

**TITLE IV-B
CHILD and FAMILY SERVICES PLAN
CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION and TREATMENT ACT STATE PLAN
CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM
EDUCATION and TRAINING VOUCHERS PROGRAM**

**FISCAL YEARS 2005 - 2009
JUNE 30, 2004**



**Office of Children's Services
P.O. Box 110630
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0630**

Joel Gilbertson
Commissioner

Marcia Kennai
Deputy Commissioner

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**AGENCY DESCRIPTION
&
CONTINUUM OF SERVICES**

INTRODUCTION

The Governor of Alaska has designated the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services as the single state agency responsible for administering Title IV-B of the Social Security Act, Child Welfare Services, CAPTA, and Independent Living services. The Office of Children's Services (OCS) has administrative responsibility for development and implementation of the Child and Family Services Plan, including all policies and procedures relating to child protection services, child placement services, adoption promotion, family preservation and family support. In addition, the Office of Children's Services also administers the Women, Infant and Children's (WIC) Program, the Early Intervention Program, and the Healthy Families Alaska Program.

AGENCY DESCRIPTION

A Deputy Commissioner has overall responsibility for the administration of the agency. Three Program Administrators are responsible for 1) Field Operations, 2) Policy and Program, and 3) Systems Reform.

The OCS is state administered and has 29 field offices statewide, organized into four geographic regions. A Children's Services Manager administers each Region. The Northern Regional Office (NRO) is located in Fairbanks and is responsible for Nome, Kotzebue, Barrow, and surrounding towns and villages.

The South-central Regional Office (SCRO) is located in Wasilla and is responsible for the Mat-Su Valley, the Kenai Peninsula, Bethel, Valdez, Kodiak, Dillingham, the Aleutian Islands, and surrounding areas.

The Anchorage Regional Office (ARO) is responsible for the municipality of Anchorage.

The Southeastern Regional Office (SERO) is in Juneau and is responsible for Juneau, Haines, Sitka, Petersburg, Ketchikan and surrounding communities.

Formerly known as the Division of Family and Youth Services, OCS reorganized in July 2003, bringing together four programs that support children and families. In the past, we focused mainly on child protection and permanency. Now our mission also includes three primary prevention programs: Healthy Families, Family Nutrition (WIC), and Infant Learning.

Child Protection: We are committed to safety, permanency, and well-being for Alaska's vulnerable children, youth, and families. OCS assesses allegations of abuse and neglect and provides family preservation services in the home when appropriate. If necessary, we provide out of home care to protect the child. Our goal is a safe, permanent home for every child

through reunification, adoption or guardianship. We recruit adoptive and foster homes and help older teens in care prepare for independent living.

Family Nutrition Services: Through the Women Infants and Children Program (WIC), OCS supports delivery of free nutritious foods and information on healthy eating for low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women and their children. WIC also offers participants and eligible seniors fresh fruits and vegetables through the Alaska Farmers' Market program. In addition, we have a teen nutrition program that operates in schools to promote healthy eating and decrease childhood obesity.

Healthy Families Alaska: HFAK provides new parents with services to help their babies thrive and to build family self-sufficiency. HFAK reaches out to women during pregnancy or at birth, using a Family Stress Check List to identify those in most need of support. We address challenges such as parenting, housing, finances, social isolation, substance abuse, domestic violence, and mental health issues. The program is voluntary and families can be served until children reach age five.

Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program: EI/ILP provides an array of flexible services to infants and toddlers with disabilities or special developmental needs. Within the family setting, EI/ILP helps parents and children under three with instruction, therapy, and other support services. Our services are flexible and tailored to the circumstances of each family.

STRATEGIES/VALUES

A core set of values drives the work at the Office of Children's Services.

We believe:

- *All people should be treated with respect and dignity.*
- *All children deserve safe, stable, loving, and permanent families.*
- *Every family has unique and inherent strengths.*
- *The success of our interventions rests with the family; therefore, families should be included in making decisions about their children*
- *Community partners are essential to ensure healthy, safe families.*
- *Services should enhance cultural and family values.*
- *Services should be timely, accessible, and coordinated.*
- *Services related to parenting, health, and nutrition are essential to strengthen the growth and development of children and to prevent abuse and neglect.*
- *Data should drive our decisions about how and where we allocate resources and services.*

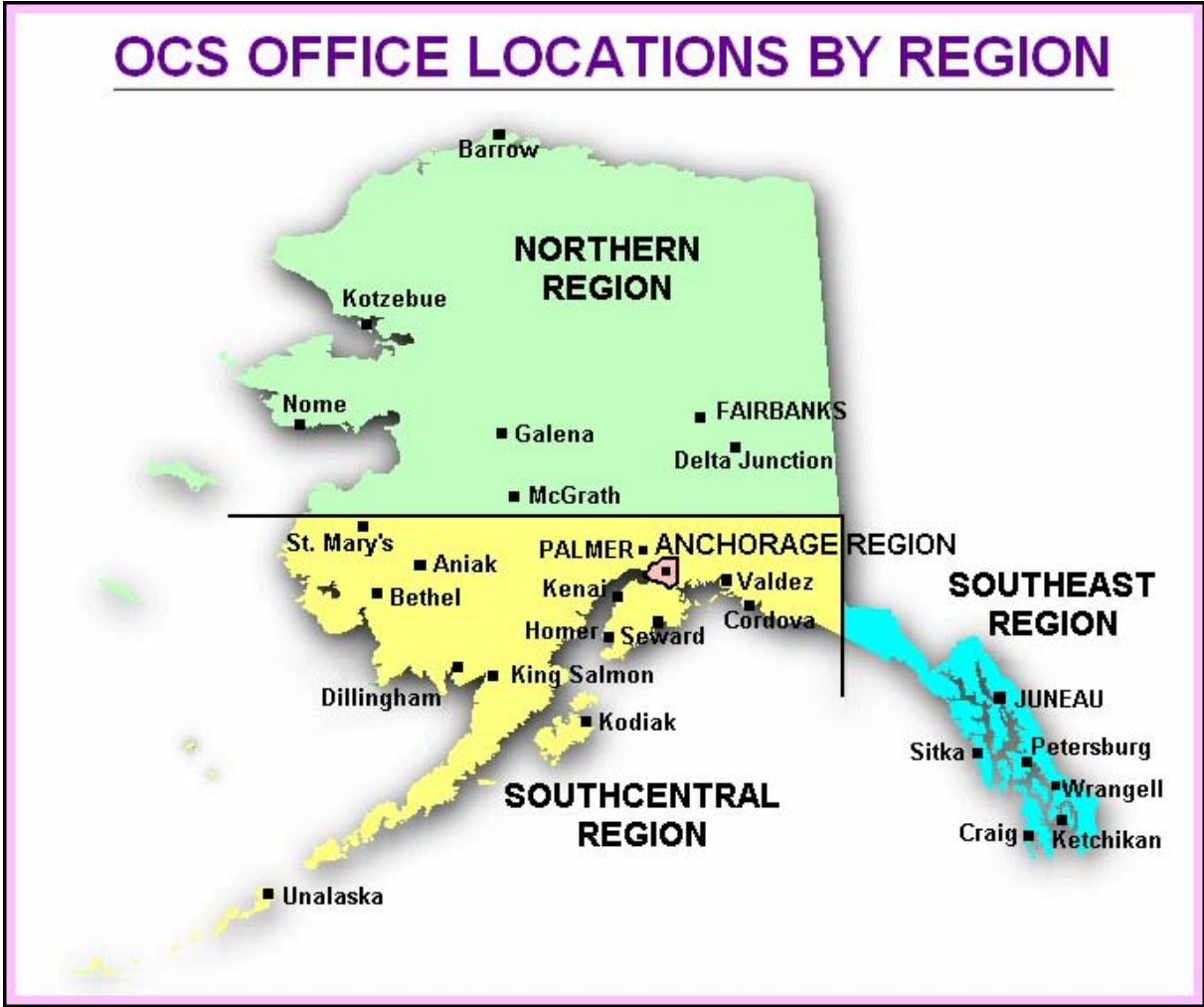
MISSION STATEMENT

OCS works in partnership with families and communities to support the well-being of Alaska's children and youth. Services will 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.

VISION STATEMENT

Stronger Families, Safer Children

Office of Children's Services
Region and Office Locations



Child And Family Services Continuum

Prevention Services

- **Alaska Children's Trust (ACT)**

The ACT is a corpus trust fund that uses its earnings to fund primary prevention services. In 1996, Alaska invested \$6 million to start the fund. Thanks to private-sector fundraising efforts by the Friends of the Alaska Children's Trust and investment earnings, the ACT funds community-based programs each year. Each year, the interest from the principal is awarded in a competitive grant process to community-initiated projects that prevent child abuse and neglect. Over the last four years, the Trust has contributed over \$1.2 million to prevention efforts around the state.

The Alaska Children's Trust relies on gifts, bequests, and contributions of cash or other assets from individuals, corporate entities, legislative appropriations, and federal funds. The annual funding level for ACT is based upon annual income earnings from the trust. Grant awards are contingent upon legislative appropriations of funds to the ACT.

The ACT places special emphasis on funding proposals that are community-based prevention. It focuses on underserved areas; parent education and support; programs engaging fathers/adult males in parenting; crisis nurseries and respite care for families with children with disabilities, mentoring/peer counseling and education projects.

- **CPS Daycare**

Protective services childcare (day care) is a support service designed to help keep families together. It may be authorized for children at risk of abuse or neglect and for whom childcare during the day is part of a family treatment plan. Its objective is to enable the child to remain with his or her biological family or to return the child to the child's own family following an out of home placement.

- **Healthy Families Alaska (HFAK)**

The Healthy Families Alaska program is primary prevention of abuse and/or neglect. HFAK provides screening and assessment for all pregnant women and families of newborns in five geographic regions: Catholic Social Services- Anchorage, Cook Inlet Tribal Council - Anchorage, Catholic Community Services - Juneau, Mat-Su Services for Children and Adults- Wasilla, Resource Center for Parents and Children - Fairbanks, and the Kenai Parent Support Program through Public Health Nursing at the Kenai Public Health Center. Families identified to have stressors that place their children at risk for poor childhood outcomes, are offered voluntary home visiting services for three to five years. In FY 2003, HFAK programs

provided services to 395 families with multiple, significant risk factors for childhood maltreatment that include domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health issues. Healthy Families programs are funded solely through the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF), also known as Better Beginnings (BB) funding.

- **Infant Learning Program**

The Infant Learning Program provides early intervention services to children, birth to three years of age, with disabilities or developmental delays or at risk for developmental delays and their families. Services may include screening, assessment, special instruction, family support and therapies and are designed to meet each child's unique developmental needs. The program serves more than 1700 children and their families statewide annually. In FY 2003, 1721 children and their families received services at an average annual cost per child of \$4,746. The cost per child varies according to individual needs and geographic region, with an average annual cost per child ranging from \$3,741 in Anchorage to an average annual cost of \$9,983 for children in Northwest Arctic Borough. Multiple funding sources are used for this program, including state general funds, federal Part C funds, Medicaid and billing receipts from insurance and other third party payers. All children under three who have a substantiated abuse or neglect are referred to their local ILP program for screening and assessment.

- **Family Nutrition Services**

Family Nutrition Services encompasses six programs that provide \$26 million in federal grants and \$3 million in program receipts to program participants in the form of food, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and resources on obesity and chronic disease prevention. The largest of these programs is the Women, Infants and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program or WIC. There are 31 WIC clinics in the state that serve approximately 26,000 women, infants, and children. In addition to providing supplemental foods, WIC clients also receive health assessments and counseling on nutrition and breastfeeding. Participants are pregnant, breastfeeding, or postpartum women and their children 0 to age 5 who must also meet income and nutrition risk criteria. Benefits are 100% federally funded by the US Department of Agriculture. WIC clinics see many families who have risk factors for child abuse and neglect. Child abuse prevention and education will be a major focus of these clinics over the next five years.

- **Family Support Services**

Family Support services are community based services that promote the safety and well-being of children and families and are designed to increase the strength and stability of families (including adoptive, foster and extended families) to increase parents' confidence and competence in their parenting abilities, to afford children a safe, stable and supportive family environment, and otherwise to enhance child development.

Child Protective Services

- **Intake**

Intake involves receiving and screening reports of potential harm to a child and determining whether to initiate an investigation. Screening involves ascertaining the current status of the child, the potential for immediate and/or future danger, and the location of the child and parents. The intake workers try to elicit additional information about the alleged victim and family (i.e., substance use/abuse, domestic violence, history of concerns, family strengths and resources, etc.) in order to most accurately determine the degree of risk to the child. If the report does not meet the criteria for investigation, the report is screened out. Protective service reports meeting criteria for investigation are assigned a priority level and moved into the investigation stage.

