effectiveness of their recruitment or whether adjustments to strategies are made to recruit families who meet the racial and ethnic needs of children awaiting foster or adoptive homes. For Item 36 Alaska reported to not have a fully functioning system to ensure successful placement across regional or state lines. Adherence to processes to facilitate inter- and intra-jurisdictional placements are inconsistent. Information in the Statewide Assessment showed that Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children adoption home studies, licensure requests, and parent and relative requests are not completed timely. The focus for the CSFP is to develop a formal response to when new safety concerns arise through APSIN Flag Hits on unlicensed relative resource family homes.

## **SECTION 3 – PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT**

### **GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

Alaska has chosen, in joint planning with the Children’s Bureau, to focus on the following four priorities over the next five years. OCS believes that by focusing on these four priorities the agency will be able to achieve significant improvement in the outcome areas identified as needing the greatest growth. Several strategies will be completed within the first two years of the CFSP but lay the groundwork for the larger strategies that will take the full five years to implement. Those larger strategies include an in-home model, prevention services, workforce improvements and implementation of agency wide CQI.

## **DEVELOP A SKILLED AND STABLE WORKFORCE**

Central to improved child welfare performance on all outcomes for families and children in Alaska is a strong and stable workforce focused on safety, permanency and well-being. Alaska looks to the key elements of staff recruitment strategies, retention efforts primarily through training, supervision and staff mentorship as key to reducing the workforce challenges with OCS.

OCS is targeting four key areas of focus related to strategies to improve outcomes for workforce. These targets align with current workforce improvements the agency has embraced to improve worker retention, using the CQI process:

- Recruitment of frontline staff;
- Competency-based assessment of line staff;
- Agency and Organizational culture; and
- Retention of staff.

Throughout the PIP and CFSP, there are strategies for which training is central to improve practice. However, it is also recognized that training alone cannot improve practice. Thus, the importance of supervisory support, mentoring and a gradual approach to being assigned cases, once the worker returns to the office from training is crucial to the steady and reliable application of the training and the OCS practice model to the sustainability of safety, permanency and well-being. Additionally, this work, involving transfer of learning, and supervisory initiatives, coupled with CQI through the CQI Implementation framework will help to enhance the resiliency and retention of frontline and supervisory staff with OCS.

## **PRIORITIZE IDENTIFIED ESSENTIAL CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES**

OCS is an overburdened and underperforming child protection agency. The examination of OCS's data related to workforce retention issues, increase in protective services reports and rise of children in foster care requires call to action. Alaska needs to identify and focus on essential child protection services in order to effectively achieve our mission to keep children safe and families strong.

Through leadership and stakeholder dialogues driven by CSFR data and PIP development, key essential services were identified to prioritize in the CSFP. Identifying clear priorities in services and expectations of key service delivery will provide direction to staff in an overwhelmed work capacity and enhance messaging to external stakeholders of the priority of OCS. The five essential services include:

- Timely initiations of Initial Assessments;
- Timely and accurate completions of Initial Assessments;
- Current case plans for children and parents;
- Monthly case worker visits with children, mothers and fathers;
- Children placed with relatives

## **PARTNER WITH TRIBES AND COMMUNITY AGENCIES TO PROVIDE SUPPORTS AND SERVICES TO FAMILIES**

In the past five years, Alaska has followed the national trends of other states in experiencing significant and profound increases in the number of protective services reports received for child abuse and neglect and the number of cases which must be opened to keep children safe, leading to higher numbers of children in care. The impacts of child maltreatment pose significant, compounded social and financial costs to the State of Alaska. The return on investment to starting interventions at birth, and providing comprehensive early childhood and family support programs is well documented. The child protection system was historically designed to be reactive, not proactive towards child maltreatment. It is impossible for OCS to address prevention alone. Rigorous research has demonstrated that some community based programs and strategies can improve outcomes and keep children safely at home with their families preventing them from entering the child welfare system.

**Screen outs.** For years there has been repeated requests by Tribal partners and community stakeholders alike for OCS to release screened out protective service report in order to allow those families identified as being at-risk to be targeted for support services. The belief is that if there was a way to intervene sooner with this particular population, it may be possible to prevent families from entering the foster care system. Under the Tribal Child Welfare Compact, 94 Tribes are currently receiving screened out reports. However, most Tribes do not have the resources to keep up with the number of reports and the volume of need. Conversely for non-tribal entities who may have resources, there is no legal mechanism to provide these reports due to confidentiality barriers. OCS has identified this issue as a prevention strategy for the CFSP.

**Plans of Safe Care.** OCS is committed to the development of a statewide collaborative Plans of Safe Care Initiative for infants exposed to substances. In May 2019, OCS joined with Alaska's Plans of Safe Care Committee, members of Alaska's Obstetrics *Maternal* Newborn Investigation (*OMNI*) team and the Center for Children and Family Futures to launch *Alaska's Plan of Safe Care Initiative* (APOSC). APOSC's goal is to improve outcomes for substance using pregnant and postpartum women, their infants, families, and care givers. During the two day event, plans for conducting a pilot were developed. Seventy-three people from Alaska's Court system and health and social service agencies and organizations participated.

Plans of Safe Care, reduce stigma, promote mothers to receive more treatment services during and after delivery, and decreases the likelihood for children entering foster care. Planning efforts are underway to pilot a Plans of Safe Care program in the Mat-Su valley.

**Title IV-E Prevention Program.** OCS is in the initial stages of developing a Prevention Plan that has involved technical assistance and key stakeholder feedback and collaboration. OCS is committed to assisting in leveraging community resources to support prevention services in addition to conducting an analysis of implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act.

## **BUILD A CULTURE DEDICATED TO EVALUATION AND CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (CQI) INFORMED BY DATA DRIVEN DECISION MAKING**

The Office of Children's Services Quality Assurance process was recognized in the 2017 Statewide Assessment as a strength. However, OCS does not have a consistent guiding policy, practice or

protocols as to the CQI processes, steps and priorities. Most striking is the lack of a consistent, robust and meaningful feedback loop that can inform all areas of practice on necessary changes, improvements and overall direction for children and families. These findings were echoed in the 2017 Child and Family Services Review findings.

OCS has specifically selected CQI as a goal for this CFSP to identify needs and opportunities, research solutions, develop, modify, refine and better embed solid CQI at all levels of the agency with a focus on a CQI Implementation framework and improved outcomes for children and families.

Known factors regarding existing CQI processes for OCS include the following:

- No common guiding principles, values or processes for CQI that is sustainable across the agency;
- Differing values and expectations on what CQI is and should be for the agency;
- CQI is perceived to be more of a management tool and not necessarily a tool that benefits supervisors or workers at the field level; and
- OCS is great at new ideas, and starting new initiatives, but is lacking on the necessary focused follow-through of implementation that allows for changes to new initiatives along the way. If new efforts do not work, they are generally eliminated with little assessment, evaluation or changes that could make the effort successful. OCS needs assistance in strengthening its change and implementation practices.

<b>Goal #1: Develop a Skilled and Stable Child Protection Workforce</b>				
<b>Strategy 1.A: Recruitment and Retention Efforts</b>				
<b>Concern/ Focus</b>	<b>Objectives:</b>	<b>Measure of Progress and Timeline:</b>	<b>Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports</b>	<b>Projected Outcomes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By end of year 2017, the vacancy and turnover rate at OCS was at 49%</li> <li>• High turnover rates impacts all areas of case practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a five year staff recruitment and retention plan.</li> <li>• Develop and implement standardized and centralized recruitment. Strategies and tools including longevity bonuses, educational stipends and leave, well-being leave and staff recognition policies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 year plan will be created by March 2020.</li> <li>• Full implementation of agency Mission, Vision, and Values by March 2020.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update and embed agency vision, mission, and values through strategic communication plan to include training and mentorship.</li> <li>• Coordination with DHSS HR on retention and recruitment strategies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease turnover rate to 35-40% within 5 years.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update and embed agency vision, mission, and values through strategic communication plan.</li> <li>Statewide Executive Team (SET) will work with Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Human Resources (HR) to create recruitment deliverables.</li> </ul>			
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**Strategy 1.B: New Staff Training, Transfer of Learning, and Case Assignment**

<b>Concern/ Focus</b>	<b>Objectives:</b>	<b>Measure of Progress and Timeline:</b>	<b>Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports</b>	<b>Projected Outcomes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to evaluate and enhance existing training and extend to 6 weeks per House Bill (HB) 151.</li> <li>High caseloads negatively impacting quality efforts and engagement.</li> <li>Lack statewide consistency in how new staff are oriented to the agency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retain quality staff through enhanced training and reduced caseloads.</li> <li>Mentor program will be fully implemented, outlined in policy, with an evaluation component.</li> <li>Implement HB 151 gradual case load requirements and case load average by June 2020.</li> <li>Implement a statewide first year orientation program for new employees that includes required timelines for competency based evaluations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training through the Child Welfare Academy (CWA) will be extended to 6 weeks beginning July 2019. Training will occur in phases to enhance transfer of learning (TOL) through mentorship and field practice.</li> <li>Workgroup through the Change Management Leadership Team (CMLT) will develop an implementation process for the competency based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Partnership with the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) develop measurement and feedback strategies to track the effectiveness of training and TOL.</li> <li>Develop a case assignment protocol, to align with the HB 151 case load average requirements. Embed protocol in the Child Protective Services (CPS) manual</li> <li>Create a quarterly all staff mandatory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CWA evaluation and Annual staff survey will demonstrate that staff feel their training and orientation successfully prepared them for their position.</li> <li>At least 50% of the frontline caseworkers in the state will have a caseload average of 13.</li> <li>Staff will report feeling more competent in their practice after implementation of changes to new employee and on-going training.</li> </ul>

		<p>evaluation for PSS I/II staff by 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring and reporting mechanism for new case load assignments will be developed by June 2020.</li> <li>By November of 2019 OCS leadership will implement a required new employee orientation packet that outlines the first year of onboarding for a new employee.</li> </ul>	<p>webinar training program. Topics will be identified by data from and Essential Services Scorecard and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training will be provided to supervisors and managers for utilization and purpose of the orientation packet and the onboarding process.</li> </ul>	
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**Strategy 1.C: Improved, Consistent, Meaningful Supervision, on the Job Support, Case Guidance and Mentoring**

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of consistent and quality supervision statewide.</li> <li>Lack of standardized training for supervisors.</li> <li>Lack of competency based evaluations for supervisors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisors consistently use data in supervisions with case carrying staff.</li> <li>Standardized training plan for new and current supervisors</li> <li>Develop and implement a supervisory competency based evaluation by July 2020.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement an the Online Resource for the Children of Alaska (ORCA) Desktop Feature to allow supervisors real time access to individual case worker data by January 2020.</li> <li>Standards will be developed for all new and current supervisors to attend trainings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisory Leadership Council (SLC) and CMLT to develop a work plan to ensure consistent standards of supervision across the agency. Tools will be included to assist supervisors in data driven supervision to track and staff key decision points in a case, identify needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On the annual Staff survey, staff will report they receive meaningful and consistent supervision.</li> <li>On the annual Staff survey, supervisors will report they receive consistent training on coaching techniques, supervisory requirements, and use of data in supervision.</li> </ul>

		including Academy for Supervisors through Department of Personnel and Labor Relations (DOP), CWA Supervisor training, and Coaching Supervisors to Best Practices (CSBP) at CWA by 2020.	and provide areas of coaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The implemented supervisor competency based evaluation will demonstrate enhanced competencies of supervisors and utilization of data, coaching and worker wellbeing in consistent staffing.</li> </ul>
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**Goal #2: Prioritize Identified Essential Child Protection Services**

**Strategy 2.A: Improved Timeliness, Accuracy, and Consistency of Protective Services Reports (PSR) and Initial Assessments (IA)**

<b>Concern/ Focus</b>	<b>Objectives:</b>	<b>Measure of Progress and Timeline:</b>	<b>Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports</b>	<b>Projected Outcomes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intake is not currently staffed on the weekends and after standard work hours.</li> <li>Not timely initiating cases, especially Priority 3s (P-3), lack of timely and accurate case closures.</li> <li>Inaccurate identification of safety threats and ineffective monitoring of safety plans.</li> <li>Lack of process for assessing risk and child safety when a concern is reported in a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refine and continue efforts to standardize Centralized intake.</li> <li>Increase timely initiations to Priority 3 reports.</li> <li>Require supervisory staffing note in ORCA if initiation is not going to occur within timeframes.</li> <li>Improve the timely and accurate completion of initial assessments.</li> <li>Cases determined to need on-going safety management will have their needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By August of 2019, Intake Specialists will be in the office extended hours on weekends and from 7am until midnight during the weekdays.</li> <li>ORCA and Case Review data monitoring will indicate timely initiation of P-3 reports in 75% of cases by July 2021.</li> <li>Initial Assessment initiations will be included in the Essential Services Scorecard by July 2020.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued CQI efforts to improve quality of reports and a PSR Dispute Process are being developed.</li> <li>Centralized Intake Manager conducts training with regional staff and outreach to solicit feedback.</li> <li>IA workgroup will develop and implement a webinar training and competency based test for priority response times.</li> <li>Supervision guidance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timely and accurate assessment of safety for children as evidenced by ORCA and Quality Assurance (QA) outcome data.</li> <li>The Onsite Review Instrument (OSRI) reviews will indicate that children are safely maintained in the parent home when appropriate.</li> <li>Supervisory staffing ORCA report will demonstrate that supervisors</li> </ul>

<p>Resource Family Home.</p>	<p>safety managed in the parent’s home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement clear process for assessing risk and child safety timely when an Alaska Public Safety Information Network (APSIN) flag hit reveals a new safety concern to the child in the unlicensed Resource Family Home.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By July 2020 monitor the supervisor staffing report in ORCA to ensure compliance with documented reasons why an IA is not being initiated timely.</li> <li>• By March 2020 develop CQI system with measurements, progress timeframes and a feedback loop with staff, regional managers and leadership to track and monitor priority response times.</li> <li>• ORCA and Case Review data monitoring will indicate timely completion and accurate assessments in 75% of cases by July 2024.</li> <li>• By September 2020 CQI, Research Unit, and QA, in addition to stakeholder feedback will conduct a root cause analysis to identify systemic issues and/or practice model issues that cause initial assessments to not be</li> </ul>	<p>developed by SLC and CMLT for supervisors to utilize ORCA reports/desktop feature to track initiation rates for Priority 3 reports.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IA workgroup will develop a guide for practice strategies to better manage workload adjustments when turnover occurs.</li> <li>• Develop and implement policy for supervisory oversight requiring the use of ORCA reports/desktop features to identify open Initial Assessments, and staff these with the PSS to clarify steps needed to complete accurate and quality assessment of all open reports. Measured through OSRI case review.</li> <li>• Supervisory training and mentorship related to accurate assessment of risk and</li> </ul>	<p>are entering a supervisory staffing note for delayed initiations 90% of the time by end of CFSP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy and procedure defines process for assessing safety of children when a new concern is received on an unlicensed Resource Family Home.</li> </ul>
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		<p>completed timely and accurately.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By June of 2024 identify and implement appropriate interventions based on the root cause analysis for the IA process. Including evaluation of the intervention.</li> <li>• Develop policy and procedure for response to APSIN flag hits in unlicensed Resource Family Homes by June 2020.</li> </ul>	intervention decisions.	
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**Strategy 2.B: Build Infrastructure and Implement Statewide In Home Services and Increase Service Array Linkage**

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alaska is lacking an in-home services model.</li> <li>• Families are not adequately linked to services.</li> <li>• Families will be connected with culturally appropriate services.</li> <li>• Competencies to identify when children can be returned to the family home and appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement an in-home services model.</li> <li>• A system for collecting qualitative/case review data on in-home cases established.</li> <li>• Enhance supervisory competency and oversight of safety planning and assessment</li> <li>• Develop CQI process for Service Array.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By November 2019 review promising practices, existing policy, and outcomes for in home cases in Alaska to assist in needs assessment and CQI.</li> <li>• By June of 2022 implement in-home model pilot in selected region and evaluate effectiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training to staff and community partners.</li> <li>• OCS and CWA will ensure that all supervisory staff complete the coaching program to ensure enhanced competency to safety plan, assess parents' behavior change, level of engagement and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development and implementation of an in-home services model.</li> <li>• OSRI reviews will indicate an increase in compliance for Safety Outcome 2 and Well-Being Outcome 1.</li> <li>• Outcomes from OSRI reviews will demonstrate that children remain safely in</li> </ul>

<p>safety planning and monitoring are lacking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural Resource Guide will be fully implemented for use by staff.</li> <li>• The mentor program will reinforce training and transfer of learning regarding assessment of parental behavioral change, safety planning and monitoring during a trial home visit.</li> </ul>	<p>prior to scaling up statewide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-home model will be fully implemented with In Home Services Policy and Procedures by June of 2024.</li> <li>• By February 2020 develop a targeted staffing process, that includes safety measurement tools, to plan for when children can safely return home for a trial home visit and on-going safety monitoring.</li> <li>• Partner with Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) and contractor to conduct Behavioral Health Services Gap Analysis by July 2019.</li> <li>• By September 2020 develop online tools and other resources for staff to stay informed about new and current services and referral procedures in their communities.</li> <li>• By March 2021 develop a measurement plan to assess improved</li> </ul>	<p>sustainability of child safety in the parents' home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement supervisory strategies and timeframes for meeting with workers specific to monitoring safety, parent progress and continued assessment of need and engagement.</li> <li>• Follow up training and feedback loop regarding implementation and usefulness of the Cultural Resource Guide.</li> <li>• Mentors provide training and transfer of learning to new OCS front line protective services specialists on assessment of parental behavioral change, safety planning and monitoring of safety.</li> <li>• Train staff on the new policy and procedure for assessing unlicensed Resource Families when an APSIN flag hit occurs.</li> </ul>	<p>their own homes whenever possible.</p>
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		service accessibility, availability, and delivery of new Home-Based Family Treatment and Traditional Healing services.		
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**Strategy 2.C: Improve Engagement with Parents and Relatives**

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Earlier identification and engagement of relatives.</li> <li>• Lack of engagement with parents through case worker visits and case planning.</li> <li>• Family Contact is inconsistently administered statewide and lacks meaningful family engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase engagement with relatives and parents.</li> <li>• Clear direction will be provided, to each level of the agency, on what reports they are required to use during supervision to ensure early identification and engagement of parents and relatives.</li> <li>• Partner with Tribes through Tribal State Compacting to continue efforts on Relative Search and engagement.</li> <li>• Partner with community agencies to enhance the quality and frequency of family contact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed supervisory certification of relative search required by HB 151 by September 2019.</li> <li>• ORCA Research Unit will review reports required to ensure data is clear, easily accessible, and quick launch time by January 2021.</li> <li>• A pilot of community engaged family contact to include training will occur in the Mat Su Valley in November 2019.</li> <li>• The family contact pilot will be evaluated for impact to family engagement and permanency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervisors will receive training on elements of a case including, relative search and notification, parent engagement and timely initial referral for services, and case worker visits (CWV), that are required to be staffed at point of removal.</li> <li>• Protective Services Managers will be required to review CWV data, relative search data, and case plan data during each supervision with PSS IV.</li> <li>• Establish evaluation of successful activities and method for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ORCA reports will reflect an increased number of children in care in a relative placement.</li> <li>• Noticing data will reflect relatives are identified and noticed of their right to request placement at the earliest need of out of home placement.</li> <li>• OSRI reviews will indicate improvements to Permanency Outcome 2.</li> </ul>

		<p>outcomes until June 2022.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If family contact pilot evaluation is positive, scaling up incrementally statewide will occur by June 2024.</li> </ul>	<p>modification, compared to existing OCS processes for relative search.</p>	
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**Strategy 2.D: Increase Parental Engagement and Reduce Time to Permanency through OCS Strategies and Joint OCS/CIP Strategies**

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alaska does not achieve timely permanency.</li> <li>Lack of accountability and progress due to length of time between court hearings following the 12 month permanency hearing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Court Improvement Project (CIP) and OCS will develop several new strategies to increase timeliness to permanency.</li> <li>OCS will implement strategies for supervisory oversight of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) timeframes to reduce time to permanency.</li> <li>Permanency Planning Specialists will track potential barriers to permanency and find ways to remove barriers to permanency.</li> <li>Develop 3-4 required supervisory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benchcards will be updated to focus on permanency and parental engagement to include Judiciary oversight of case plans, family contact, and tasks to be completed for the next hearing by September 2019.</li> <li>Institute additional court hearings to occur every 6 months after a permanency hearing to support continued parental engagement and increased judicial oversight of deadlines at a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Judges will be trained on the importance of permanency and use of the updated bench cards.</li> <li>Pre-and Post-Test will be utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of the training.</li> <li>Develop and implement a mechanism for data collection and reporting on the pilot strategies quarterly and OCS/CIP meetings.</li> <li>Implement a process for all new parents in CINA court to view the video.</li> <li>Training and mentorship to all staff and supervisors on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ORCA and Court Data will reflect decreased time to permanency for children in care at the pilot location.</li> <li>Court parties will report Increased parental engagement in court process and case planning through CIP evaluation</li> <li>Court parties will report transparency of case progress in court hearings through CIP evaluation</li> <li>Evaluation of the pilot site will inform decisions on scaling out statewide with associated</li> </ul>