- **Investigations**

Protective Services reports are prioritized according to the immediate or potential risk of harm to the child. The assigned priority determines the division's response time. Each case accepted for investigation is assigned a priority rating of "Priority 1", "Priority 2" or "Priority 3", contingent on the severity of the reported risk of harm to the child.

"Priority 1" reports must be responded to within 24 hours of the time the report is received. Priority 1 reports are defined as reports that present the greatest degree of risk to the child.

"Priority 2" reports must be responded to within 72 hours of the time the report is received. Priority two reports are defined as reports that indicate that while the situation is serious, information available does not indicate the child is in immediate danger.

"Priority 3" reports must be responded to within seven (7) calendar days of the time the report is received. Priority three reports are defined as reports that indicate that a delay in assessing the situation will not result in significant additional harm to the child.

The priority rating may be revised if additional information is received prior to the investigation that demonstrates that the situation is either more or less serious than the initial report indicated.

In the course of the investigation, workers examine other risk factors that may indicate that risk exists beyond the immediate allegations. Such risk factors include chemical dependency, domestic violence, and if the parents/caretakers were victims of abuse/neglect as children, etc. Similarly, workers should note family strengths and resources that can be coordinated to reduce the risk to the child. Such strengths include extended family members, positive associations with neighbors and friends, and other potential support structures (faith-based, tribal affiliation, AA membership, etc.).

Investigation workers will often coordinate interviews with law enforcement agencies to insure that these agencies are aware of reports to which they are mandated to respond, and that interviews can be coordinated and trauma to the child minimized. Regardless of other agency involvement, investigation workers retain final responsibility for the direction and resolution of the investigation.

Investigations are concluded with a finding on the allegation. The two categories of findings are: a. substantiated: it is determined the child suffered harm or faces risk of harm as a result of abuse/neglect; b. not substantiated: it cannot be determined whether the child suffered harm through the action or inaction of caretakers and there are no facts to support the allegation.

- **Child Advocacy Centers**

The Office of Children's Services receives federal funding for Child Advocacy Centers through a grant received from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) utilize a highly effective, one-stop approach to the investigation of child abuse. Role models of community collaboration, the centers provide a child-friendly facility at which members of the investigative team interview, medically examine, provide and refer treatment for abused children while pursuing the prosecution of offenders. The multidisciplinary team (MDT) typically includes professionals in the areas of law enforcement, child protective services, medicine, mental health and prosecution. Currently there are CACs in the communities of Juneau, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Nome, Bethel, and Wasilla.

For the next five years OCS is developing a strategic funding plan to ensure the continuation of the CAC's by diversifying funding sources and working towards sustainability after the federal grant funds are no longer available. Therefore, OCS will continue to fund the operations of the existing six Child Advocacy Centers and to assist with the development of a seventh CAC in Dillingham.

Programmatically, OCS and the CAC's are working towards establishing statewide protocols that will work in collaboration with the local CAC/MDT protocols that drives the operations of each CAC. These statewide protocols include developing consistent systems for referral of cases, utilization of the CAC's by OCS, and establishing a CAC utilization practice that may include having forensic interview staff on site at the CAC. The OCS is planning regular training opportunities for the MDT and CAC staff that will include specialized forensic interview training, e.g. cultural sensitivity, interviewing the very young child, or developmentally disabled child. The state will be working towards establishing a method to provide regular MDT training for existing and developing MDT's.

In cooperation and collaboration with the CACs, the OCS will continue to work towards improving the measurement of outcomes through the utilization of a CAC database and quarterly reporting requirements of the CAC's. Recently the National Institute of Justice

expressed an interest in researching Alaska's Child Advocacy Centers. OCS views this as an excellent opportunity to improve our current system and develop best practices.

- **Alternative Response**

The *Dual Track* program is a family preservation program in which low risk reports of abuse and neglect are diverted to a community-based agency. The agency is responsible for contacting the family with voluntary services targeted at the issues identified through a comprehensive child and family assessment. If the assessment indicates that a child may be unsafe, the case is given back to the Office of Children's Services for immediate investigation.

There are currently three programs in the state: The Children's Place in the Mat-Su Borough, Cook Inlet Tribal Council in Anchorage and Kawerak, Inc., in Nome. During the next five years OCS hopes to be able to fund additional Dual Track programs throughout the state.

- **Family Preservation**

Family Preservation services are services for OCS referred clients that are designed to help children and families (including adoptive, foster and extended families) at risk or in crisis. These services include:

- a) Intensive service programs designed to help children at risk of foster care placement remain safely with their families.
- b) Service programs designed to provide follow-up care to families to whom a child has been returned after a foster care placement or after a child abuse and neglect investigation has been substantiated.

Permanency Planning

- **Case Planning**

The child protection workers conduct a comprehensive case planning process directed toward the goal of a permanent, stable home for every child. These case planning activities are directed toward assuring that every child in the state's care has a permanent family, capable of providing them with nurturance and protection. When this is not the child's family, then an alternate permanent family is found for the child.

- **Out of Home Care**

AS 47.14.100 mandates the Department to provide for the "...care of every child committed to its custody by placing the child in a foster home or in the care of an agency or institution providing care for children inside or outside the state." The Office of Children Services is

responsible for finding temporary and permanent homes for children who have been abused and neglected and cannot remain safely in their own home. OCS licenses foster parents, provides for adoption homestudies, places children with relatives and in foster and adoptive homes and helps to ensure that these out of home caregivers get the support they need.

- **Time Limited Family Reunification**

Time Limited Family Reunification services are services and activities for OCS referred clients that are provided to a child that is removed from the child's home and placed in a foster family home or a child care institution and to the parents or primary caregiver of such a child, in order to facilitate the reunification of the child safely and appropriately within a timely fashion, but only during the 15-month period that begins on the date the child enters foster care.

- **Subsidized Adoption & Guardianship**

The Subsidized Adoption & Guardianship program is an adoption incentive program for children with special needs. This program provides services to facilitate the transition of children from foster care into permanent homes. The subsidy payment and/or medical coverage provides for the cost of the child's special needs and is available to the family until the child reaches age 18. One of the primary goals of the OCS is to achieve permanency for children. Permanency can mean returning to their home with the necessary protections and treatment in place. However, for some children, returning home is not an option, usually for a variety of reasons. This is when adoption or guardianship becomes an important permanent option for children who have been in state custody.

- **Independent Living**

Alaska's Independent Living Program allows youth to gain the necessary skills, education and supports to successfully transition into adulthood. Alaska has developed a core set of policies and procedures for their Independent Living Program including: adoption of the Ansell-Casey Life Skills as the primary assessment tool; the requirement that all youth have in their case plan a Transition Plan at age 14 and by age 17 an Exit Plan; set-aside funds for goods and services for youth to help them acquire the independent living skills identified in their plans; set-aside funds for post-secondary education or vocational training programs for youth; after-care supports for youth up to age 21 that includes set-aside funds for youth out-of-custody to help with critical needs such as housing, and employment search.

Placement Resources

- **Community Care Licensing**

The licensing of community care facilities is a preventive service that reduces predictable risks to the health, safety and well-being of children in out-of-home care. Licensing requirements establish acceptable standards of care, while the licensing and monitoring processes provide support and quality control services to the care providers. The OCS has statutory responsibility for the licensing of child residential care facilities and child placement agencies.

- **Residential Care**

Residential care facilities provide treatment services within a therapeutic environment that is staffed 24 hours a day. Residential care facilities may offer short-term emergency shelter as well as more long-term residential treatment. Placement in a residential facility is for a specified period of time, and generally occurs only after less restrictive placement options have been found inappropriate or have been exhausted.

- **Recruitment and Training of Foster Homes**

The OCS contracts with the Alaska Foster Parent Training Center (AFPTC) to provide training to foster, adoptive and relative placement caregivers. Training consists of a 15-hour CORE training, providing basic information on six aspects of caring for children in custody. Aspects include OCS services, impact of abuse, neglect and substance abuse on children, separation, grief and attachment issues foster children may experience, and appropriate parenting, discipline and guidance for the children in their care. Additional training on specific issues relevant to caring to children in care is provided through the AFPTC as well.

The OCS allocates resources specifically for recruitment activities, including creating and implementing a statewide media awareness campaign. In the past several years, television, radio and print campaigns have been conducted in both rural and urban areas. A new recruitment effort will begin during FY 05 along with plans to streamline the application and home study process. A new emphasis on developing “Resource Families” will be undertaken during this next fiscal year.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR
FY 2005 - 2009**

Introduction

The following goals and objectives have been developed as a result of a number of different planning processes.

In January 2004, the Office of Children's Services (OCS) entered into a strategic planning process. A facilitated conversation was held with tribal leaders, juvenile justice representatives, provider organizations, foster parents, adoptive parents, law enforcement, university personnel and OCS staff. In addition, this process included partners from the Department of Education, the Division of Behavioral Health, the Governor's Council on Disabilities, the Rasmuson Foundation, Casey Family Programs, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

In addition, stakeholder input into the Five-Year Plan development was solicited through direct contact with tribal representatives and service providers, and public notice to all Alaska citizens was provided, soliciting comments and input into a draft plan.

Finally, the process includes an incorporation of the elements currently contained in Alaska's Program Improvement Plan and builds on the progress made to date.

Safety Goal and Objectives

GOAL #1: Prevent child abuse and neglect

Objective 1: Increase public awareness of child abuse and neglect

Strategies:

1. Work with the Alaska Children's Trust and other non-profit community agencies to develop a statewide prevention media campaign.
2. Coordinate the development of a statewide plan for the prevention of child abuse and neglect that includes developing protocols for cases that include domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental health issues.
3. Revise and distribute informational brochures for mandated reporters and community service providers on recognizing and reporting suspected child abuse and neglect.
4. Seek opportunities to provide training on the recognition, reporting and management of suspected child abuse and neglect to mandated reporters.
5. Integrate and enhance focus on child abuse and neglect prevention into WIC, HFAK and ILP programs.

GOAL #2: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect and are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate

Objective 1: Ensure timely and effective responses to all protective services reports

Strategies:

1. Respond to all investigations within the required time frames. (PIP)
2. Look for ongoing funding sources to continue funding Child Advocacy Centers throughout Alaska.
3. Expand Alternative Response Services in regional hubs throughout Alaska.
4. Identify first responders in remote villages.

Outcome measure:

1. 95% of case file reviews as conducted through on-site QA activities and supervisory reviews will show that protective services reports were responded to according to established policy.

Objective 2: To safely maintain children in their own homes whenever possible

Strategies:

1. Establish caseload standards that are realistic for Alaska.
2. Reduce safety and risk factors for children by improving risk and safety assessments. (PIP)
3. Increase services to families to protect children in their home and prevent their removal.
4. Monitor the use of Structured Decision Making tool to accurately assess risk of abuse during and after service delivery.
5. Build Community Partnerships: Partner with a wide range of community organizations and tribes in targeted neighborhoods and villages that are the source of high referral rates.
6. Find and maintain local resources that can support children and families in their own neighborhoods by recruiting, training and supporting foster parents and relative caregivers.
7. Use hard data linked to child and family outcomes to drive decision-making, and to show where change is needed and where progress has been made.

8. Facilitate on-going communication between the Family Support Services grantees and local OCS offices through the Linkages program.