	<p>staffing questions for cases at 9 months which are nearing the 12 months ASFA decision, and monthly thereafter, and expectations to identify activities to achieve permanency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeted staffing process will be created for individual cases where the child(ren) have been in care for more than 12 months and continue with a primary goal of reunification, children in care more than 24 months and are placed with a relative for 6 months or longer, legally free children who are not placed in a permanent home, and children in Trial Home Visit (THV) longer than 180 days.</li> </ul>	<p>pilot site by September 2019.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a training video for parents related to the Child In Need of Aid (CINA) process, narrated from a parent’s perspective by June 2020.</li> <li>Create a template designed to give parents at the conclusion of hearings clarifying case plan activities, next hearing dates, and follow up items to be piloted by September 2019.</li> <li>Evaluation of the pilot will inform scaling out to other judicial districts by June 2022.</li> <li>If the evaluation deems that the pilot is successful, the strategies will be rolled out statewide by June 2024.</li> </ul>	<p>ASFA timeframes and compelling reasons, to include supervisory guidance, court report process and CQI feedback loop.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training for Permanency Specialists and their supervisors.</li> </ul>	<p>implementation timeframe planning.</p>
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**Goal 3: Partner with Tribes and Community Agencies to Provide Supports and Services to Families.**

**Strategy 3.A: Plans of Safe Care**

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alaska has a lack of community engagement and meaningful multi-disciplinary engagement for Plans of Safe Care.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Babies with pre-natal substance exposure and the affected family or caregivers receive the treatment and support needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an action plan for a pilot testing community based Plans of Safe Care in the Mat-Su Valley by January 2020.</li> <li>Utilize CQI to evaluate pilot implementation to inform statewide rollout and timeframe planning by January 2021.</li> <li>If evaluation is positive rollout Plans of Safe Care Statewide by June 2024.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with other divisions within DHSS, non-state entities and national consultants to create a pilot and roll out Statewide.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All substance affected babies will have a Plan for Safe Care.</li> <li>Support will be provided to babies, and their families, who are affected by substance use and prenatal substance exposure.</li> <li>OCS will accurately report all instances of substance affected babies and the number of Plans of Safe Care.</li> </ul>
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**Strategy 3.B: Link at risk families identified in screened out reports to Tribal and Community Services**

Concern/Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support is not provided to families reported to, but screened out by OCS.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a system for which families receive services following a screened out report in efforts to prevent additional reports and potential screen ins.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage key stakeholders in the exploration stage, including parents and youth by June 2020.</li> <li>Explore statutory support, including fiscal allocations, and contractual authority for data sharing by FY 2021.</li> <li>Initiate a demonstration pilot for Mat-Su</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide for dedicated state and local staff to implement the early intervention program.</li> <li>Partner with Tribes to maintain specific strategies are integrated into program development, including linkages with culturally specific</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in repeat screen outs for families in the piloted locations through PSR data.</li> <li>Piloted community based agencies report families being served through screen out reports.</li> </ul>

		by January 2021. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize CQI to evaluate pilot implementation to inform statewide rollout and timeframe planning by January 2023.</li> <li>If evaluation is positive rollout Plans of Safe Care Statewide by June 2024.</li> </ul>	community providers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide training and application of learning opportunities for CQI.</li> </ul>	
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**Strategy 3.C: Develop and implement an approved Title IV-E Prevention Program Plan**

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize new opportunities under the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) to support the prevention of families from entering the child welfare system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alaska will consult and coordinate with Tribal, State and private entities in the development of a prevention program to ensure a continuum of care for children, parents and caregivers receiving prevention services.</li> <li>Identify eligibility for candidates for care population.</li> <li>Identify and rate prevention services to be included in the prevention program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OCS will submit a Title IV-E Prevention plan to the Children’s Bureau by December 2019.</li> <li>OCS will implement prevention services by October 2021.</li> <li>Develop a method for implementing and monitoring prevention services with fidelity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child welfare workforce will be trained on the development of family prevention plan.</li> <li>Identify evaluation strategy for prevention services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ORCA reports will demonstrate that more children are being served in their home and safely decrease the number of children in out of home care.</li> </ul>

**Goal 4: Build a Culture Dedicated to Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Informed Data Driven Decision Making.**

**Strategy 4.A: Create a CQI System that Engages the Entire Child Welfare System**

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No common guiding principles, values, or processes for CQI that is sustainable across the agency.</li> <li>Differing values and expectations on what CQI is and should be for the agency</li> <li>OCS implements new programs but is lacking on the necessary focused follow-through for implementation that allows for changes to new initiatives along the way.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a CQI Organizational Structure, and management process that clearly defines the leadership role in CQI, embeds CQI processes with all programing efforts and modifications to that program changes are made based on CQI.</li> <li>Reorganization of the CQI functions into one statewide unit, whereby, all data, quality assurance, reporting, data analysis, evaluation, and findings are centralized.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restructuring Executive Steering Committee (ESC) to CMLT to be completed by September 2020.</li> <li>Identify and utilize a CQI implementation framework to be completed by September 2020.</li> <li>Centralization of CQI staff functions into one centralized unit by September 2020.</li> <li>Imbed a CQI culture throughout the agency across organizational units and all staffing levels by June 2024.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize the Center for States in evaluating and consultation for redesign, formalize and implement a CQI work plan.</li> <li>Utilize Center for States to assist in the evaluation of the capacity of the ESC and restructure to implement CQI processes to support strategies and outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include data elements as a standing agenda item in the restructured CMLT to support data driven decision making.</li> <li>Evaluate and document implemented program improvement measures and the decision to continue, adapt or discard improvement interventions based on the evaluation</li> <li>The annual staff survey will reflect staff of all levels feeling included in CQI activities by the end of the CFSP.</li> </ul>

**Strategy 4.B: Integration of Internal and External Stakeholder’s Data Sources in the OCS CQI process**

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No formal process to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integration of internal and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a feedback loop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have an institutionalized</li> </ul>



solicit internal and external stakeholder input feedback at all levels.	external stakeholder’s data sources in the OCS CQI process for robust assessment and evaluation.	formalized ingrained processes for inclusion of key internal and external stakeholders including roles and data sources by the completion of the CFSP.	as a part of the CQI process involving internal and external key stakeholders. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize the Center for States in evaluating and consultation for redesign, formalize and implement a CQI work plan.</li> </ul>	method and process for providing feedback to stakeholders and adjusting programs and processes that will be reflected in reporting of agency activities
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**SECTION 4 – SERVICES**

**CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES CONTINUUM**

**PREVENTION**

OCS has engaged in collaboration with several community and state agencies to address prevention before families enter and across the child welfare system. OCS has a number of programs that are focused on the promotion of well-being and the prevention of child maltreatment for young children as identified under the Goals and Service Array of this plan. OCS is the lead agency for the Alaska Strengthening Families which is a new, cost-effective initiative aimed at preventing child abuse and neglect. The Center for the Study for Social Policy, with funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, set out to develop an approach to child abuse prevention that would be systematic and national, reach large numbers of very young children, and have impact before abuse or neglect occurred. Alaska is one of seven states chosen to pilot the program. Its strategy involves early childhood centers working with families to build protective factors around children. Alaska’s program brings together a leadership team from the child welfare, child abuse prevention, and early childhood fields, as well as parents and community leaders. These partners combine existing strategies to prevent child abuse and neglect primarily through state policy development and through early care and education programs.

**INTAKE**

Intake is the front door into the OCS in that Intake is the point at which reports of alleged child maltreatment are received. The receipt of a report begins the course of action for determining if the child is safe in his or her own home. The reported information is documented into a Protective Services Report (PSR) within the agency’s automated case management system, ORCA.

Intake marks the beginning of the safety assessment process. That process may result in identifying caregivers who are unable or unwilling to protect their children from danger, or it may result in identifying a family that requires no Child Protective Services intervention.

Intake is a critical function within the OCS, as it determines whether there will be a state intervention in the family's lives. Most initial contact made to OCS Intake is to either: 1) report concerns of child maltreatment or 2) obtain information and referral to other resources within OCS or in the community. Intake requires exemplary customer service.

## INITIAL ASSESSMENT

OCS provides initial assessments to determine child safety on all reports screened in during the intake process. The initial assessment process begins immediately after a protective services report is assigned to an initial assessment worker. The worker has multiple goals to accomplish during this process while following standardized policy and procedures throughout the initial assessment. The focus of this assessment is to gather sufficient information about the family which allows workers to make educated safety determinations about present and impending danger as well as the level of risk of future harm. This assessment informs the level of intervention, if any, the circumstances may require.

By the conclusion of the initial assessment process, the worker must also determine whether the child suffered harm as a result of maltreatment with a finding of "substantiated" or "not substantiated" based on the initial allegations or other child abuse or neglect. This finding is required, however, it does not dictate if or how a family will be served by OCS. For example, the allegations of maltreatment may be "not substantiated" because a child was not harmed, but the family circumstances may be placing a child at high risk of harm. A family in such a situation may still be provided services to ameliorate the dangerous conditions and prevent future episodes of child maltreatment. The most important function of the initial assessment process is determining child safety and controlling any threats to the child's safety occurring in the present or likely to occur in the near future.

## FAMILY SERVICES

The Family Services Program provides comprehensive services in situations where the initial assessment has determined the child is unsafe or at high risk of being maltreated. Services are intended to ensure the safety, permanency and well-being of children, enhance the protective capacities of parents, and strengthen the family. It is comprised of two components: 1) In-home Services and 2) Out-of-home Services.

**In-Home Services** In-home services are designed to assist families with safely maintaining their children in the home and prevent out-of-home placement. When the safety assessment is conducted and it is determined the safety threats can be managed while the child is the home, a plan to provide safety for the child is developed. An in-home safety plan can only be considered if the home environment is manageable and the caregivers are willing to participate in the plan.