Outcome measures:

1. A reduction in the rate of repeat maltreatment. – **Current baseline - Calendar year 2003: 17.1%**

2. A reduction in the total number of children served away from their own families. **Current baseline - Number of children in custody and in out of home care as of May 3, 2004: 2,029**

Objective 3: To ensure the safety of children in out of home placement

Strategies:

1. Ensure comprehensive orientation and training of resource families. (PIP)
2. Develop standards for unlicensed relative caregivers and include them in the FLAG project through the Department of Public Safety. (PIP)
3. Develop and implement a comprehensive recruitment, screening, training and retention plan. (PIP)

Outcome measures:

1. A reduction in the incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care: **Current baseline - Calendar Year 2003: 1.35% (9 month period)**

Permanency Goals and Objectives

GOAL #3: Children will have permanency and stability in their living situations

Objective 1: To improve the stability of foster care placements

Strategies:

1. Increase training opportunities for foster parents in both rural and urban areas of the state. (PIP)
2. Strengthen matching process by increasing placement options available through foster home recruitment and retention. (PIP)

3. Increase the number of available foster parents.
4. Implement a Unified Home Study Process.

Outcome measure:

1. Increase the number of foster children who have been in foster care less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home who have had no more than two placement settings. **Current baseline - Federal FY 2003: 74.0 %**

Objective 2: To expedite permanency for children with the goal of reunification, guardianship, or placement with relatives

Strategies:

1. Strengthen Administrative and Supervisory Reviews to examine permanency goals and concurrent plans (PIP) and track caseworker compliance with recommendations made at last review.
2. Increase use of reunification assessments through SDM, and continue training workers on these assessments.
3. Continue to fund Time-Limited Family Reunification programs and develop process for evaluating efficacy of these programs.
4. Increase access and availability of services in parents' home communities, especially substance abuse treatment and follow-up services.
5. Develop a Kinship Care Program.
6. Collaborate with tribal partners to develop safety net services in remote areas.
7. Utilize team decision making, including permanency specialists such as Regional Adoption Specialists, for placements/transitions to promote long-term best interests, especially for children under 3 years old and for children who have been in out of home care 6 mos. or more.

Outcome measure: Increase the percentage rate of children reunified in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home. **Current baseline - Federal FY 2003: 59.3 %**

Objective 3: To expedite permanency for children with the goal of adoption

Strategies:

1. Work with the state court system through the Court Improvement Project to document the frequency and types of court delays that occur in cases involving children who have a goal of adoption, to understand the reasons for those delays, and to implement strategies aimed at decreasing those delays. (PIP)
2. Provide diligent statewide recruitment efforts for potential adoptive parents who reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of children in foster care.
3. Ensure that all children are registered with the state adoption exchange when their identified case plan is adoption, they are legally free, and have no identified adoptive family with a completed adoption homestudy.
4. Maintain regional Adoption Specialist positions to work with supervisors and social workers and monitor ASFA compliance through the administrative review process.
5. Active participation in the Adopt US Kids national campaign.
6. Collaborate with Alaska Native Tribal Organizations to develop a culturally sensitive training and recruitment plan for increasing Native foster and adoptive homes.
7. Implement a Unified Home Study process.
8. Continue working relationship with the Alaska Adoption Exchange and the Northwest Adoption Exchange.
9. Continue working collaboratively with the Court Improvement Project to identify and eliminate legal barriers to timely termination of parental rights and the placement of children for adoption.
10. Provide Adoption Assistance to ensure that children with special needs achieve the goal of adoption.
11. Periodically review laws and policies to identify and eliminate barriers to timely adoptions.
12. Examine the development of an adoption purchase-of-service program to allow for payments to licensed child placing agencies, in-state and out-of-state, to facilitate the adoptive placement of children with special needs when they have no other available placement resource.

Outcome measures:

1. Increase the number of adoptions completed within 24 months from date of entry into foster care. **Current Baseline - Federal FY 2003:23.9 %**

2. Increase the number of children who receive adoption assistance – **Current baseline - Total children in the SAG program is 2,055 as of April 30, 2004**

3. The number of children who receive ICAMA services – method of measuring to be developed within first year of the plan.

GOAL #4: To provide youth who will transition out of the foster care program to independence with the support and resources they need to be successful

Refer to the Chafee Independence and ETV Section of this plan.

GOAL #5: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Objective 1: Increase visits between parents, siblings, and children in foster care

Strategies:

1. Work with Tribal partners to increase tribal assistance in facilitating visitation. (PIP)
2. Maintain existing Visitation Center contract in Anchorage and explore possible expansion of similar services in other parts of Alaska.
3. Engage foster parents in assisting with family visitation.

Outcome measures:

1. 90% of case file reviews as conducted through on-site QA activities and administrative reviews will achieve substantial conformity in frequency of visitation among family members.

Objective 2: Continue and preserve family relationships and connections for children in out of home care and provide support to enhance and maintain the child-parent bond

Strategies:

1. Continue use of INGENS database as a tool for conducting relative searches. (PIP)
2. Collaborate with tribal partners to expand the ICWA Help Desk concept to other regions (currently operates in the Anchorage Region only). (PIP)
3. Continue working with Tribes through the Tribal/State collaboration group to address these issues. (PIP)

4. Work with the court system, the AG's office, Child Support Enforcement and the Office of Public Advocacy to establish a court-based process for paternity testing throughout the state (already occurs in Anchorage). (PIP)

5. Implement Family Team Decision-Making in Anchorage. Involve foster parents, case workers, birth families and community members in all placement decisions to ensure a network of support for the child and the adults who care for them.

Outcome measures:

1. 90% of case file reviews as conducted through on-site QA activities and administrative reviews will achieve substantial conformity in workers' efforts to provide supports to maintain family relationships.

Objective 3: To make diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources.

Strategies:

1. Social workers will conduct relative searches by or before the temporary custody hearing and will continue to search for appropriate relatives throughout the case. (PIP)

2. Continue use of INGENS database as a tool for conducting relative searches. (PIP)

3. Collaborate with tribal partners to expand the ICWA Help Desk concept to other regions (currently operates in the Anchorage Region only). (PIP)

4. Work with the court system, the AG's office, Child Support Enforcement and the Office of Public Advocacy to establish a court-based process for paternity testing throughout the state (already occurs in Anchorage). (PIP)

5. Develop a Kinship Care program.

Outcome measures:

1. 90% of case file reviews as conducted through on-site QA activities, administrative reviews and Supervisory Reviews will achieve substantial conformity in workers' efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement options.

2. Implementation of Kinship Care program.

Well being Goals and Objectives

GOAL #6: Enhance the capacity of families to provide for their children's needs.

Objective 1: To effectively assess the needs of children, families and foster parents

Strategies:

1. Children's and parents' needs will be adequately assessed and addressed at critical junctures in the case. (PIP)
2. There will be ongoing evaluation of service provision for parents and children. (PIP)
3. Foster parent needs will be assessed and addressed in regard to the child's specific needs. (PIP)
4. Continual assessment of worker training needs.
5. All children under the age of 3 with substantiated abuse or neglect will be referred to the Infant Learning Program for assessment.
6. All children in foster care under the age of 3 months will be referred to Healthy Families Alaska where programs are available.
7. All children in foster care under the age of 5 will be referred to the WIC program.

Outcome measures:

1. 90% of case file reviews as conducted through on-site QA activities and administrative reviews will achieve substantial conformity in workers' assessments of child and family needs.

Objective 2: To facilitate adequate worker contact with children and families

Strategies:

1. Increase the number of family meetings where a child in custody and his/her parents all actively contribute to case planning efforts affecting their family. (PIP)
2. Develop processes to ensure that the frequency and quality of visits between workers and children is sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's safety and well-being. (PIP)

3. Develop processes to ensure that worker visits with parents will occur with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of the children and parents, focusing on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment. (PIP)

4. Request Federal approval to develop contact policies and practices that are reasonable and address the unique geographic and weather related issues of the State of Alaska.

Outcome Measure:

1. On-site QA activities, administrative and Supervisory review of caseworker contacts will show 90% of cases to have contact according to state policy.

GOAL #7: Children will receive appropriate services to meet their educational, physical health and mental health needs.

Objective 1: To ensure children’s educational, mental health and physical health needs are assessed and addressed appropriately.

Strategies

1. Complete EPSDT within our guidelines and use the healthcare provider's recommendations as a guide for all health treatment decisions. (PIP)

2. Maintain consistent communication with the child and caregivers on health needs and issues. (PIP)

3. Clarify expectations between school districts and OCS regarding case and school record collection, documentation and worker participation in IEP meetings. (PIP)

4. Workers will assess, address and document the presence of educational needs for children in their own homes. (PIP)

5. Children will be referred to WIC, Infant Learning and Healthy Families programs as appropriate for assessment and services.

6. Children will be referred for mental health assessments and services as needed.

7. Implementation of the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Planning process.

Outcome measure:

1. 90% of case file reviews as conducted through on-site QA activities and administrative reviews will document substantial conformity in workers’ efforts to address educational, mental health and physical health needs.

System Goals and Objectives

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

GOAL #8: To evaluate and provide support and information on child welfare services programs at the state, regional and local levels

Objective #1: To complete the development and implementation of On-line Resources for the Children of Alaska (ORCA), the state's new SACWIS system.

Strategies:

1. Execute project plan to implement case planning and licensing modules of ORCA by late summer 2004.
2. Execute project plan to implement financial processing modules of ORCA by October 2004. Fully functional ORCA system by end of October 2004.
3. Conduct user review of initially designed system reports for purposes of evaluating how they are meeting state, regional and local office needs.
4. Conduct ACF initial review of the system by December 2004.
5. Conduct full scale SACWIS Assessment Review of ORCA by August 2005.
6. Begin any remediation identified as the result of the review by October 2005.

Outcome Measure:

1. Fully operational ORCA system providing data and reports on a regular basis to local, regional, state and national staff.

Objective #2: To measure progress towards meeting the goals and objectives of the Program Improvement Plan by using ORCA data and management reports.

Strategies:

1. Utilize ORCA data and management reports to determine progress towards meeting national standards for the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR).
2. Identify data and management reports that will be provided to central office, regions and local offices for monitoring and review processes.

3. Begin using ORCA data and management reports to assist in resource allocation and decision-making for service evaluation.
4. Produce regular reports regarding the status, demographics, location and goals for all children in foster care.
5. Produce semi-annual AFCARS data to DHHS.
6. Produce annual NCANDS data to DHHS.

Outcome Measures:

1. ORCA data and management reports provide essential information that can be used to determine whether PIP goals and objectives are being met.
2. AFCARS reporting meets federal requirements for completeness, accuracy and timeliness.
3. NCANDS reporting meets federal requirements for CFSR safety data submission.

ICWA COMPLIANCE

GOAL #9: To ensure that the State is in compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

Objective 1: To effectively collaborate with Alaska Native Tribes

Strategies:

1. Continue meeting with Tribal/State Collaboration Group (T/SCG) 3 times per year.
2. Maintain ongoing contact/communication with tribes and tribal organizations regarding ICWA compliance issues.
3. Maintain regional ICWA Specialist positions to work with local tribal entities and monitor ICWA compliance through the administrative review process.
4. Evaluate/assess the reasons for overrepresentation of Alaska Native children in the child protection system.
5. Collaborate with T/SCG to develop and distribute an ICWA Handbook for tribal ICWA workers use.

6. Update Statewide Tribal Directory for Shared Outlook files, Internet WebPages and mailing.

7. Refer to ICWA Section of the Five-Year plan.

Outcome Measures:

1. Documentation of T/SCG meetings along with participant list.
2. Document results of disproportionate representation study.
3. Completed ICWA Handbook and Tribal Directory

GOAL # 10: Cultural continuity for all children and families will be maintained.

Objective 1: Increase ICWA compliance through improved case management.

Strategies:

1. Regional ICWA Specialists participate in or facilitate all federal reviews, the out of preference placement reviews, FACE, 6 month, and permanency placement reviews to increase ICWA compliance.
2. Social workers provide ongoing identification of ICWA eligible children and coordination of services to ICWA eligible children and families.
3. Involve families from the beginning of the case management process and through the return of the child to the family. This will be tracked through our ORCA database.
4. Increase the number of Native foster homes in Alaska.

Outcome Measure:

1. Annual ORCA generated report of ICWA compliance at the state, regional and local levels.

Objective 2: Increased ICWA compliance via electronic tracking using ORCA system

Strategy:

1. Develop, implement and analyze ICWA questions in ORCA database system.

Outcome Measure:

1. Annual ORCA generated report of ICWA compliance at the state, regional and local levels.

Objective 3: Improved statewide and regional ICWA Compliance.

Strategies:

1. Conduct ongoing OCS ICWA team teleconferences, which includes the tribes and others as needed.
2. Request OCS ICWA representation on other agency collaboration groups.
3. Provide representatives who can ensure ICWA input on all relevant division committees.
4. Provide training and orientation regarding the Role of the ICWA Specialist to Regional OCS Staff and tribes/Native Organizations.
5. Provide training regarding data collection for ICWA Compliance to Regional OCS Staff.
6. Provide updates and training (as needed) regarding the OCS Statewide ICWA Compliance and Tribal Collaboration Plan at each Quarterly Supervisor's Meetings.

Outcome measures:

1. ICWA case file reviews throughout the year will demonstrate a 90% ICWA compliance level.

STAFF TRAINING

GOAL #11: To coordinate, develop and deliver a comprehensive training program in child welfare for child welfare staff, tribes, foster and adoptive parents and other child welfare service providers working in collaboration with OCS to provide services to children and their families.

Objective 1: To strengthen the skills and knowledge of staff at all levels for more effective planning and delivery of child welfare services, in the context of safety, permanency and well-being for children and families.

Strategies:

In partnership with the University of Alaska School of Social Work:

1. Review and revise curriculum as needed to correspond with changes in federal and state law/regulation, and to reflect trainee feedback from post-training questionnaires.
2. Develop, strengthen, and facilitate training opportunities and requirements for supervisors and managers.

3. Coordinate policy and procedure training to dovetail with skills training wherever practical.
4. Continue to develop and expand competency-based skills training using public-private sector partnerships.

Outcome measures:

1. Local workers are able to apply policy and procedures appropriately as evidenced by QA, administrative and Supervisory Reviews.
2. Demonstrated improvement in the six CFSR outcome measures.

Objective 2: To improve the retention of child protection workers and provide for a qualified workforce

Strategies:

1. Continue the stipend program for BSW and MSW level students interested in working in child welfare
2. Implement and OCS staff Recruitment and Retention workgroup

Outcome measure:

1. Numbers of students receiving stipends and who obtain child welfare employment
2. Numbers of vacancies and turnover rates

GOAL # 12: Provide quality assurance system that evaluates quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system and ensures that children in foster care are provided needed services that protect the safety and health of children.

Objective 1: Strengthen and build upon existing measures to fully identify and integrate quality assurance and continuous quality improvement within the division.

Strategies:

1. Review and revise current system to ensure that the on-site and administrative review process is relevant and beneficial to field offices.
2. Develop and implement yearly statewide plan for quality assurance reviews.

3. Review and revise, as needed, the Supervisory Case Review instrument. (PIP)
4. Develop a formal and periodic evaluation of agency performance by stakeholders and tribal groups. (PIP)
5. Develop regional QA committees, including members of local tribes. (PIP)
6. Develop and implement quality assurance review system for in-home cases. (PIP)
7. Create a pool of trained Supervisors to participate in on-site case review process.
8. Develop supervisory review tool to be used for regular monthly case reviews.
9. Track supervisor/social worker utilization and completion of administrative review recommendations.

Outcome measures:

1. Positive results from consumer satisfactory surveys.
2. Feedback from regional managers that on-site and administrative case review process is beneficial to improving worker practice.
3. Overall improvement in meeting Alaska's Program Improvement Plan.
4. Evidence that supervisory review forms are being completed and are useful to enhancing safety, permanency and well-being of children.
5. Supervisors are trained and participating in quality assurance reviews.
6. Quarterly number of cases reviewed.

SERVICE ARRAY

GOAL #13 To develop an accessible array of services that is community based and meets the identified needs of children and families

Objective 1: To expand the existing array of services.

Strategies:

1. Establish flexible funding opportunities to provide for identified service needs.

2. Conduct regional assessment of available community resources to identify gaps and develop plans for service development.
3. Through the use of “mapping” software conduct an analysis of available services on a statewide, regional and local basis.
4. Prioritize the development of new services throughout the state based on needs assessment.
5. Work within the Department and with other community partners to expand services available to children and families. (PIP)
6. Establish a realistic service array in all regions.

Outcome measures:

1. A consistent package of services is available in every region.

FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION.

GOAL #14: To coordinate, develop and deliver a comprehensive training program in child welfare for foster and adoptive parents.

Objective 1: To provide skill training to foster and adoptive families to enhance their capability to provide for children in their care.

Strategies:

1. Implement Statewide Recruitment and retention plan.
2. Review and monitor contract with the Alaska Foster Parent Training Center by conducting an annual survey, analyzing the results, and providing feedback to contractors.
3. Develop strategies to ensure that foster and adoptive parents receive the basic skills and knowledge needed to nurture foster care children and support their permanency plans.
4. Develop strategies to ensure that foster and adoptive parents develop knowledge of and support children's ethnic background traditions.
5. Continue to work on the feasibility of recognizing tribally licensed foster homes.
6. Implement Unified Home Study Process.

Outcome measures:

1. Increase in the attendance rate for required training by foster and adoptive parents.
2. Decrease in the number of foster placement disruptions.

GOAL #15: Increase the number of culturally appropriate foster homes

Objective 1: Implement statewide resource family recruitment plan

Strategies:

1. Work with Tribal State Collaboration Group to develop regional and statewide ongoing tribal and Native foster care recruitment plan.
2. Work with Alaska Foster Parent Training Center staff to ensure tribal participation in planning the Statewide Foster Care Recruitment Plan.
3. Work with tribes to develop a series of articles for Alaska Native for-profit Corporations presenting positive Native Foster Parents as a recruitment tool.
4. Work with Tribal State Collaboration Group Committee to facilitate the recognition of tribally licensed foster homes for children in state custody.
5. Implement attached Recruitment plan – see addendum

Outcome measures:

1. Increase in the number of Native foster homes. **Current baseline: 341 Alaska Native Homes currently licensed**
2. Increase in the number of tribally licensed foster homes.

**Service Description Of Services Offered Under Each Category In Title IV-
B, Subpart 2**

FAMILY PRESERVATION, FAMILY SUPPORT, & TIME LIMITED FAMILY REUNIFICATION:

The Office of Children's Services administers four service programs under Title IVB, Subpart 2: 1) Family Support services, 2) Family Preservation services, 3) Time Limited Family Reunification services and 4) Adoption Support services. OCS requests written proposals from community-based, non-profit private agencies that wish to be funded for providing these programs. Successful proposals are then selected from a competitive rating process that utilizes a Proposal Evaluation Committee. Throughout the year, OCS then provides program supervision and technical assistance for the delivery of these services.

The goals and objectives of services and programs offered through community-based grants to child and family service providers are:

- To reduce the rate of repeat maltreatment
- To increase services to families to protect children in their own home and prevent removal
- To expedite permanency for children with the goal of reunification, adoption, or permanent placement with relatives
- To improve the assessments of the needs of children and families, in order to make sure they receive the services they need
- To increase the amount of visitation opportunities for children, their parents, and siblings
- To continue and preserve family relationships and connections for children in out-of-home care
- The educational, physical health, and mental health needs of children will be addressed
- A system of effective services will be available to keep children safe in their own homes.

A description of each service category is provided below.

Family Support services are defined as community based services to promote the safety and well-being of children and families designed to increase the strength and stability of families (including adoptive, foster and extended families) to increase parents' confidence and competence in their parenting abilities, to afford children a safe, stable and supportive family environment, and otherwise to enhance child development. This program will receive 23% of total funds awarded in FY2006.

Examples of Family Support services currently available are:

- Information and referral services to refer families to other community services, including child care, health care, nutrition programs, education and literacy programs, and mentoring services;
- Parenting classes or instruction;
- Crisis intervention and mediation services for runaways and their families; and
- Early developmental screening of children to assess the needs of such children, and assistance to families in securing specific services to meet those needs. Services to improve parenting skills (be reinforcing parents' confidence in their strengths, and helping them to identify where improvement is needed and to obtain assistance in improving those skills) with respect to matters such as child development, family budgeting, coping with stress, health, and nutrition;

Family Preservation services are services for OCS referred clients that are designed to help children and families (including adoptive, foster and extended families) at risk or in crisis. These services will receive 48% of total funding in FY2006. These services include:

- c) Intensive service programs, designed to help children at risk of foster care placement remain safely with their families.
- d) Service programs designed to provide follow-up care to families to whom a child has been returned after a foster care placement or after a child abuse and neglect investigation has been substantiated.

Examples of Family Preservation services currently available are:

- Structured activities involving parents and children to strengthen the parent-child relationship;
- Drop-in centers to afford families opportunities for informal interaction with other families and with community-based staff;
- Intensive home-based services for high risk families (may include both cases where there is a high risk of removal and cases where a separation has occurred and there is a need for preparation for reunification; minimum of eight hours per week, 24 hour availability);
- Non-intensive home-based services offer a minimum of two hours per week or two visits per week. Home-based services include household management, child

management, physical care, supervision, communication techniques, problem solving and coping skills;

- Parenting classes or instruction;
- Respite care for OCS-referred clients (including birth parents, foster parents, and relative care givers);
- Individual, group, and family counseling;
- Inpatient or residential substance abuse services for children placed with their parents;
- Mental health treatment services for children and families;
- Child sexual abuse intervention and treatment for victims, victims' families, and offenders. Outreach services to non-abusive parents;
- Services designed to provide temporary child care;
- Transportation to or from services;
- In-home visits, parent support groups, and other programs designed to improve parenting skills (by reinforcing parents' confidence in their strengths, and helping them to identify where improvement is needed and to obtain assistance in improving those skills) with respect to matters such as child development, family budgeting, coping with stress, health and nutrition.
- Case conferences or case review meetings with OCS; and
- Assistance to address domestic violence.

Time Limited Family Reunification services are defined as services and activities for OCS referred clients that are provided to a child that is removed from the child's home and placed in a foster family home or a child care institution and to the parents or primary caregiver of such a child, in order to facilitate the reunification of the child safely and appropriately within a timely fashion, but only during the 15-month period that begins on the date the child enters foster care. These services will receive 29% of total funding in FY 2006.

Examples of Time Limited Family Reunification services currently available are:

- In-home visits, parent support groups, and other programs designed to improve parenting skills (by reinforcing parents' confidence in their strengths, and helping them to identify where improvement is needed and to obtain assistance in improving those skills) with respect to matters such as child development, family budgeting, coping with stress, health and nutrition;
- Supervised visitations when children are physically removed from their parents and the case plan for the family only allows supervised visitation (written observation required).
- Structured activities involving parents and children to strengthen the parent-child relationship;
- Transportation to or from services; and
- Case conferences or case review meetings with OCS.

Services will help to meet permanency provisions by:

- Assisting children and families to resolve crises, and connecting them with necessary and appropriate services, enabling them to remain safely together in their homes.
- Helping families to avoid unnecessary out-of-home placement of children, and also help children already in out-of-home care be returned to their home. They allow children to be maintained with their families or in another planned, permanent living arrangement.

In FY 2000, the OCS began a program called Linkages, which formalized the referral process for children and families who were a subject of an investigation and where the investigation warranted family support services but not custody or court intervention. Linkages focused on strengthening on-going communication between the Family Support Services grantee and the local OCS offices in the common goal of protecting children and serving families. Protocols were developed for referring, linking, and hearing back from one another. Grantees were required to further assess and define services needed by the family, make connection with the family, report back on outcome of service intervention and submit documentation on services provided to the child(ren) and families. The Linkages program has been successful. The OCS intends to continue utilizing this system during the next five years.

Programmatically, the Office of Children's Services is in the process of analyzing the array of services provided with both IVB Part 2, and other funds. Beginning with the prevention end of the spectrum and moving through more intensive services provided for children at risk of

removal from their homes. Finally, we will be looking at reunification services provided so that children can be returned to their homes.

Currently a committee of various OCS workers is studying prevention programs within the Department of Health and Social Services. This will enable us to determine both duplicative services and any gaps in service and help us design a continuum of services that serve all our needs, and allow us to better reach the goals and objectives of our PIP. This will also ensure that services between offices are coordinated and integrated into the child and family service continuum.

FY 2005 is a continuation year for the Family Support, Family Preservation, and Time Limited Family Reunification grants. OCS is looking at a shift in quarterly narrative reporting that will not only allow us to count the number of families served, but will also begin to gather outcome-based reporting from our grantees. We will be attaching special conditions to all Notice of Grant Awards (NGA's) that contain outcome language from the grantee's FY 2004 proposal. In addition, we will be further updating the Quarterly Narrative Reporting tool so that outcome-based information will be reported.

In order to comply with the Indian Child Welfare Act, OCS works closely with many grantee agencies that are tribally affiliated. We ensure that services delivered through all agencies (regardless of tribal affiliation) are culturally sensitive and consider a family's cultural values and needs.

In February 2006 OCS will release a new Request for Proposals (RFP). In preparation for this, the Office of Children's Services is in the process of researching and evaluating program information from other States to see what services are offered and how they are structured. We will be seeking technical assistance from the Institute for Family Development regarding development of an RFP that will allow us to design a model that includes a continuum of Family Preservation and Support services that goes from short term to longer term. OCS will also be looking at prescribing one assessment tool to be used by all of our grantees. We are currently looking at the North Carolina Family Assessment Scale.