**Out-of-Home Services** are provided when a child is determined as unable to be maintained safely in their own home, the Office of Children's Services assumes legal custody of the child and arranges for placement of the child in out-of-home care. Throughout this process the court provides oversight of the case and conducts regular reviews to ensure the needs of the child and family are met. Out-of-home care is provided by relatives of the family or tribal members. When these resources for placement are not available, the child is placed with a licensed foster family. Efforts are made throughout this process to ensure that the child maintains family connections, and continuity

of their cultural and community connections. Services to assist the birth family in making needed changes are provided through a process of assessment of need of each family member including the children and identification of services responsive to those needs. Parents are actively engaged by the worker in the development of their case plan. Tribal members are also asked to participate in case planning efforts if a tribe has intervened on a child's behalf.

## RESOURCE FAMILIES

The Resource Family Program is responsible for assessing all families who wish to be a foster, adoptive or guardianship family, ensuring standards of safety are met in each resource family home. The Resource Family Section includes foster care licensing, adoption, guardianship and recruitment services for the OCS. Resource families are necessary to OCS, as children in out-of-home placement need to live in safe homes while they are not living with their parents. In the event that a child cannot permanently return home to their parents, OCS strives to place children for adoption or guardianship in safe, nurturing, permanent homes. Resource families consist of relative or kinship families, licensed foster care families, guardianship families or adoptive families.

Should the child be unable to safely return to the parent's home, OCS actively prepares the child for adoption or guardianship with a permanent, "forever" family. There are many places the Resource Families Program intercepts with other program activities. During the initial assessment, the Resource Family Program assesses the resource family and their supportive services. If a relative is identified for the placement of a child, the licensing worker will assess the relatives' ability to meet basic licensing standards for care. Training for resource families is valued and mandated by OCS. Each resource family completes a basic training program called CORE, which is vital to a child's positive transition and adjustment to foster care.

## SERVICES ARRAY

OCS Service Array Section manages funding for services provided under Title IV-B Subparts 1 & 2, Chafee, ETV, CAPTA, Title IV-E, CBCAP, Adoptions and Legal Guardianship Incentive Funds, and state general funds. Each fiscal year, OCS updates the web-based resource [listing](#) of all of the OCS- funded grants and the communities the grantees serve in order to assist OCS workers in linking families and children with the services to meet their individualized needs.

**Child abuse and neglect prevention.** OCS provides grants for community-based primary prevention services designed to increase the strength and stability of families, to increase the parents' competence in their parenting skills, to afford children a safe, stable and supportive family environment, and to enhance child development. The core services of the grant include: in-home support; parent education and support; and facilitated access to resources such as early childhood services, medical services, educational or employment services, and transportation services. Referral sources include service agencies, such as schools or early education programs, medical services, community agencies, or parents may self-refer. Services are aimed at families who do not have an open child protection case and they can support families who need support for basic needs, skill acquisition and crisis stabilization. The primary focus of this grant is children ages 0-12 years of age, with special consideration given to children ages birth to three years. Other targeted populations are families experiencing disability of a family member and/or homeless youth. The services are intended to promote parent engagement and parent leadership skills. Service providers also facilitate family participation in free activities such as literacy fairs, parenting nights, health fairs and other

positive family activities. These activities sometimes involve child care, parenting resources and links to other community resources. A grant to the Alaska Children's Trust provides a mechanism to fund parenting education classes, through mini-grants, in 13 rural communities around the state.

### **Child abuse and neglect intervention, treatment services and foster care:**

**Rural Child Welfare.** Because of the disproportionate number of Alaska Native/American Indian children involved in the OCS system, there is a critical need for OCS to provide culturally relevant services that are available to meet the needs of families in rural areas. In many rural areas, OCS does not have a stable workforce to provide the close monitoring and support necessary to adequately meet the needs of Alaska Native children and families. The Rural Child Welfare (RCW) grant program utilizes state general funds to fund rural service providers with a demonstrated understanding of the ICWA, and an existing infrastructure in remote/local settings to provide culturally relevant, intensive case management services. These services help fill gaps in formal service provision in specific rural communities and primarily to Alaska Native families. Grant services include monthly caseworker visits, case plan support and service coordination, relative searches and location of ICWA preferred placements, as well as documentation of services provided.

**Child Advocacy Centers (CAC's).** Provide services to child victims of alleged sexual and severe physical abuse. The centers use a multidisciplinary team approach where forensic investigations are conducted in a protective, safe, child friendly environment during a single visit.

**Residential Care for Children.** Provides therapeutic interventions for youth who have severe complex behavioral needs. Treatment services are provided in facilities located in a variety of environments from small homes in residential neighborhoods to larger treatment facilities.

**Family preservation services.** Family Preservation services provide in-home support and service coordination for families who have been determined by OCS to have risk factors for future abuse or neglect. The OCS case can remain open, or be closed, with the child remaining in the home. Alaska's Family Preservation Program is called "Circles of Support". The grant continues the integration of the Strengthening Families protective factors and Trauma-informed practices to serve the existing target population. The services funded through the grant are: Family Service Coordination; Service plan implementation and monitoring; Assessment of family progress; Parent education and support; and Transportation services.

**Services to support reunification.** Family Reunification services help assist family and child functioning, decrease repeat maltreatment, and reduce the need for out-of-home care. OCS workers make referrals to the Family Reunification Grant when it is determined through the Safety Assessment process that current family circumstances are not safe for the child at home, and out-of-home placement is necessary. Services to families may include supervised family contact, service coordination, skill development, and transportation.

**Parent navigation.** Parent Navigation Services are currently being provided with the support of a contract with the Alaska Youth and Family Network in the Mat-Su Valley. The same agency performs parent navigation services in the Anchorage area as well. The agency continues to provide group support and psychoeducational classes to the families to build knowledge and skills, reduce social isolation and build healthy connections and relationships. OCS will continue to work with the agency on ways to evaluate the services.

**Adoption.** OCS provides the “Services for Adoption Support” grant with the Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF). The grant was established to provide seamless continuation of support for adoptive and guardianship families of Alaska through pre- and post- adoption/guardianship services. This ongoing collaboration with ACRF provides for improved outcomes to children and families through the provision of services including: family preparation services, information and referral services, crisis intervention services, and case management services. The population served through this grant includes all families in Alaska who have adopted children through public and private adoptions. Services are available throughout the State of Alaska by face to face contacts, self-study courses and telephonic services.

**Adoption Education and Preparation.** ACRF provides a series of classes called “The Adoption Learning Path” geared toward preparing families to adopt special needs children from care. When the family completes the series of classes, they help the family generate a “family profile” which is shared with adoption case workers throughout the state. This process has assisted in matching children needing adoptive homes with families who understand the needs of children in care and are ready to care for them. Services are available throughout the State of Alaska by face to face contacts, self-study courses, and telephonic services. The Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF) continues to develop, update and provide trainings for Resource Families in order to promote adoption.

Preparing Families for Special Needs Adoption project continues to promote adoption through the provision of intensive preparation, training and post-adoption support to approximately ten families per year who are interested in adopting children in foster care who have special needs. This service is available in the Mat-Su Valley and Anchorage. Each family attends Trust-Based Relational Intervention training to give them the tools and knowledge they will need to become a forever home to a child in foster care. ACRF provides the participants with intensive education and preparation as well as matching support and post adoption support.

**Independent living.** The Independent Living Program works to develop the skills young people in foster care need for self-sufficiency in adulthood. The program provides active planning, support, skill development and financial assistance for youth in foster care and for qualified young adult alumni of foster care.

Mentorship services. A Grant is provided to Big Brothers Big Sisters to match foster youth ages 14 to 21, both in and out of OCS custody, with mentors to support the individual needs of youth and help to promote transitional skills such as socialization and life skills, employment, and educational services

**Services for other permanent living arrangements.** Emergency/Crisis Shelters provide 24-hour care to vulnerable children in need of emergency placement. When a child arrives at the shelter, shelter staff make a preliminary assessment of the child’s needs and work with the child, parents and others when appropriate to stabilize the crisis.

Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, through the Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA), provides subsidized rental support for former foster youth. OCS continues to maintain a partnership with Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, to build a housing program that provides long-term support for youth leaving foster care. Supported housing provides youth a stable environment in which they can continue to develop skills necessary to live independently.

## SERVICE COORDINATION

The services supported through the Service Array Section continually adapt to changes in field practice, which is coordinated through ongoing dialogue and engagement with the management in the five OCS regions. Additionally, other OCS collaborative efforts on statewide and regional levels ensure that available services through other federally funded programs, community-based public and private providers for programs such as substance abuse, domestic violence, and behavioral health ensure that families served in the state child welfare services receive priority services that meet their specific needs to achieve case plan goals.

Some specific examples of these collaborative efforts include:

- **Public Health Nursing.** The Public Health Nursing Program will be linked to the Family Support grant programs, providing guidance in the review and award process of grants and coming to the table as changes are made to the service model. As the Public Health Nursing Program has interest in establishing medical homes for all children in Alaska, the Family Support service model will address the coordination of medical services for families served by the program.
- **Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems/Strengthening Families.** The most effective collaboration and coordination work has been through the activities with the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Program, the Strengthening Families initiative and the Alaska Children's Trust, who also fund Family Support Programs throughout the State of Alaska. Currently, this group is working on a Statewide Prevention Plan, which will prioritize prevention activities needed in all communities throughout Alaska. The IV-B Program Coordinator will provide input to the plan and work to incorporate the needs identified in the statewide plan into the models for service delivery.
- **Infant Learning Program.** Because the Infant Learning Program (ILP) has a strong focus on the 0-3 age group in Alaska, the Family Support Program has integrated that population as a group needing special considerations for services under the Family Support Programs, as well as the IV-B funded Family Preservation and Time Limited Family Reunification Programs. As those programs have been redesigned, the Request for Proposals now include the age range of 0-3 as a priority population and the reporting requirements for children served indicates whether a referral has been made to the ILP for screening and services through the ILP program. This provides for a direct link between these services and ensures that even the youngest family members are considered during service provision.
- **Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP).** OCS is designated as the State Lead for the Community-based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) program. OCS grants a portion of the CBCAP Funds to grantees in three urban communities in the state who provide community-based primary prevention services designed to increase the strength and stability of families, to increase the parents' competence in their parenting skills, to afford children a safe, stable and supportive family environment, and otherwise to enhance child development. The other portion of Alaska's CBCAP funding goes to a grant for coordination of statewide prevention efforts, to include April child abuse awareness month activities, and the provision of mini-grants to 13 rural communities around the state for parenting classes. The grant was awarded to the Alaska Children's Trust in SFY19.
- **Children's Justice Act (CJA).** The Alaska CJA Task Force holds three in-person meetings a year to plan and carry out the goals and objectives of the group including

awarding scholarships to support child welfare and law enforcement professionals to further their professional development. The meeting held during legislative session occurs in the State Capital of Juneau, where the task force presents before Committees and meets face-to-face with individual legislators and their staff. These meetings and presentations focus on educating legislators about the extent of child abuse in Alaska, and environmental and social factors related to child abuse based on a recent longitudinal study of Alaskan children from birth through adulthood. The task force also participates in public presentations and other media events to talk about the activities of the CJA. One of the major accomplishments of the CJA has been the development and maintenance of the state's online child abuse and neglect and mandated reporter [training](#).