Following are the specific services currently offered under IVB, Part 2. Family Support holds 23% of funding, Family Preservation holds 48%, and Time Limited Family Reunification holds 29%. These percentages are based on total funding and include both IV-B and state General Funds. Some current identified gaps in service include the Kotzebue and Bethel areas.

During FY 03 and FY 04, the Office of Children's Services experienced funding reductions to its General Fund allocations. These reductions have made it difficult for the OCS to match its IVB Part II funding. Future General Fund reductions continue to be a concern to OCS, and the OCS plans to look into the possibility of using a percentage of the individual agency cash match as part of its 25% IVB match.

In FY 2006 when the next RFP goes out, OCS will work with their regional and field offices to talk to agencies about applying for and providing services in certain areas where there are identified gaps. As part of the Program Improvement Plan (PIP), OCS will be working with a task force to study services and needs in the state. The Regional percentages of the IVB, Part 2 money may be re-allocated as a result of the task force findings.

FAMILY SUPPORT: \$529,530 (includes combination of federal IV-B and state funds)

South Central Region: \$167, 750

Alaska Family Resource Center – Palmer \$41,816

Families served by the Alaska Family Resource Center Family Support program will receive home-based parenting education and support services. Services provided to these families include solving immediate crises, budgeting, stress management, positive discipline, transportation, child development, resource referrals and other skills needed to maintain family integrity independently and prevent out-of-home placements. These services are available Monday through Friday during the day and after hours to accommodate the client's need.

All families are encouraged to attend weekly parenting classes. The maternal parent will be assessed for the need for the Women and Anger group. If the client is involved with OCS, the FSPP Case Manager will contact the referring Social Worker to request that group attendance be mandatory.

Cordova Family Resource Center – Cordova \$28,712

The Cordova Family Resource Center Family Support program offers individual family and safety assessments, home visits, support groups, parenting skills classes and related education, arrangement for respite care, involvement in family night activities, and information and referral to other community services.

Kenaitze Indian Tribe – Kenai \$9,630

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe Family Support program offers in-home respite, parent skills training, transportation, OCS case conferencing, clinical mental health services, and psycho-education about child development and special needs.

Kodiak Youth Services Center – Kodiak \$37,170

The Kodiak Youth Services Center Family Support program offers intensive case management, weekend day respite, crisis intervention (both office based and in-home), group and individual substance abuse education and counseling, parent training and support, skill building and asset groups, and transportation.

Sea View Community Services – Seward \$16,921

The SeaView Community Services Family Support program offers in-home visits, parent support groups, transportation, and programs designed to improve parenting skills with respect to such matters as child development, family budgeting, coping with stress, and health and nutrition. They also provide structured activities involving parents and children to strengthen the parent-child relationship.

Valdez Regional Health Authority – Valdez **\$33,501**

The Valdez Community Center Family Support program offers functional assessments, home visits that address basic and essential living skills, parenting skills, and networking with other community services.

Anchorage Region: \$97,775

Alaska Women’s Resource Center – Anchorage **\$50,851**

Each family receiving services from the Alaska Women’s Resource Center Family Preservation program receives a comprehensive assessment identifying strengths, support systems, and individual needs of parents and their children. Early developmental screening of children assists families with identifying and meeting any special needs. Based on the assessments, parents identify priorities from which a Family Goals Plan is developed. The Parent Educators work with parents to teach appropriate parenting skills and education that includes, but is not limited to, child safety, behavior management, child supervision, physical care, parent child communication techniques, problem solving and coping skills. Problems identified on the Family Goals Plan are the focus during the weekly home visits. In-home services are offered at times convenient for the family including evenings and weekends. OCS case plans are incorporated into goal plans as appropriate.

AWRC offers case conferences with OCS and other service providers, information and referral services for other community services, specialized parenting classes geared to meet the needs of families affected by substance abuse and/or domestic violence, parent support groups, and educational workshops for parents whose children are in OCS custody. In addition AWRC has a Stepping Stones program parents enter as part of a reunification plan. The Stepping Stones program includes supervised visitation.

Cook Inlet Tribal Council – Anchorage **\$46,924**

The Cook Inlet Tribal Council Family Support program offers the following services: Assessments, In-Home Visits, Parent Support Groups, Transportation, Parenting Skills Improvement, and Life Skills Groups.

Southeast Region: \$62,151

Catholic Community Services – Juneau **\$56,369**

The Catholic Community Services Family Support program provides client-specific counseling and support services for families, with an emphasis on in-home (or in-office if that

is more convenient for the client) skill training, including individualized counseling and support services, referral and referral coordination services, and case coordination services covering parenting skills, anger and stress management, household management, problem solving, and coping skills.

Wrangell Community Services – Wrangell **\$5,782**

The Wrangell Community Services Family Preservation program offers family strength assessments; case planning; emotional support to parents; informal counseling and modeling of family relationships; communication and life coping skills development; linkage to other needed community services; parent-child interaction to facilitate bonding between the parent and child and facilitate healthy parent-child interactions; child health and development monitoring; and paternal involvement activities.

Northern Region: \$201,854

Fairbanks Counseling & Adoption – Fairbanks **\$27,476**

The Fairbanks Counseling and Adoption Family Support program is a gender specific program for pregnant, parenting and high-risk adolescent females. The program offers the following activities: Outreach, Intake, Body Movement Therapy, Equine Therapy, and Summer Activity/Therapy. The Body Movement Group will include a physical movement component, plus a check-in form covering several topics. Topics include: body image, dynamics of domestic violence, healthy vs. unhealthy relationships, identifying risk factors in a relationship, safety for self and child, and stress and anxiety. The Equine Therapy groups include one hour of caring for and riding horses, which has many psychological and physical benefits. Summer activities include meeting at pre-arranged locations for planned activities such as swimming, gym work-outs, and nature walks.

Fairbanks Native Association – Fairbanks **\$174,378**

The Fairbanks Native Association Family Support program offers a 24-hour emergency shelter and drop in services. They also offer Crisis Intervention, Family Mediation, Individual, Group and Family Counseling, Classes to Improve Parenting Skills, Planning for Permanent Placement, Home Visits, and Structured Activities.

FAMILY PRESERVATION: \$1,096,732 (includes combination of federal IV-B and state funds)

Southcentral Region: \$195,754

Alaska Family Resource Center – Palmer **\$88,785**

Families referred to the Alaska Family Resource Center Family Preservation program will receive intensive, home-based counseling and support, crisis intervention, case management,

transportation, parenting education, anger management counseling, and a comprehensive outcome based case plan.

Cordova Family Resource Center – Cordova **\$18,953**

The Cordova Family Resource Center Family Preservation program offers the following services: Home visits, family education, evening family and sobriety support groups, arrangement of respite care, personal support, parenting skills training, information and referral, and supervised visitation.

Kenai Peninsula Community Care – Kenai **\$44,462**

Kenai Peninsula Community Care Family Preservation services include the following: Direct services to clients will be needs based and may include a mix of both in-home and supportive services. For example, pre-placement preventive services are designed to help families avoid out-of-home placement and may include crisis response, supportive respite, in-home parenting skills education, basic needs assistance and community resource referral. Post-placement, follow-up and transitional services may include the services previously listed as well as family counseling, mediation, and advocacy. Supervised parent/child visitation services may also include some of the above services as well as direct observation, parenting skills education and side-by-side coaching.

Kenaitze Indian Tribe – Kenai **\$25,877**

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe Family Preservation program offers in-home respite, parent skills training, transportation, visitation, OCS case conferencing, clinical mental health services, in-school skill development services while at Head Start to reduce classroom aggression, and psycho-education about child development and special needs.

Valdez Regional Health Authority – Valdez **\$17,677**

The Valdez Counseling Center Family Preservation program offers functional assessments, home visits that address basic and essential living skills, parenting skills, and networking with other community services, including transportation. The Center also provides supervised visitation for children and families during out-of-home placement.

Anchorage Region: \$450,383

Alaska Women’s Resource Center – Anchorage **\$40,865**

Each family receiving services from the Alaska Women’s Resource Center Family Preservation program receives a comprehensive assessment identifying strengths, support systems, and individual needs of parents and their children. Early developmental screening of children assists families with identifying and meeting any special needs. Based on the assessments, parents identify priorities from which a Family Goals Plan is developed. The Parent Educators work with parents to teach appropriate parenting skills and education that includes, but is not limited to, child safety, behavior management, child supervision, physical care, parent child communication techniques, problem solving and coping skills. Problems

identified on the Family Goals Plan are the focus during the weekly home visits. In-home services are offered at times convenient for the family including evenings and weekends. OCS case plans are incorporated into goal plans as appropriate.

AWRC offers case conferences with OCS and other service providers, information and referral services for other community services, specialized parenting classes geared to meet the needs of families affected by substance abuse and/or domestic violence, parent support groups, and educational workshops for parents whose children are in OCS custody. In addition AWRC has a Stepping Stones program parents enter as part of a reunification plan. The Stepping Stones program includes supervised visitation.

Cook Inlet Tribal Council Visitation Center – Anchorage \$185,848

The Supervised Visitation Program is located in the Muldoon Child and Family Resource Center in the Muldoon Mall in East Anchorage. It serves children 0-7, in State custody, in out-of-home placement, and their parents, or other family members. Referrals are accepted only from OCS. Visits take place in a comfortable, large living room type setting with plenty of play materials and interactive materials parents can use with their children. The mall provides an array of child and family resources such as the Boys and Girls Club, Kids Corps Headstart, job training, and other community resources. The Child and Family Resource Center also provides case management support for families involved with OCS or at risk of being involved with OCS.

Cook Inlet Tribal Council – Anchorage \$223,670

The Cook Inlet Tribal Council Family Preservation programs includes the following services: Supervised Visitation, Transportation, Assessment, Individual Adult and Child Therapy, Case Management, Family Service Planning, Monitoring of Progress, Advocacy, Family and Child Skill Development, Domestic Violence Counseling and Education, Services designed to provide temporary childcare, Discharge, Future Planning, and Follow-up, and OCS Program Compliance.

Southeast Region: \$ 161,748

Catholic Community Services – Juneau \$49,260

The Catholic Community Services Family Preservation program offers support to the entire family unit to help children at risk of foster care placement remain safely in their homes or return safely within six months of placement. Staff provide a wide range of services from transportation for the children, supervised visits, and helping the family to find affordable housing and food to teaching valuable life skills to clients. The program provides support to OCS caseworkers, ongoing case management after the case has been closed, information and referral services to other community agencies, in-home based support with parenting,

budgeting, nutrition, and health, and in-home observation and monitoring of caseworker specified elements of the case plan.

Communities Organized for Health Options – Craig \$26,035

Communities Organized for Health Options (COHO) provides Family Preservation services to all of Prince of Wales Island, including Craig, Klawock, Thorne Bay, Hydaburg, Naukati, and Coffman Cove. The program provides training and assistance to families referred by OCS and who are at risk of out-of-home placement. The services have great emphasis on in-home training including modeling, role-playing and other skill building techniques. It includes packaged training programs, videos and audiotapes and other devices to assist the family in developing the skills necessary to prevent an out-of-home placement. The goal of this project is to eliminate the need for out-of-home placement and to insure the safety of the child.

Juneau Youth Services – Juneau \$21,792

Juneau Youth Services Family Preservation program offers individualized mediation and case management in the family home, JYS emergency shelter, or other setting; supervised visitation; and transportation to help families resolve crises and connect them with the necessary and appropriate services so the family can safely remain together.

Women in Safe Homes – Ketchikan \$44,428

The Women In Safe Homes Family Preservation program offers supervised visits; parenting and skill building education; strengthening positive family interaction and communication skills; lessons concerning discipline without corporal punishment; education on the effects of domestic violence on children; counseling to identify and build on family strengths, individually and as a family; recognition of needs; implementing change, short and long-term; and advocacy with other agencies and referrals to other services and agencies.

Wrangell Community Services – Wrangell \$20,233

The Wrangell Community Services Family Preservation program offers family strength assessments; case planning; emotional support to parents; informal counseling and modeling of family relationships; communication and life coping skills development; linkage to other needed community services; parent-child interaction to facilitate bonding between the parent and child and facilitate healthy parent-child interactions; child health and development monitoring; and paternal involvement activities.

Northern Region: \$288,847

Fairbanks Counseling & Adoption – Fairbanks \$21,642

The Fairbanks Counseling and Adoption Family Preservation program will provide intake, assessment, individual, family and group therapy, and case management.

Fairbanks Native Association – Fairbanks \$59,817

The Fairbanks Native Association Family Preservation program includes the following services: family mediation, counseling, parenting skills, parenting groups, supervised visitation, home visits, and structured activities.

Nome Community Center – Nome \$44,388

The Nome Community Center Family Preservation program offers in-home family assessments, individual or group educational activities focused upon: reduction of stress, building of coping skills, family interaction, problem solving, household management, communication, and effective disciplining. They also offer individual couple or group effective parenting classes using the STEP (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting) curriculum, make referrals for individual couple or family counseling, assist families in receiving direct services which may be necessary to meet identified needs, refer families to appropriate resources including mental health, substance abuse recovery programs, social services agencies, and private providers. NCC also provides transportation.

Resource Center for Parents and Children – Fairbanks \$163,000

The Resource Center for Parents and Children Family Preservation program offers Family Assessment of Functioning, Families in a New Direction group parenting classes, and Individual Family Enrichment Series.

TIME LIMITED FAMILY REUNIFICATION: \$652,705 (includes combination of federal IV-B and state funds)

Southcentral Region: \$200,681

Alaska Family Resource Center – Palmer \$63,188

Families receiving services through the Alaska Family Resource Center Time Limited Family Reunification program will receive supervised visitations, transportation, parenting education and support services, anger management counseling, and case management services with an outcome based case plan.

Bristol Bay Native Association – Dillingham \$102,217

The Bristol Bay Native Association Time Limited Family Reunification will provide the following services: In-home parenting skills training using existing curricula resources and trained staff on hand BBNA including individual and group classes. Information and referrals to community or regional services including health care, nutrition, education, employment opportunities and child care. Services to assess skills and to identify areas for improving family strengths such as child development, budgeting, stress management, and family and community support systems. Home-based services for families when children have been removed by OCS will consist of at least 1 to 3 visits per week until stability is maintained. Included are follow-up visits on a regular basis to assure the continued safety the child(ren). Monthly case conferences with the OCS social workers, as well as in-house case conferences

with BBNA social workers. Caseworkers will assist in finding a permanent home for the child(ren) if the parents/caregivers have surpassed the legal time frame for reunification.

Kenaitze Indian Tribe – Kenai **\$35,276**

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe Time Limited Family Reunification program offers parent support, parenting instruction, information and referral services, structured parent-child activities, respite care, pre-school individual skill development for SED children, case management/service coordination, mental health services, supervised visitation, drug and alcohol treatment/referral services, individual and family therapy, and transportation.

Anchorage Region: \$122,449

Cook Inlet Tribal Council – Anchorage **\$77,882**

The Cook Inlet Tribal Council Time Limited Family Reunification program offers the following services: Supervised Visitation, Transportation, Inpatient Residential or Outpatient Substance Abuse Treatment, Individual Group and Family Counseling, Mental Health Services (including assessments, testing, and treatment), Family Therapy, Individual Adult and Child Therapy, and Domestic Violence Counseling and Education

Salvation Army Booth Memorial – Anchorage **\$44,567**

The Salvation Army Booth Memorial Time Limited Family Reunification program offers assessments, parental skill building classes, in-home visits, and supervised visitation.

Southeast Region: \$132,932

Catholic Community Services – Juneau **\$45,538**

The Catholic Community Services Time Limited Family Reunification program provides support for OCS caseworkers and foster parents, transportation for children, supervised visits, referral services to other community agencies (including CCS Family Support Program for parenting skills). Historically, CCS has combined the Family Preservation and Time Limited Family Reunification program to provide a seamless continuation of services for clients as they move between the two classifications. However, if necessary, each component can stand alone.

Communities Organized For Health Options – Craig **\$28,807**

Communities Organized for Health Options (COHO) provides Time Limited Family Reunification services to all of Prince of Wales Island, including Craig, Klawock, Hydaburg, Thorne Bay, Naukati and Coffman Cove. The program provides training and assistance to families referred to the project by OCS and who are currently in out-of-home placement. The services have great emphasis on in-home training programs, videos and audiotapes and other devices to assist the family in developing the skills necessary to return a child home.

Women in Safe Homes – Ketchikan **\$50,000**

The Women In Safe Homes Time Limited Family Reunification program offers supervised visits; parenting and skill building; strengthening positive family interaction; communication skills; education for discipline without corporal punishment; education on the effects of domestic violence on children; counseling to identify and build on family strengths, individually and as a family; recognition of needs; implementing change, short and long-term; advocacy with other agencies; and referrals to other services and agencies.

Wrangell Community Services – Wrangell **\$8,587**

The Wrangell Community Services Time Limited Family Reunification program offers emotional support to parents; informal counseling and modeling of family relationships; communication and life coping skills development; linkage to other needed community services; parent-child interaction to facilitate bonding between the parent and child and facilitate healthy parent-child interactions; child health and development monitoring; and paternal involvement activities.

.Northern Region: \$196,643

Fairbanks Counseling & Adoption – Fairbanks **\$50,000**

The Fairbanks Counseling and Adoption Time Limited Family Reunification program will operate a secure web site for children involved in the foster care system. The site will provide age-appropriate chat rooms and opportunities for individual chats with professional therapists. The site will also provide a variety of information useful to children in foster care, including community events and resources.

Nome Community Center – Nome **\$68,009**

The Nome Community Center Time Limited Family Reunification program offers in-home family assessments, individual or group educational activities focused upon: reduction of stress, building of coping skills, family interaction, problem solving, household management, communication, and effective disciplining. They also offer individual couple or group effective parenting classes using the STEP (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting) curriculum, make referrals for individual couple or family counseling, assist families in receiving direct services which may be necessary to meet identified needs, refer families to appropriate resources including mental health, substance abuse recovery programs, social services agencies, and private providers. NCC will also provide supervised visitation and transportation.

Resource Center For Parents and Children – Fairbanks **\$78,634**

The Resource Center for Parents and Children Time Limited Family Reunification program offers supervised visitation and teaches parents how to have safe, productive and nurturing interactions with their children.

ADOPTION PROMOTION AND SUPPORT SERVICES - \$193,000

The Office of Children's Services currently offers the Adoption Support Services through a contract with the Alaska Adoption Support Center. Previous to fiscal year 2004, these services were incorporated into family support and preservation grants; however, in fiscal year 2004, a specific contract was established to target adoption promotion and support services. The contract started in October 2003, with actual service provision beginning in January 2004. The initial response from adoption and guardianship families alike has been positive, with families accessing the resources on a consistent basis. It is believed that as the services become more well-known to adoptive and guardianship families, that the service will be accessed more readily by families.

The Northwest Resource Associates was selected to provide the services of this contract through a competitive RFP process. RFPs were released which outlined the actual services that the Office of Children's Services was interested in providing to adoptive and guardianship families in the pre and post adoption and guardianship stage. Responses to the RFPs were reviewed through a Proposal Evaluation Committee (PEC) and the Northwest Resource Associates was selected as the contractor for these services.

Assurances: See Addendum

COORDINATION WITH TRIBES

Introduction

The Office of Children's Services (OCS) strongly supports the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and continues to build federal ICWA mandates into all levels of OCS Child Welfare. We continue to develop positive collaborative and communicative partnerships with all Native organizations and Alaska Native Tribal organizations.

Indian Child Welfare goals include:

- Providing an overall statewide ICWA compliance plan that meets ICWA, Title IV-B, Title IV-E, Child Welfare federal and state mandates.
- Ensuring implementation of the statewide ICWA Compliance Plan for all State of Alaska Office of Children's Services, Regional and Field offices.
- Providing a process for developing and implementing a data base which documents and monitors statewide ICWA Compliance.
- Maintaining and increasing Tribal/State Collaboration Group participation in ICWA Compliance, Training and Evaluation.
- Assisting in the development and implementation of a statewide ICWA training plan for State of Alaska, Office of Children's Services and Tribal Indian Child Welfare Workers.
- Providing a collateral ICWA plan for implementation with the State of Alaska Court Systems, Attorney General's and other attorneys

Tribal State Collaboration Group meets three times each year. They examine issues faced by Alaska Native children and their families who are involved with OCS. There is joint, tribal-state leadership and inclusive membership of both parties. The OCS has a unique relationship with tribes. The Group addresses all policies relating to ICWA compliance as well as other policies that impact Alaska Natives

Collaboration increases services and placement compliance for ICWA eligible clients. The OCS will continue to support this collaboration by:

- Networking between state, tribes and Alaska Native Organizations for the ICWA is maintained and increased by:
- Letters, telephone calls, Emails, Faxes, and newsletters are distributed to tribes/native organizations.
- Hosting regular telephonic conversations with tribes and Alaska Native Organizations.

- Assisting in the planning and facilitating of the Annual Statewide ICWA Conference with the Alaska Native Indian Child Welfare Association (ANICWA)
- Providing Tribes with ongoing information on current OCS child welfare practices and processes within federal and state mandates.
- Developing, distributing, analyzing results of an annual survey to tribes requesting feedback on State ICWA Compliance efforts and other issues emphasized by Alaska tribes/Native Organizations.
- Sharing ICWA compliance reports with Alaska tribes/Native Organizations.
- OCS supporting T/SCG monthly Tribal Caucus teleconferences.

Planning Process with Tribes

On November 17, 2003, the Tribal/State Collaboration Group held a second two-day strategic planning session in Anchorage. With facilitation by Eileen Lally, Ph.D. of the Family Service Training Academy the group reviewed and built on the 1999 Strategic Plan to ensure continuity of the Group priorities and goals.

The T/SCG participants chose to work in one of three workgroups from the former Strategic Plan: *Toward Effective Partnerships*, *Toward Mutual Accountability* and *Toward Expanded Services & Resources*. Each workgroup developed tasks meeting their workgroups objectives. The T/SCG then collectively reviewed the items listed from the three workgroups. The activities with the associated timelines were sorted into standing committees with new committee tribal and State Co-chairs to begin working on the tasks.

The Strategic Plan will be reviewed and updated as needed or at least annually during the Fall Tribal/State Collaboration Group meeting in Anchorage for any needed changes. A copy of this plan is located in the Addendum.

Additional goals and objectives related to ICWA compliance can be found throughout the goals and objectives in this plan, particularly on pages 25 and 26.

Disproportionate Representation

During the next five years, OCS will be working with our tribal partners to specifically address the disproportionate representation of tribal children in out-of-home care. As part of this process, we will be looking at a number of different issues including the following:

- Cultural bias in intake procedures
- Cultural Competency training
- Cultural Competence of service providers
- Tribal prevention efforts

Social Service Grants with Tribal Organizations

Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska provides ongoing social services for Native families and their children who live in the Rural Southeast Region of Alaska in partnership with OCS, under a Social Services Block Grant from OCS. There are six communities covered under this grant.

Tribal workers in each village work with the state social worker for each of the respective communities. Services provided under the grant may include prevention to prevent removal from the home, early intervention services, case management, facilitation of ICWA preference placements, family reunification efforts and permanency planning.

Kawerak, Incorporated provides prevention and ongoing social services for Native families and their children living in the Bering Straits Region in partnership with OCS, under a Social Services Block Grant from OCS. There are twenty villages additional to the city of Nome receiving services under this grant.

Because this is a cooperative work relationship, policies and procedures detailing which agency provides what services has been detailed in a Memorandum of Agreement.

Ongoing services are provided for Native children OCS custody and may include relative searches, foster home studies, monthly foster home visits, ICWA preference placement research, assistance in coordinating transportation between communities and supervised visitation.

Prevention services are provided for Native children where OCS has received a Report of Harm and initially determined that the report represents a low risk of harm to the child, that the child may be an at-risk candidate for foster care if preventive services are not provided, and that the case is appropriate for referral to Kawerak Child Family Services. Kawerak workers in the villages provide assessments and services or referral to needed services. Services provided may include home visits, training or education in health and nutrition, parenting and early childhood, and stress management along with escorting families to appointments or arranging transportation services.

Maniilaq Association provides ongoing social services to Native children and their family's who live in the Northwest Arctic Region of Alaska in partnership with OCS, under a Social Services Block Grant from OCS. There are three programs funded under this grant: family

crisis response, ongoing social services and the Putyuk Children's Home. There are eleven villages covered under this grant additional to the city of Kotzebue.

Because this is a cooperative work relationship, policies and procedures for detailing which agency provides what services are detailed in a Memorandum of Agreement.

The Social Service Program provides family preservation and support services and includes parenting and early childhood instruction, coordinated case management, foster care recruitment and licensing.

The Putyuk Children's Home provides children in crisis a safe, structured and nurturing living environment. Services include assessment of behavioral/functional, educational, medical and social/emotional issues.