It is expected that work on the training will continue over the next five years as there is new legislation regarding reporting child abuse and neglect which will require renewed efforts to implement and educate new mandated reporters. Efforts will continue to advertise the website through various means. The CJA plans to engage in formal strategic planning for 2020, which will focus their future objectives and activities.

- **Court Improvement Project (CIP).** The CINA Court Improvement Program monitors and improves the way the court system handles child in need of aid cases, and enhances coordination between the court system and other agencies and Tribes involved in CINA cases. Members of the statewide CIP committee are appointed by the Chief Justice of the Alaska Supreme Court. Current members include judges, the Director of the Office of Children's Services, Tribal representation, and representation by other state agencies including the Department of Law, the Public Defender Agency, the Office of Public Advocacy and the Director of the Division of Behavioral Health. CIP has several projects they jointly work with OCS on including Families Infants and Toddlers (FIT) Court in Palmer, CINA Therapeutic Court in Anchorage, State Team Planning Meetings, Joint Permanency Project, and CINA Core Curriculum Trainings.

## SERVICE DESCRIPTION

The service array and resource development system is functioning to ensure the provision of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, services that address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, services that enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and services that help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency in all political jurisdictions covered by the CFSP.

Alaska did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array during the CFSR in 2017. Information in the statewide assessment and collected during interviews with stakeholders showed that because of the state's vast geographical area, Alaska is challenged in ensuring that the array of needed services is accessible in all political jurisdictions covered by the CFSP. Alaska does not have an established routine system for collecting needs assessment data from communities regarding service array, resource development, and service gaps. Also, the service array is not routinely included as an aspect of the OCS CQI processes. There are significant gaps in the service array throughout the state, most notably in in-home services and specialized medical, mental health, and substance abuse treatment, both outpatient and residential, especially in rural areas. In addition, there is a statewide shortfall in Independent Living (IL) programs that assess and address the needs of eligible youth.



Alaska has goals in this area for the CFSP including the Cultural Resource Guide and the 1115 Behavioral Health Medicaid Waiver Demonstration Project. See Service Array description and Item 29 and 30 sections.

**STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES CHILD WELFARE SERVICES PROGRAM (TITLE IV-B, SUBPART 1)**

All title IV-B funding received is awarded through grants and/or contracts managed through OCS. No title IV-B subpart 1 or 2 funding is allocated to support planning and service coordination. Allocations of title IV-B, subpart 2 funding to the respective categories are based on analysis of utilization and service outputs in each service category; the blending of additional funding supporting each service priority; the availability of services in each category statewide; and the capacity of providers to deliver services within each category. Based on utilization data from the previous five fiscal years, funding was realigned to increase the services utilized most by children, youth and families.

OCS continues to prioritize funding family reunification services with IV-B, subpart II funding due to the high numbers of children in out of home care and caseload sizes. Alaska is currently funding Adoption Support and Promotion services with Title IV-E adoption program savings. Family Support grants are funded with Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention funds which have been adequate to fund Family Support grants in recent years. For these reasons, Alaska’s limited Title IV-B, subparts 1 and 2 funding are needed primarily for Family Preservation and Family Reunification services. The chart below provides a percentage breakdown of Title IV-B, subpart 2 funds in allowable categories, as OCS intends to continue to utilize funds in FY 2019:

Table 10: Title IV-B, Subpart 2 Allocation for FY 2019

Service Type	Percent Allocated
Family Support	5%
Community Service Option 1 (FP)	20%
Community Service Option 2 (TLFR)	65%
Adoption Promotion	10%

**SERVICES FOR CHILDREN ADOPTED FROM OTHER COUNTRIES**

Services for adoption support are provided statewide through a grantee. Post-adoption services are crucial to ensuring the continued success of families who have adopted through the Office of Children’s services and through private domestic or international adoptions. The grant provides information and referrals services; crisis intervention services; and general support to include support groups or peer mentoring services for all adoptive and guardianship families, regardless of the how the legal relationship was finalized. The goal of the services are to help ensure that children remain in their homes safely and permanently and that the child’s evolving special needs will be met.

**SERVICES FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF FIVE**

*Describe activities undertaken to reduce the length of time children in foster care under the age of five are without a permanent family. In addition, describe activities the State plans to undertake to provide developmentally appropriate services to this population over the next five years.*

OCS has piloted some region specific and statewide initiatives aimed at actively expediting permanency for children under the age of five without a permanent family.

Families, Infants and Toddlers (FIT) court has continued operations in Ketchikan and a new FIT court has started in the Mat-Su area serving families with children age three and younger. The intention of these courts is to provide more targeted and timely services leading to reduced repeat maltreatment and less time placed in out-of-home care.

OCS continues to focus on the timeliness and quality of Relative Searches as a strategy to increase timely permanency for all children. Relative searches are particularly critical for Alaska with the high number of children who fall under the jurisdiction of ICWA. Early placement with relatives and agreement with the Indian child's Tribe regarding placement is a much preferred scenario versus contested placement hearings with Tribes, later in the life of a case. Relative Searches is one of the first services to be provided under the Tribal Child Welfare Compact.

Permanency efforts have continued for all children with special emphasis on select populations including children age 0-5 in out-of-home care more than twenty-four months and in relative placement greater than six months. This effort includes staff training on concurrent planning and the utilization of guardianships for kinship placements as an acceptable permanency option, especially for ICWA cases. The table below illustrates that total percent of children in a permanent placement by the age of five has increased significant in the last three years, from 41% in SFY 2015 to 59% in SFY19.

Through Alaska's Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC), the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) partners with other state organizations and non-government entities to ensure the integration and alignment of services to address the developmental needs of all vulnerable children under the age of five in Alaska. The AECCC was created in 2010 to promote positive development, improve health and mental health outcomes and school readiness for Alaska's children prenatal through age eight. Members the of AECCC include the Commissioners of the Department of Health and Social Services, the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), the Department of Labor, and the Department of Public Safety; a representative from the Governor's Office; the DEED Partnership Liaison; the Child Care Program Manager; the Part C/Early Intervention Manager; the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Manager; Alaska Infant Learning Program Association, Alaska Head Start Association, Alaska child care resource & referral network (thread), Alaska Native Health, the Children's Trust, Chamber of Commerce, and mental health providers.

DHSS is the state government agency under which the Office of Children's Services is administered and it is also the agency that houses many other divisions with programs that fund and address the developmental needs of all vulnerable children under five years of age. These activities and programs include:

- **Denali KidCare.** Administered through the Division of Health Care Services, Alaska's Federal Children's Health Insurance Program is known as Denali KidCare. The program offers comprehensive health insurance coverage for children and teens. Additionally the CHIP program is required to partner with the Public Health, Maternal Child Health, OCS and DJJ to ensure child and adolescent access to Medicaid services and delivery of quality health care including children with special health care needs to all Alaskan children.

➤ **Early Periodic Screening Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT).** The EPSDT program provides coverage of all medically necessary Medicaid services to correct or ameliorate a child's physical or mental condition, regardless of whether such services are covered under a State's Medicaid State Plan. All children in state custody receive an EPSDT screening within 30 days from removal.

➤ **The Infant Learning Program (ILP).** Housed in the Division of Senior and Disability Services, insures that all infants and toddlers with disabilities in the State who are eligible for early intervention services are identified, located, evaluated and provided appropriate services. As required by federal law, this program utilizes a Child Find System that is coordinated with:

- Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV)
- Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT)
- Programs under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000
- Head Start and Early Head Start
- SSI program under Title XVI of the SS Act
- Child protection and child welfare programs under the state agency responsible for administering the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)
- Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI)
- Child care programs in the state

In accordance with CAPTA, ILP complies with federally required referrals from the State agency (OCS) responsible to substantiated allegations of child abuse. These electronic referral records are automatically retrieved from the ORCA data system every night. These referrals are sent to database that interfaces with all of the ILP providers throughout the State. Approximately 23% of all referrals to the program come from OCS.

➤ **Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems.** The Women's Children's and Family Health (WCFH) section, housed in the Division of Public Health, administers the federally-funded Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant for Alaska. This grant aims to integrate and coordinate services for the early childhood population and to improve outcomes in children's developmental health and family well-being indicators. This work is community-based in nature. The focus of this grant is to increase the use of evidence-based developmental screening. Often, developmental concerns aren't identified until a child enters school. This project aims to identify those concerns early and connect families with needed supports.

➤ **Parents as Teachers.** Also under, WCFH is the management and implementation of the Parents as Teachers home visiting grants. PAT is an evidence-based model of home visiting that serves clients during pregnancy and also up until the child is age 5. The focus is on family education and parent support. This model aims to increase parent knowledge of early childhood development and improve parenting, provide early detection of development concerns, prevent child abuse and neglect, and increase school readiness. The model involves personal visits, group connections, child screening, and a resource network. National research has shown that parents enrolled in PAT read more frequently to their children and are more likely to enroll their children in pre-school, both of which are linked to school readiness and achievement.

➤ **The Early Childhood Mental Health- Systems of Care.** This program is delivered by the Child Welfare Academy and is a system for technical support for Head Start mental health consultants and their grantees. It provides: facilitation of a learning network,

supporting the development of an Alaska model for head start consultation, providing a face to face statewide meeting, providing participant support for training in evidence based treatment and participation in reflective practice groups and collecting data.

- **System Development for Young Children and their Families.** The Division of Behavioral Health provides funding, training and technical assistance to Alaska mental health providers in order to support the following services:
  - Complex Behaviors Collaborative
  - Flexible Funding “Individualized Services Program”
  - Alaskan Trauma Informed-Care Statewide training Initiative
  - Early Childhood mental health assessment and intervention
  - Implementation of Evidenced Based Practices related to: Attachment, Self-Regulation and Competency Development
  - Adopted cross walk to allow young children to qualify for behavioral health services: DC 0 – 5 Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood
  - Trauma Informed Schools work, consultation on web-based teacher trauma training, etc.