Family Crisis Response program provides sanctuary for survivors of family violence and sexual assault. Services include crisis intervention, referral and support services, advocacy, and community education.

Norton Sound Health Corporation (NSHC) provides prevention and ongoing mental health and substance abuse services for Native families and their children living in the Bering Straits Region in partnership with OCS, under a Social Services Block Grant from OCS. There are fifteen outlying villages additional to the city of Nome receiving services under this grant.

Communication procedures have been developed for good partnership between NSHC and OCS. Services for high-risk youth and children within the region are provided with the goal of ensuring the safety of children at risk of abuse through wraparound services (individual and family therapy) psychological testing, and substance abuse counseling.

Tribal IV-E Program

Under the Title IV-E Tribal Program, the Office of Children's Services passes through federal Title IV-E funds for administration and training on child welfare related activities to nine Tribes/Tribal organizations. Reimbursement is for the categories of administration and training only. Eligibility to participate in this program is limited to those tribes and tribal organizations having an approved five-year child welfare plan on file with Region X of the ACF.

Activities under these grants are monitored through quarterly certification of expenditures, face-to-face meetings and on-site visits. OCS completes the Title IVE eligibility determination on the children served by these programs, determines the penetration rate and calculates the reimbursement for each grantee. Technical assistance is provided to all on a regular and ongoing basis.

Tribes and Tribal Organizations having a signed MOA for the Tribal IV-E Program include:

- *Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association* provides case management services to children and families on the Aleutian chain who are Title IV-E eligible.
- *Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP)* provides similar services to children and families in the Bethel Region.
- *Bristol Bay Native Association* provides case management services to Dillingham and surrounding villages.
- *Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska* has ICWA workers in Juneau and six rural communities in Southeast Alaska. These workers provide case management services and adoption services to children in State foster care, and their families.
- *Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC)* has two distinct programs included in the Title IVE Tribal Agreement. One is the ICWA Help Desk, which is staffed by one full time CITC worker and located in OCS's Anchorage office. This position is a point of contact for ICWA workers throughout Alaska and OCS workers needing assistance in contacting or coordinating services for an Alaska Native child. The second program operated provides case management services to families whose children are candidates for foster care, or whose children are in foster care.
- *Kawerak, Inc.* provides case management services to IV-E eligible children in state foster care in Nome and in the villages under their service umbrella.
- *Maniilaq, Inc* has four workers that provide case management services to children in state custody and their families in the Kotzebue region. These workers are housed in the OCS office in Kotzebue and are considered the permanency-planning unit for that office. Maniilaq also has a position dedicated to recruiting and licensing foster homes in the area.
- *Sitka Tribe of Alaska* has one IV-E staff person working with children in state foster care who are IV-E eligible.
- *Tanana Chiefs Conference* has one full time social worker dedicated to providing case management activities to Title IV-E eligible children in state foster care. This position works primarily with the TCC families located in the Fairbanks area.

MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Child welfare waiver demonstration activities (applicable States only).

Not Applicable to Alaska at this time.

Intercountry adoptions:

The State of Alaska is now providing adoption and post-adoption services to children who were adopted from other countries through the contract with the Alaska Adoption Support Center. These services are open to any family who has adopted a child, whether or not the adoption was finalized in the State of Alaska, in another state or in another country. The services provided under the Alaska Adoption Support Center include: information and referral; crisis intervention services; support services; minimal case management services.

In Alaska, only four children have been reported over the past fiscal year as entering into the foster care system in Alaska. Two of these children were from Anchorage; one from Southeast and one from Southcentral Region. In each of these cases, the children remain in the care of the foster care system, and the goal remains reunification with the adoptive family.

Currently, the only way that OCS has to track the number of children who were adopted from other countries, who are now in OCS care, is through a report from the field staff. These reports are inconsistent at best and do not provide an accurate view of the actual numbers of children who are in State custody through failed adoptions. However, under the ORCA case management system, workers will be required at the intake stage, to identify if a child is adopted and from which country or state the child's adoption originated. These reports will then be available more accurately to the OCS State Office staff through the ORCA reporting system.

Adoption incentive payments:

For fiscal year 2004, Alaska did not receive the adoption incentive payments as the number of our finalized adoptions had declined in the previous fiscal year. While Congress has extended the adoptive incentive program, it is unclear at this time whether or not Alaska will continue to receive these funds. For this reason, no plan has been initiated regarding the use of adoption incentive funds at this time.

Evaluation and Research Activities

The Child Welfare Evaluation Program (CWEP) is a partnership of the State of Alaska Office of Children's Services, the Tribal-State Collaboration Group, the Casey Family Programs, and the University of Alaska Anchorage School of Social Work.

Status of Current Evaluation Projects:

1. Independent Living Skills for Youth in Office of Children's Services Custody Ages 14-18.
 - a. Four youth-in-care focus groups have been completed. Participating youths came from diverse communities around the state and were currently in foster or residential care. They were asked several questions regarding what skills they think Alaskan youth need to live independently. In addition, they were asked to comment on the relevance of the Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment to Alaskan youth.
 - b. Transcripts of the focus groups will be analyzed and a draft report will be ready for review by stakeholders by July 1, 2004.

2. Status of Alaskan Foster Care Alumni ages 19-29.
 - a. The State of Alaska generated a list of youth in this age range who were formerly in state custody and out-of-home placement for at least one continuous year between the ages of 15 and 18 and left care before their 16th birthday. This list yielded 183 names. Sixty-five addresses of individuals within this group were obtained and letters of recruitment to participate in the study were mailed.
 - b. A CWEP temporary staff is currently working on locating the remainder of the targeted former foster care youth.
 - c. Interviews with the foster care alumni are currently under way.
 - d. Interviews will be completed by September 2004.
 - e. Data will be analyzed from October-December 2004.
 - f. A report will be available in January 2005.

3. An Exploration of Family Support and Preservation Programs
 - a. A draft of the literature review of best and promising practices in Family Support and Preservation programs will be complete by June 30, 2004.
 - b. This report will include outcome measures and possible indicators for successful Family Support and Preservation Programs.
 - c. A small non-random sample of Alaskan Family Support and Preservation program representatives will be interviewed addressing the following questions:
 - i. What is success in your program?
 - ii. How do you measure it?
 - iii. What do you think contributes to this success?
 - d. A report containing findings from all three aspects of this research will be completed by October 2004.
 - e. Links will be made to findings from the Parental Alcohol and Substance Abuse study.

4. An Exploration of Parental Alcohol and Substance Abuse Programs

- a. A review of the national literature in this area, including promising practices, will be concluded by June 1, 2004.
- b. A summary of research on Alaskan programs will be completed by July 1, 2004.
- c. Interviews with four Parental Alcohol and Substance Abuse programs will be conducted during May and June.
- d. The final report on this topic will be linked to the Family Support and Preservation research effort and completed by October 2004.

Future Potential Child Welfare Evaluation Projects:

The CWEP is currently pursuing funding in the following areas identified as child welfare research needs in Alaska:

1. A study of recruitment and development of adoptive families in rural communities, matching them with children in foster care.
2. Exploration of factors supporting successful kinship care of children in state custody.
3. Evaluation of Alaskan Family Preservation and Support programs using national promising practices; establishing relevant outcomes, and measuring them with appropriate indicators.
4. Longitudinal study of foster/residential care youth leaving custody using key variables identified in the foster care alumni study.
5. A follow up of successful cases from the foster care alumni study to determine components of positive outcomes for Alaskan youth.
6. Evaluation of independent living skills training for Alaskan youth aging out of the foster care system.
7. A study of ways to improve recruitment and retention of child welfare staff in Alaska.
8. Evaluation of a project to provide stipend funds to BSW and MSW students to improve recruitment, competency-level, and retention of child welfare staff.
9. Technical assistance in program evaluation for Alaskan Native child welfare organizations.

Plans for Technical Assistance

Alaska plans to request technical assistance from the National Resource Centers in the following areas:

1. National Resource Center on Child Maltreatment to conduct a workload Study
2. National Resource Center on Child Maltreatment on conducting foster care assessments
3. National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement to work with supervisors.

4. National Resource Center on Independent Living to strengthen the Independent Living Program.
5. National Resource Center on Permanency Planning to train trainer on concurrent planning and expediting permanency.

Self-Evaluation Teams

With Technical Assistance from the Annie E. Casey Organization, Alaska will be developing Self-evaluation teams statewide. These teams will take an in depth look at regional data outcomes and conduct data analysis. Information gathered from this process will result in an evaluation of current regional practice and the development and implementation of plans to improve regional outcomes.

Family-to-Family

Alaska plans to implement the four core strategies of Family-to-Family in Anchorage and one rural site over the next five years.

Current Executive Initiatives:

Faith-Based Initiatives: One Church One Child Project

HISTORY: One Church, One Child (OCOC) is a faith-based project engaging churches and state agencies tasked with matching adoptive families and children in need of permanent homes. It was founded in 1980 initially to recruit African-American families for African-American children needing homes.

NATIONWIDE MISSION: To encourage churches to promote the adoption of children who are without permanent families and homes, providing safe, culturally relevant and permanent homes.

GOAL: Develop and implement a pilot project in the Anchorage bowl area to initiate OCOC with churches whose membership are predominately African-American and/or Alaska Native.

1. By September 1, 2004, have two families interested in providing care/adoption minority children in the Anchorage area and commencing the process through OCS licensing.
2. By December 2004, have two more families interested in becoming licensed to provide care.

OUTCOME: Increased resource family homes for African-American, Native and minority children needing permanent, safe and culturally relevant homes. Need for increased homes for this target population has been identified by the CSFR and Alaska's PIP in response to CSFR.

By December 1, 2004, four families will have begun the licensing process to provide care for minority children in need in the Anchorage bowl and supported in these efforts by their churches, in alignment with the OCOC philosophy.

Responsible Fatherhood:

The following programs are funded through the Alaska Children's Trust to help men become responsible, committed, involved fathers:

Fairbanks Counseling & Adoption

Fairbanks, AK

Responsible Fathers:

Responsible Fathers is a two-phase program to help high-risk teen fathers increase involvement with, and responsibility for, their children. Outreach efforts target teens and young adults, ages 13 and up, with emphasis on reaching teen fathers who are not involved with their child. The interactive components include supervised playtime, teen parent mediation services, work exchange for baby items, and parenting education. Outreach will be to all teens but will target teen fathers in the Fairbanks Youth Facility, new recruits at Ft. Wainwright Army base and senior high classes.

Bartlett Regional Hospital

Juneau, AK

The *Fathers Project* provides education and support services for new and expectant fathers. Services include pre/postnatal support groups for fathers, with emphasis on active involvement before, during, and following the birth of their child. Further emphasis is placed upon bonding and the father's role in child development. Education also is provided to schools and health care providers about the importance of fathers and ways to encourage their involvement.

Staff Development and Training Plan for FY 2005 – 2009

The Family Services Training Academy (FSTA) at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) has been in operation since July 1998. The FSTA develops and delivers in-service training that is based on the CWLA/Institute for Human Services core competencies required for the practice of child welfare casework in a Title IV-E foster care agency.

In addition to the competency-based core curriculum, the FSTA develops and delivers additional in-service training curricula, including training in specific areas of policy and practice and training in the supervisory competencies required of OCS supervisors.

All new social workers are required to attend Training and Orientation for New Employees (TONE) in their first month of hire. This is a two-week course. In the first six months of their employment, social workers are to attend 103 – The Effects of Abuse & Neglect on Child Development and 104 – Separation, Placement, and Reunification. This is 15 days of training.

In the next six to eighteen months of employment, a new worker must attend 229 – ICWA, 239 – Intensive Sexual Abuse Interviewing Skills, and 204 – Risk Assessment for a total of seven and a half days of training.

Additional trainings in specialty areas such as FAS/FAE and Domestic Violence are also offered throughout the year.

In addition to OCS staff, tribal representatives, as Tribal Family and Youth Services (TFYS) workers and ICWA workers, have been encouraged to join trainings, and have always been appreciative of the opportunity to learn how OCS approaches child welfare issues.

Five-year plan for OCS - FY05 to FY09

First Year Mandatory Training Plan for OCS Workers

Training:

1. Duration and audience: This is the short term training for social services workers (CCLS, SSA, SWKI-V, CSS I-I, and management of OCS) employed by OCS.
2. Setting: The training will occur at the FYSTA offices or at regional settings for OCS throughout the state of Alaska.
3. Provider: The FYSTA trainers will provide the training, or will contract with other appropriate trainers.