## **EFFORTS TO TRACK AND PREVENT CHILD MALTREATMENT DEATHS**

The source of data used by OCS to identify child maltreatment deaths continues to be through the agency’s participation in the Maternal Infant Child Death Review and Child Fatality Review Teams which are facilitated under the auspices of the State Medical Examiners Office (SMEO). OCS is involved in a DPH led Child Death Classification workgroup of local and national experts to develop a tool designed to improve accurate and consistent counting of child deaths caused by maltreatment. This new classification tool is expected to be completed and go into use by the Alaska Maternal Infant Child Death Review team during FFY20.

## **PROMOTING SAFE AND STABLE FAMILIES (PSSF)**

States are required to spend a significant portion of the title IV-B, subpart 2 PSSF grant for each of the four service categories of PSSF: family preservation, community-based family support, time-limited family reunification, and adoption promotion and support services. OCS provides family reunification grants in Anchorage, SouthCentral and Northern. PSSF funds, in part, provide grants for family preservation in the Northern, SouthCentral, Anchorage and SouthEast regions. Partially supported by PSSF funds are family support programs in all regions of the state. Alaska plans to spend the PSSF funds in the same way during the 2020-2024 CFSP as reported in the Final APSR 2019.

## **SERVICE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FOR FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES**

Family Support Services (FSS) are community-based primary prevention services designed to increase the strength and stability of families, to increase the parents’ competence in their parenting skills, to afford children a safe, stable and supportive family environment, and otherwise to enhance child development (1993 OBRA Provisions, PL 10366). Families participating in FSS do not have an open child protection case.

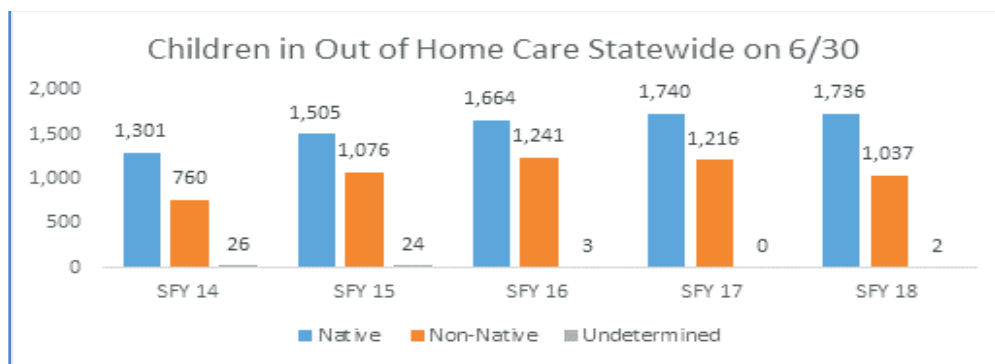
The primary focus of this grant are children ages 0-12 years of age, with special consideration given to children ages birth to three years. Other targeted populations are families experiencing disability of a family member and/or homeless youth. The services are intended to promote parent engagement and parent leadership skills. Service providers facilitate family participation in free engagement activities such as literacy fairs, parenting nights, health fairs and other positive family activities. These activities sometimes involve child care, parenting resources and links to other community resources.

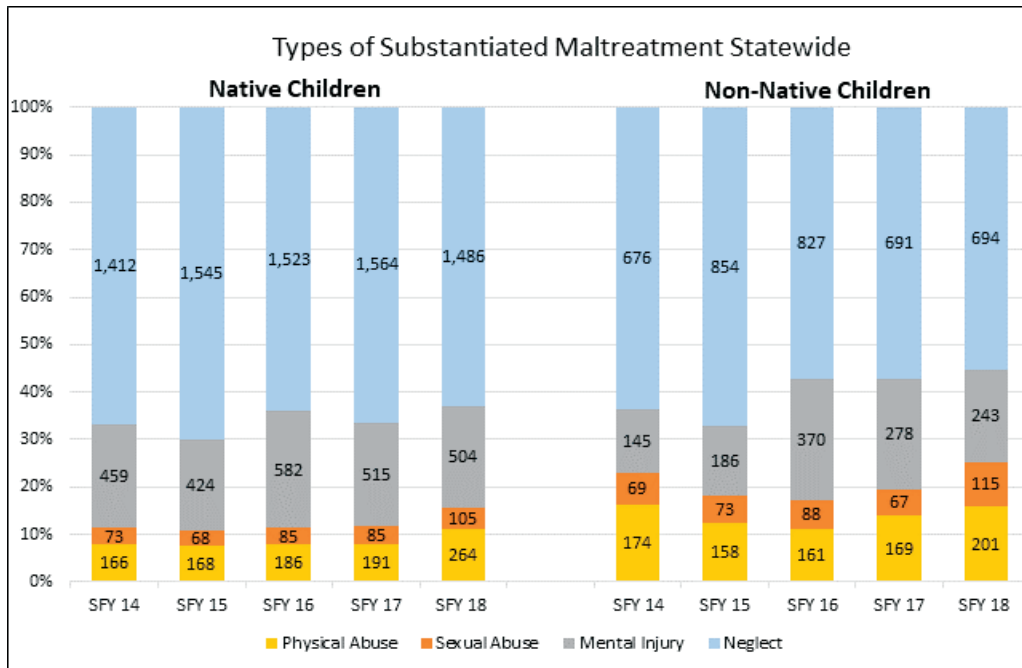
The core services of FSS include: in-home support; parent education and support; facilitated access to resources, transportation services and service coordination of access to or participation in early childhood services, medical services, educational or employment services. FSS works with families who need support for basic needs, skill acquisition and crisis stabilization. Referral sources include OCS case workers, other service agencies, such as schools or early education programs, medical services, community agencies, or parents may self-refer.

### POPULATIONS AT GREATEST RISK OF MALTREATMENT

Alaska Native children, age birth to five years continue to be the population at greatest risk of maltreatment. This group of children makes up 9.4% of the general population of children in Alaska, but makes up 27% of the substantiated protective services reports. Further, 3.9% of Alaska Native children in this age group experienced substantiated maltreatment.

Alaska recognizes that Alaska Native children, particularly children in the younger, vulnerable age groups as being the population at the highest risk for maltreatment. Consequently, OCS dedicates a significant amount of time and resources targeted at nurturing relationships with tribal partners, developing practice and policy strategies aimed at Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) compliance, targeted Alaska Native foster home recruitment and the purchase of culturally-appropriate family support services.





Source: ORCA 2019

OCS has also recognized a broader category of children at greater risk of harm, children under age one with three or more prior PSRs and/or prior out-of-home placement of children in the household (aka High Risk Infants) and emphasized services for these children. ORCA reports have been modified to allow quick identification of these children and managers instructed to prioritize this population.

The age of maltreatment victims in Alaska is also of significance. Children in younger age groups are more likely to be victims of maltreatment as compared to national rates.

### Age of Maltreatment Victims

Age of Maltreatment Victims	Alaska	Nationally
Victims 0-3 years old	968 34.78%	233,784 34.53%
Victims 4-7 years old	711 25.55%	155,668 22.99%
Victims 8-11 years old	565 20.30%	134,875 19.92%
Victims 12-15 years old	399 14.34%	110,553 16.33%
Victims 16-17 years old	124 4.46%	39,484 5.83%
Age Unknown	16 0.57%	2,768 0.41%
<b>Source: 2017 Child Maltreatment</b> <a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/child-maltreatment-2017">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/child-maltreatment-2017</a>		



Substantiation Year	Age Range	Child Race	% Of AK Ages 0-17	% Of Total Children Ages 0 to 17 With a Substantiation	% Of Age Group Maltreated
2018	Ages 0-5	Native	9.4%	27.0%	3.9%
		Non Native	23.9%	15.7%	0.9%
	Ages 6-10	Native	8.2%	19.5%	3.2%
		Non Native	20.8%	10.0%	0.7%
	Ages 11-15	Native	7.1%	13.7%	2.6%
		Non Native	19.9%	7.6%	0.5%
Ages 16-17	Native	2.8%	4.0%	2.0%	
	Non Native	7.9%	2.4%	0.4%	

Sources: SOA Online Resources for Children in Alaska (ORCA) and SOA Department of Labor Population Estimates

## MONTHLY CASEWORKER VISIT FORMULA GRANTS AND STANDARDS FOR CASEWORKER VISITS

OCS continues efforts to improve CWV compliance. With continued high caseloads and record high staff turnover rates, Alaska’s performance on monthly CWV continue to fail to meet the national standard. OCS continues efforts for staff recruitment and retention.

Alaska received \$33,734.00 in title IV-B, subpart 2 funding for FFY 2018. This money was used to offset the cost for travel required to make monthly case worker visits. Due to the geographical challenges of Alaska, this is how the state will continue to use the fund for the 2020-2024 CFSP. States are required to report data on monthly case worker visits with children in foster care by December 15 of each year. OCS submitted the following data on December 12, 2018:

- **STANDARD #1:** The total number of visits made by caseworkers on a monthly basis to children in foster care during a fiscal year must not be less than **95** percent of the total number of such visits that would occur if each child were visited once every month while in care.  
FFY 2017 OCS DATA: the total number of visits made by OCS caseworkers on a monthly basis to children in foster care was 68%; this is a slight increase from FFY 2017.
- **STANDARD #2:** At least **50** percent of the total number of monthly visits made by caseworkers to children in foster care during a fiscal year must occur in the child’s residence.  
FFY 2017 OCS DATA: **64%** of the monthly visits by OCS caseworkers to children in foster care occurred in the child’s residence; this is a slight increase from FFY 2017.

## ADDITIONAL SERVICES INFORMATION

**Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payments (section 473A of the Act):** Alaska is using the Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive to fund, in part, a statewide grant that promotes the achievement of timely permanency through the provision of adoption and guardianship home studies. Due to significant annual decrease of funds, OCS is utilizing other sources of funding to continue post-adoption and guardianship support services which were previously funded by incentive funds. The Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive funds will continue to be used for fund the statewide grant to Catholic Social Services for the provision of adoption and guardianship homestudies. There are no concerns about the expenditure of these funds within the timeframes.



**Adoption Savings (section 473(a)(8) of the Act):** With the adoption savings the state provides post adoption and guardianship services through a grant with the Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF). The grant was established to provide seamless continuation of support for adoptive and guardianship families in Alaska. The grant services include information and referral services, crisis intervention, and case management. Savings is also provided for IV-B allowable services specifically to maintain a child in their home or return a child home such as parenting skills, family and child counseling, and non IV-E case planning services. The state also provides services to help secure permanent homes for children in foster care that cannot return home.

Alaska plans to spend savings within one fiscal year. Accessing the funds has not yet been a challenge due to the ability of Alaska’s Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) to identify the specific children whose eligibility determination resulted in Adoption Savings.

## **SECTION 5 – CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION BETWEEN STATES AND TRIBES**

The State of Alaska, local Tribes, and Tribal Organizations utilize several forums to discuss OCS compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). The outcomes of these joint discussions include government-to-government collaboration on legal agreements, initiatives, workgroups, committees, and meetings designed to develop policy and systemic changes to improve outcomes for Alaska Native children involved in the child welfare system. Tribes are provided the opportunity within these forums to discuss the CFSP as well as the APSR. The State will continue to make the CFSP and future APSRs accessible to Tribes through the OCS website. Below is a detailed narrative of specific outcomes that were a result of consultations and coordinated discussions between the State, Tribes and Tribal Organizations.

The State of Alaska values Tribal collaboration and input on service delivery and seeks to gather input from Tribes through various ways. Representatives and leaders from the Tribes and State have been “working together for a common goal” since 1994 through the Tribal State Collaboration Group (TSCG). The statewide and regional groups will continue to meet during the 2020-2024 CFSP.

The Tribal-State Data Group meets regularly to review and identify possible additional data indicators to ensure the data collected conveys an accurate representation of the strengths and challenges within the system. This group will continue to meet during the 2020-2024 CFSP.

A new ORCA Activity Note titled “Collaboration with Tribe” has been launched in the ORCA system. For ICWA eligible cases, the OCS Protective Services Specialist will maintain monthly contact with the Tribe and document this communication in a Collaboration with Tribe Activity Note in ORCA. This allows OCS to have the ability to ensure the communication with the Tribe is frequent and ongoing., ORCA reports will monitored to review the collaboration notes to determine if more implementation strategies will need to be considered during the CSFP.

Contested ICWA Matter Memo’s will continue requiring the assigned AAG to complete if OCS and the Tribe are in disagreement, issues with ICWA Compliance are brought to the leadership level for review in hopes of reaching resolution.

OCS utilizes a survey to solicit information regarding Tribal satisfaction with OCS. The survey asks Tribal Partners to use a Likert scale to rate their agreement or disagreement level to several statements surrounding the involvement of Tribes in cases involving their Tribal children. The survey also asked several questions where Tribal responders have the opportunity to provide feedback and ideas about OCS staff recruitment and retention, disproportionality, and alternatives to taking custody of Alaska Native children.

The Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact was signed on October 10, 2017 by former Governor Bill Walker at the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention. The Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact is a government-to-government agreement between the State of Alaska and certain Alaska Native Tribes and Tribal Organizations. The Compact respects and acknowledges the inherent sovereignty of Tribes over the welfare of Alaska Native children. The Compact helps increase the capacity of Tribal governments to provide child welfare services to their Tribal children. One of the primary goals of the Compact is to collaboratively address the racial disproportionality of Alaska Native children in State custody. Tribes, Tribal Organizations, and the State participated in several joint meetings, to negotiate the child welfare services Tribal partners would provide to their Tribal citizens through the Compact.

OCS continues to work on the expansion of Tribal Title IV-E Maintenance Pass-Through Agreements and Administration & Short-Term Training Agreements. OCS, Federal Region X, and Tribal partners who currently have IV-E Agreements presents IV-E information to Tribal Caucus. The information presented outlines the benefits of IV-E, the ability to draw down funds to build Tribal child welfare infrastructures, and the criteria needed to enter into a IV-E Agreement with the State. Nine Tribes and Tribal Organizations have expressed interest in establishing Title IV-E Administration & Short-Term Training Agreements with OCS.

Technical assistance continues to be provided to all Tribes via teleconference. In-person site reviews were conducted with the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) and Orutsararmiut Native Council (ONC), a formal in-person training was provided to AVCP and ONC, site visits were conducted at Sitka Tribe of Alaska (STA) and Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC), and training was delivered via distance to Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC), Maniilaq Association, and ONC.

The State is committed to continued collaboration with Tribes and Tribal Organizations on joint training opportunities. Tribal partners have either been involved in or co-facilitated several trainings including Knowing Who You Are (KWYA), Tribal Title IV-E and IV-B, ICWA I and II. Training provided by the Child Welfare Academy continues to be open to Tribes and Tribal Organizations to attend. The Child Welfare Academy in partnership with OCS began facilitating the Blanket Exercise May 31, 2019. This is a very powerful event that demonstrates the gravity of historical trauma and resiliency in a new way. This curriculum was originally developed by KAIROS Canada and was adapted by Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium who worked with Alaska Center for Resource Families to create an Alaska Native version of the Blanket Exercise. The Blanket Exercise will be evaluated during the course of it's delivery in new staff training for the CSFP period.

Below is a list of Tribes and Tribal Organizations participated in one or more of the above mentioned joint Tribal-State legal agreements, initiatives, workgroups, committees or meetings.

Alaska Federation of Natives  
Alaska Legal Services

Alaska Native Health Board Inc  
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium

Aleut Community of St. Paul Island  
Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association  
Arctic Slope Native Association  
Asa'carsarmiut Tribal Council  
Association of Village Council Presidents  
Bristol Bay Native Association  
Buckland, Native Village of  
Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Casey Family Programs  
Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes  
of Alaska  
Chickaloon Indian Tribe  
Chugachmuit  
Cook Inlet Tribal Council  
Copper River Native Association  
Eastern Aleutian Tribes  
Elim IRA

First Alaskans Institute  
Kawerak  
Kenaitze Indian Tribe  
Louden Tribal Council  
Maniilaq Association  
Native American Rights Fund  
Native Village of Afognak  
Native Village of Eyak  
Ninilchik Traditional Council Community  
Clinic  
Nome Eskimo Community  
Norton Sound Health Corp  
Organized Village of Kake  
Orutsararmiut Native Council  
Sitka Tribes of Alaska  
Southcentral Foundation  
Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak  
Tanana Chiefs Conference

The State plans to continue coordinated and collaborative efforts with Tribes on the implementation and assessment of the 2020-2024 CFSP. The State will continue to distribute and share, the CFSP/APSR with Tribes utilizing, but not limited to, the following forums:

- Tribal State Advisory Team, Regional TSCG, Statewide TSCG
- Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact meetings including negotiating services to be provided by Tribes and Tribal Organization to their Tribal citizens and communities.
- To access the open-ended Title IV-E funds available through Family First Prevention Services Act, the State plans to establish a Tribal-State workgroup to discuss the development of prevention services and programs for Alaska Native children and families that are at imminent risk of entering the State child welfare system. This will provide an opportunity for Tribes to enhance their intervention and prevention efforts underway utilizing the screened out Protective Service Reports they receive.

It is through the above identified collaborations and forums that the State and Tribes work to establish shared responsibility for providing child welfare services and the protection of Tribal children. Tribes have an inherent vested interest and will continue to advocate and provide services for their Tribal children involved in the State child welfare system.

## **SECTION 6 - CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM**

### **AGENCY ADMINISTERING CHAFEE**

The State of Alaska's Office of Children's Services provides administration, supervision and oversight for the Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood and the Education and Training Voucher program.

## **DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM DESIGN AND DELIVERY**

OCS administers the Chafee Program through its Services Array Unit. A program coordinator is assigned to manage eight statewide staff who provide Chafee services directly to youth. The IL Program Coordinator also manages the grants and contracts to providers of Chafee Services, and coordination and collaboration with community partners. The IL Program Coordinator manages two grants, one contract and two business agreements with organizations who deliver services to IL eligible youth focused on mentorship, youth retreats and housing support.

OCS through the Independent Living (IL) Program is designed to support the transition into adulthood for youth ages 16-21 in out of home care. Alaska has elected to maintain its current eligibility standards and will not be expanding to include youth ages 14 and 15. Eligibility terminates at age 21 unless the youth participates in the ETV program. The IL program currently serves foster youth ages 14 and 15 in a limited fashion, focusing on credit reports and transition planning. Over the next five years the IL program will be working on expanding mentoring services to youth ages 14-21, supporting youth to make meaningful connections with mentors and caring adults.

The OCS IL program has a strong collaborative partnership with Facing Foster Care in Alaska (FFCA). FFCA is a nonprofit dedicated to improving the foster care system, developing leadership skills among current and former foster youth ages 16-24, and creating a network of peer support for foster youth throughout the state. FFCA's Youth Leadership Board meets quarterly with OCS leadership to discuss agency agendas, legislation, policy development and partnered areas needing improvement.

The IL program utilizes the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) to survey youth in efforts to assess their education levels, employment, housing and homelessness, completing high school, attending advanced classes, if they've had children and whether they've been incarcerated or engaged in substance abuse treatment. The information gathered is used to guide programmatic activities for the IL program as well as partner contracted agencies and grantees. Over the next five years the IL program will continue efforts to align all aspects of IL data collection and OCS ORCA database system with NYTD reporting, expediting submission or correct and compliant data.

Youth are routinely included as stakeholders in OCS meetings regarding the CFSR as well as other agency conferences and trainings. We foresee this partnership continuing to grow and work together to create improvements and advancements not only in the IL program but throughout the entire foster care system.

## **SERVING YOUTH ACROSS THE STATE**

OCS is divided into five regions: Northern, Western, Anchorage, Southcentral, and Southeast. Each region has a Regional Independent Living Specialist (RILS) assigned to work with youth, with an additional RILS in both Anchorage and Southcentral, Alaska's two most populous regions. Although the larger regions have more community resources available for foster youth and alumni, the IL Program makes every effort to provide equitable distribution of services and funding. The IL Program has regularly scheduled life skills activities, classes and training opportunities for the youth and alumni that reside in each of the regional office areas, and often transport youth from rural areas to participate. Life skills trainings are available by correspondence and DVDs for youth in more rural areas of Alaska. Efforts will continue to include youth in Tribal custody as part of Alaska's IL Program. Over the next five years the IL program will assess and address the challenges of delivering consistent services to youth in the Northern Region's more rural areas.

## **SERVING YOUTH OF VARIOUS AGES AND STAGES OF ACHIEVING INDEPENDENCE**

The IL program provides a multitude of diverse opportunities for IL eligible youth to engage with caring adults, experience positive relationships with their peers, learn healthy behaviors, and identify values, morals

and skills that will serve them in a positive manner for their future. The RILS work directly with individual youth in their region to assess needs and to assist the youth with their individualized goals.

Alaska does not intend to extend or plan to extend title IV-E foster care assistance to young people ages 18-21. Alaska also has not elected to extend Chafee services to age 23.

Once a youth reaches the age of 16, and is in Alaska's custody, they are eligible for the IL Program. The youth are provided information about the IL Program and given assistance in identifying and accessing needed services and resources. In addition, for youth age 16 and older, it is state policy that the youth participate in yearly the Casey Life Skills Assessment for assessment of needs, a tool available through the Casey Family Programs. The results of these assessments are then recorded in the case file and become a part of the youth's case plan.

### **COLLABORATION WITH OTHER PRIVATE AND PUBLIC AGENCIES**

The IL program makes diligent efforts to develop strong community partnerships to wrap services around eligible IL youth. Partnerships continue with FFCA, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, University of Alaska Anchorage, Child Welfare Academy, Covenant House, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Nine Star Education and Employment Services, Division of Healthcare Services, Division of Senior and Disability Services, Division of Public Assistance, and Tribal providers across the state. IL participates in the state's Court improvement Project and Regional Tribal/State Collaboration meetings. This network magnifies service delivery for youth and provides opportunities to learn about independently accessing services after they exit custody. IL is partnered with Alaska Pacific University which provides 10 Promise Tuition grants that can pay 100% of tuition. These partnerships are critical in expanding the much needed services to support youth in their transition to adulthood.

### **DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY FOR BENEFITS AND SERVICES**

Current OCS policy states that the IL program provides services to youth who are or were in foster care, on or after their 16th birthday. Eligible youth may access a wide variety of assistance which may include funding for education, employment, extra-curricular activities, and cultural events, assistance in accessing post-secondary education and housing resources.

OCS will be updating policy to reflect IL program service and resource eligibility to youth 16 or older who were in foster care and exit to reunification. Policy will also be updated to reflect that youth in state or tribal custody on or after their 16th birthday and youth that have exited foster care as adults or who were adopted or entered a guardianship after age 16 and have obtained either a high school diploma or a GED, qualify for Education and Training Voucher (ETV) funds. Youth up to age 23 are eligible for ETV funds provided they began their education prior to turning 21 years. OCS will be updating policy to reflect eligibility to youth who are otherwise eligible and exit to reunification in the near future.

### **COOPERATION IN NATIONAL EVALUATIONS**

Alaska's Office of Children's Services Independent Living Program will cooperate with any national programmatic evaluation for the purposes of Chafee to the fullest extent of our ability.

### **CHAFEE TRAINING**

The RILS continue to provide training to OCS staff in their region, and recruit youth and alumni to participate in the training events. New agency staff orientation includes training on the needs of IL youth and the resources available to youth within their region as well as statewide. The IL Program works with the resource family training grantees to further incorporate independent living components into their training

curriculum. The RILS partner with FFCA to recruit youth panels to assist in training foster parents in their regions. The IL Program offers training to legal partners; CASA volunteers and Guardians ad Litem, Tribes, community mental health programs that coordinate treatment team plans with OCS for older youth, as well as hold trainings as requested by the community and regional offices.

## **EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHERS (ETV) PROGRAM**

Alaska OCS has elected to maintain the ETV program's current eligibility requirements and will not be expanding to include youth ages 14 and 15 and eligibility for ETV terminates at age 23. IL program continues to observe a business agreement with the CWA to administer ETV to former foster youth. The ETV program continues to provide an annual Education Conference for eligible current and former foster youth that are interested in exploring post-secondary education opportunities. Further, the Youth Education Coordinator, CWA and OCS IL Program Coordinator have developed a new partnership with Alaska Pacific University to provide ten Promise Tuition Grants to eligible youth.

If the youth meets the qualifications, funds are sent to the qualified post-secondary education and training center to cover the cost of tuition, fees, books, room and board. Notably over the past five years, Alaska has been able to expend all funds to ETV applicants to date. Further, youth engaged in the ETV program receive more direct, on-campus support and have a caring adult to assist with the struggles of attending college and securing resources for their education.

To ensure the total amount of educational assistance does not exceed to total cost of attendance University of Alaska Campuses monitor students' enrollment and their number of credits and estimates the cost of attendance. The CWA Youth Education Coordinator can view financial aid awards including any grants, loans, scholarships beyond ETV. The CWA Youth Education Coordinator determines their award up to the \$5000 limit and provides that information to school's Financial Aid Department. Financial aid has further layers of review and will hold ETV assistance until all other aid has been applied to a student's account. If a student has been over awarded, or doesn't show a financial need, they will return the funds.

For Students at non-UA Campuses, the CWA Youth Education Coordinator reviews the student's overall costs as determined by that school, complete a college funding worksheet and determine the student's level of financial need. The CWA Youth Education Coordinator provides this information to the OCS RILS who then submit the request to the IL Coordinator to have a check sent directly to the school along with an award letter from the CWA Youth Education Coordinator outlining eligibility. Financial Aid provides a further layer of review. If a student withdraws or fails, has too much aid or drops some credits, financial aid notifies the CWA Youth Education Coordinator and funds are returned.

## **CONSULTATION WITH TRIBES**

In effort to ensure Chafee benefits and services are available to children in Tribal custody, quarterly teleconference meetings are facilitated by the IL Program Coordinator. The IL program will be focused on building consistency, and increasing attendance at the quarterly teleconferences. Consistency has built reliability and increased attendance and connections between the IL program and Alaska's Tribes. All 229 federally recognized Tribes in Alaska were emailed or mailed out information about the Chafee program and they were invited to scheduled teleconferences. They are also provided a hardcopy and/or electronic links to all required forms to access Chafee services, resources and funding. This information is regularly updated and available on the OCS ICWA webpage.

The IL program will continue to host quarterly Tribal teleconferences to provide IL and Chafee technical assistance for Tribes and youth in Tribal Foster care. Tribes that participate have reported a stronger connection with the Regional Independent Living Specialist and understanding of the services provided and



how to access them. In the upcoming years, the RILS will increase their attendance at the quarterly teleconference meetings to provide direct connection to Tribal staff and Chafee information, assisting determining eligibility and accessing resources.

The Chafee eligibility requirements are the same for youth in state custody as for youth in Tribal custody. RILS require a court order determining date of custody of the youth from both state caseworkers and Tribal caseworkers alike. RILS are considered subject matter experts by OCS staff and the program is working on building the relationships with Tribal representatives.

All Chafee benefits and services are currently available to eligible Indian youth. There have been no requests by tribes to develop an agreement with OCS or to build a tribal Chafee or ETV program..

## SECTION 7 – TARGETED PLANS WITHIN THE CFSP

### FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT DILIGENT RECRUITMENT PLAN

General recruitment involves reaching all parts of the state through media and public recruitment events. These media and recruitment events include public service announcements on radio and television stations, Facebook, local magazines, postcards, movie theaters ads, recruitment booths at Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), Cam-I Dance Festival and other events throughout the State.

Targeted recruitment focuses on specific children and youth in need of temporary and permanent homes, for example children with medical needs, large sibling groups, and teens. The State of Alaska has a disproportionate number of Alaska Native children in out-of-home care. The OCS conducts targeted recruitment for ICWA homes.

Training and the adoption of a customer service approach to diligent recruitment and retention are expected to both retain current resource families and increase the diversity of resource families, including to increase the number of ICWA families to address the disproportionate number of children in care. OCS will measure the changes in the foster parent population during the 2020 – 2025 period.

In the event that a child becomes legally free for adoption and no permanent placement is identified, the child is listed on adoption exchange websites including: the Beacon Hill Online Heart Gallery, Northwest Adoption Exchange, and AdoptUSKids. Through these exchange listing services, a family can submit an inquiry for a specific child. The inquiries are funneled to Beacon Hill who responds to the family and offers adoption orientation provided jointly by Beacon Hill and Alaska Center for Resource Families. Families can be attend in-person or online.

Region	Licensed Foster Home	Unlicensed Relative Foster Home
ARO - CPA	247	-
ARO	461	135
WRO	93	24
NRO	244	73
SERO	124	18
SCRO	437	97
Total	1,606	347

### HEALTH CARE OVERSIGHT AND COORDINATION PLAN

Section 422(b)(15)(A) of the act requires states to develop a plan for the ongoing oversight and coordination of health care services for children in foster care. States must develop the plan in coordination with the state



Medicaid agency, and in consultation with pediatricians and other experts in health care, and experts in and recipients of child welfare services. FFPSA also added a requirement for states to ensure that children in foster care are not inappropriately diagnosed in order to place children in settings that are not foster family homes.

OCS coordinated with the Medical Director for Health Care Services, the EPSDT program manager, an Alaska Pediatrician, the State Chief Medical Officer, and other members of DHSS to update Alaska's HOCP.

A promising update to the 2017 HOCP is the appointment of an OCS Health Authority. OCS has signed a memorandum of agreement for the Medical Director for Health Care Services to serve as the Health Authority for OCS. When the Medical Director is not available, the Chief Medical Officer is designated to serve in this role. This agreement provides for the Health Authority to participate in quarterly meetings with the OCS Psychiatric Nurses to discuss and strategize around any health care needs or practice trends identified for the foster care population. The Health Authority will also provide guidance regarding quality assurance methods on tracking children in state custody on psychotropic medications and system improvements. Agency records will be available for the Health Authority to review as necessary to provide and facilitate consultation of services for children and youth in OCS custody.

OCS has also implemented quarterly meetings to occur for HOCP Committee Co-Chairs to continue efforts for information and data sharing as well as improvements to communication.

## **DISASTER PLAN**

Section 422(b)(16) of the Act requires that states have in place procedures explaining how the state programs assisted under title IV-B, subparts 1 and 2, and title IV-E, would respond to a disaster, in accordance with criteria established by the Secretary. These procedures, enumerated in section 422(b)(16)(A)-(E) of the Act, should describe how a state would:

- Identify, locate, and continue availability of services for children under state care or supervision who are displaced or adversely affected by a disaster;
- Respond, as appropriate, to new child welfare cases in areas adversely affected by a disaster, and provide services in those cases;
- Remain in communication with caseworkers and other essential child welfare personnel who are displaced because of a disaster;
- Preserve essential program records; and
- Coordinate services and share information with other states.

Alaska experiences numerous disasters and weather related issues that affect the health and safety of residents. The OCS goal is that these issues do not affect delivery of services to children and families in Alaska. No significant changes have been made to the Alaska's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) plan in recent years. Contact information for key staff are updated, and core group notifications brought current annually. After the response to the November 2018 in Alaska, improvements have been identified for the COOP plan. Improvements planned for the COOP in the coming year will include:

- Develop improved secondary plans for centralized intake hotline.
- Reformat the Statewide COOP to include regional and field office emergency response plans which are short and useful in an emergency.
- Create stronger links to and cooperation from the State Emergency Operations Control.

## TRAINING PLAN

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Reference CFS-101 - Part I; CFS 101 - Part II; CFS101 - Part III.