In First Month: Length of Training Days

Tone 101 & 102– Training & Orientation for New Employees: 10 Days

In First Six Months

103 – The Effects of Abuse & Neglect on Child Development	3 Days
104 – Separation, Placement and Reunification	<u>2 Days</u>
Total Training Days in First Six Months:	<u>15 Days</u>

Six Months – 12 Months:

204 – Risk Assessment	2.5 Days
229 – Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)	2 Days
213 – Specialized Foster Care & Adoption	2 Days
239 – Specialized Advanced Intensive Sexual Abuse Interviewing Skills (239-mandatory for intake, investigations and “generic” workers –others as space is available)	3 Days
Total Training Days for 6-12 Months:	<u>9.5 Days</u>

Total Days of Training for first 12 Months: 24.5 Days

101 TONE & 102 TONE Training And Orientation:	60 hours
<p>Training and Orientation of New Employees (TONE) is a two-week pre-service training for new State of Alaska, Office of Children’s Services staff appointed to the positions of Social Worker I-V, Children’s Services Specialist 1-II, Social Service Associate I-III, and Community Care Licensing Specialists. TONE incorporates CORE 101 and 102 curriculum written by the Ohio Institute for Human Services and endorsed by the Child Welfare League of America and adds introductory training in the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), domestic violence and child abuse, Alaska's laws, hearings and court preparation, placement and permanency planning, concurrent planning, substance abuse, residential care, and foster parent issues.</p>	
Core 103 The Effects of Abuse and Neglect on Child Development: (Distance Delivery Available)	18 hours
<p>This curriculum is written by the Ohio Institute for Human Services and endorsed by the Child Welfare League of America. It provides staff with an overview of "normal" child development, with a focus on how child abuse and neglect impacts that development. Core 103 currently is presented as four half-day trainings with “home work.</p>	
Core 104 Separation, Placement and Reunification:	12 hours
<p>This is the fourth module of the competency-based core curriculum for child welfare caseworkers. This module addresses the knowledge and skills required for child welfare workers to provide services related to child placement, including risk assessment, separation and placement services, family intervention, working with foster caregivers, and reunification.</p>	
204 Specialized Risk Assessment:	15 hours
<p>Specialized Risk Assessment (204) builds upon the skills learned in TONE 101 and 102. The assessment of safety and risk in child protective services is explored through discussion, small group exercises, and case scenarios/videos. The State OCS’ Structured Decision Making Tools that evaluate safety and risk are also used. Social worker bias is explored and discussion about ways to reduce bias is part of the class. Interviewing is used as a method of information gathering and rapport building.</p>	
213 Specialized Foster Care & Adoption: The Foundation:	12 hours
<p>This 2-day training is essential for all social workers as permanency for children in custody begins at the investigation process. Topics covered in the training include the nuts & bolts of addressing permanency for children in state custody, the effects of attachment interruption on the growth and development of adopted children, assistance to permanency, guardianship vs. adoption, placement activities for transitioning and adoption issues and experiences. [This class replaces the ‘old’ 211, Specialized Foster Care & Adoption.]</p>	

229 Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA):	12 hours
The Specialized ICWA training builds upon the foundation information presented in the Family & Youth Services Training Academy (FYSTA) TONE Basic ICWA training. It introduces Alaska specific ICWA issues.	
239 Advanced Intensive Sexual Abuse Interviewing:	18 hours
The training introduces forensic interviewing skills to the OCS worker and their law enforcement/judicial partners. It will develop knowledge, understanding, awareness, and skills for interviewing children who are the alleged victims of child sexual abuse. While this training targets child sexual abuse, it is practical and applies to all other types of abuse cases requiring forensic interviews. The training is a combination of lecture, group discussion, and other activities. Each trainee will demonstrate forensic interviewing skills gained in the training by conducting a thirty-minute videotaped "mock" interview with an adult actor posing as a child victim. In addition to directly increasing worker skills, this training will increase statewide consistency and create a common language when approaching forensic interviews of children.	

In addition to the mandated training, the following will be offered over the next five years:

205 Specialized Legal Issues in Child Welfare:	12 hours
This two-day curriculum is developed to enhance the child protection workers basic understanding of the court process in Child in Need of Aid (CINA) cases. The course is designed to build upon skills learned in the Training and Orientation of New Employees (TONE), and to further develop the workers ability to navigate the court system to better serve the families involved in the child protection system. Each worker will be asked to testify in a mock trial. This mock cross-examination will be videotaped for 10 minutes to enhance the workers learning experience. The training is offered to workers upon completion of the core trainings, approximately 6-12 months after being hired.	
207 Safety and Risk Assessment Review:	6 hours
This is a daylong application of Structured Decision Making and Risk Assessment for front line child protections workers. Theory is applied to real case scenarios and the workers have an opportunity to utilize the safety and risk assessment process on current cases with training staff and supervisors available to assist them with a thorough assessment of the family's situation.	
209 Structured Decision Making Refresher:	3 hours
A refresher of Structured Decision making with updates in materials and methodologies. See 215 Case Planning.	
214 Specialized Foster Care & Adoption: Pre-finalization:	12 hours
This 2-day training is essential for permanency planning and 'generic' social workers. Topics covered in this training include familiarizing workers with the adoption & guardianship statewide forms, how to best negotiate subsidies, pre-finalization services to the adoptive/guardianship home and child, and how to intervene with an adoptive	

family in crisis. This class replaces the 'old' 211.	
215 Case Planning:	3 hours
Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools help focus the case plan. This training reviews the SDM tools and how those appraisals help prioritize the case plan concern statements and objectives as well as assess the protective capacities inherent in the families with whom OCS works. Involving families in the case planning process is important; they should be involved in the development of appropriate, time limited case goals and objectives. Policy & Procedure, regarding case planning, is reviewed in this training.	
236 Interviewing Skills in CPS	New for FY05
This course is a continued look at how child protective services personnel use the skills of interviewing to gather information, establish plans, empower families, conduct assessments, and evaluate outcomes with clients. This course is designed for the entry level CPS worker after they have completed TONE 101, 102, CORE 103 and 104. Topics include: establishing rapport, techniques for conducting the interview, maintaining professionalism, and dealing with difficult situations.	
240 Advanced Intensive Sexual Abuse Interviewing Skills Refresher:	2 hours
A refresher on the skills and methodologies instructed in 239 AISAIS.	
308 Adult Psychopathology:	12 hours
Social Workers who complete this training will recognize the primary indicators of adult psychopathology, including symptoms of schizophrenia, paranoia, other psychoses, depression, anxiety and personality disorders. They will understand the effects of parental mental illness or emotional problems on child development and can accurately assess the risk to the child of remaining in the primary care of the emotionally disturbed/mentally ill parent. Recognizing signs that a parent may need to be hospitalized and what community resources are available, will also be discussed.	
313 Licensing Summit:	18 hours
The Licensing Summit is a training opportunity that gives licensing workers, supervisors, child placement agency staff, and tribal representatives a time each year to gather and learn about issues that pertain to the licensing of foster homes and child placement agencies. A variety of topics are discussed such as safety, risk assessment and dual licensure, and the topics vary from year to year.	
3XX- Protecting Children in Substance Abusing Families	12 hours
New for FY05	
This course is designed to give the more advanced CPS worker training in issues of substance abuse and the concurrent dynamics within families with substance abusing problems. Particular attention is paid to how to case plan with the families, safety issues for the children and understanding of the clinical aspect of substance abuse.	
FASD 101 (Distance Delivery Available):	4 hours
Training includes what is FASD, how does alcohol impact the developing brain, and what strategies will help serve this population better, with improved outcomes. The curriculum outlines exactly what parts of the brain are specifically impacted and how that brain damage equates into behavior and learning disabilities.	

3XX Working with Adolescents: Preparing for Transitions into Adulthood	12 hours
New for FY05	
This training will focus on workers using tools such as the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment to prepare young people for adulthood.	

Training will be developed for managers and supervisors as requested. Additionally, over the next five years it is anticipated that new needs will occur that require training, and those will be developed by FYSTA for OCS as required.

Cost of the Training: \$ 970,000

<i>Specifically allowable IVE admin function training activity</i>	<i>Allocation methodology</i>
Travel to training to prepare for employment	Cost x RMTS x 75%
Training personnel employed by University (local agency) to prepare employees for Social Work (allocated to benefiting programs)	Cost x RMTS x 75%
Admin personnel who support trainers employed by University (local agency) to prepare social Worker related duties.	Cost x RMST x 50%
Trainers teaching IVE practicum	Cost x 75% reimbursement
Supt for Training teaching IVE practicum	Cost x 50% reimbursement
Trainers teaching IVE practicum	Cost x 75% reimbursement
Supt for Training teaching IVE practicum	Cost x 50% reimbursement
Non-personnel Admin support for Practicum NRO	Cost x 75% reimbursement
Employees working on practicum for Bachelor of Social Work	Cost x 50% reimbursement
Non-personnel Admin support for Practicum ARO	Cost x 75% reimbursement
Travel to specific IVE training only	Cost x 75% reimbursement
OCS employees who train at academy	Cost x RMTS x 75%

Student Stipend Program

- 1) Continuation of the BSW student units at UAA/Anchorage OCS and UAF/Fairbanks OCS, with students supported by a stipend and required to work for OCS after degree completion.
- 2) Implementation of a MSW student unit to parallel the BSW unit at UAA/Anchorage.
- 3) Provision of tuition/books/expense stipends to current OCS workers to attend BSW/MSW programs in Alaska, including part time and distance delivered programs

Cost of the Program: \$180,000

Indication of the specifically allowable Title IV-E administrative functions the training activity addresses - Social workers receiving stipend while in training for Social Work degree

Cost allocation methodology -

- o Cost x FC penetration rate x 75%

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Additional Training Activities

- 1. Due to the development of ORCA, the new SACWIS system, a SACWIS training plan will be developed and implemented with the Training Academy for initial and ongoing training of OCS staff.
- 2. IV-E training activities for OCS staff will occur throughout the year. Gudrun Bergvall will conduct this training.
- 3. Three times per year, the OCS will provide IV-E training for the tribal partners that have signed agreements with OCS regarding the provision of IV-E reimbursable services to eligible children.

CAPTA STATE PLAN

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act State Plan

A. The program areas selected for improvement from the 14 areas delineated in section 106(a)(1) through (14) of CAPTA

The CAPTA program area selected for improvement with CAPTA funds is:

Section 106(a)(7) improving the skills, qualifications, and availability of individuals providing services to children and families, and the supervisors of such individuals, through the child protection system, including improvements in the recruitment and retention of caseworkers

B. An outline of activities that the State intends to carry out with its State Grant funds, including a statement of how these may differ from the activities described in the previous State plan.

Goal:

To improve the skills and qualifications of OCS workers and law enforcement/judicial partners who provide services to children and families in the child protection system.

Objectives:

- OCS workers and their law enforcement/judicial partners will develop knowledge, understanding, awareness, and skills for interviewing children who are the alleged victims of child sexual abuse.
- Increase statewide consistency and create a common language when approaching forensic interviews of children.

C. A description of the services and training to be provided under the State Grant as required by section 106(b)(2)(C) of CAPTA;

Please refer to section B above.

D. Assurances

See addendum

E. Substantive changes, if any, in State law that could affect eligibility:

None

F. Request for FY 2004 funds in the CFS-101, Part I and an estimate of expenditures in the CFS-101, Part II.

(See CFS 101 Section.)

G. State Compliance with new CAPTA eligibility requirements – see attached grid provided by Region X.

**Chafee Foster Care Independence and Education and Training Vouchers
Programs**

Chafee Foster Care Independence and Education and Training Vouchers Programs Plan of Work

The State of Alaska, Office of Children's Services provides administration, supervision and oversight for the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and Education and Training Voucher Program. The State of Alaska will cooperate in national evaluations of the effects of the programs in achieving the purposes of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program.

1. Education or Vocational Training Voucher Program Plan of Work.

Based on the program accomplishments, identified needs and new information, the following work plan is proposed to identify program objectives and activities to establish, expand and strengthen Alaska's Education and Training Voucher Program over the next grant period.

Objective 1: To prepare youth to enter post-secondary education or vocational training programs.

Activities:

1. Beginning at age 16 include education/career goals in youth's transition plan
2. By age 17, develop exit plan that includes a specific education plan and career development plan.
3. Through transition/exit planning process, inform youth of supports available to them for post-secondary education or vocational training.
4. Establish primary contacts between Regional IL specialists and high school administrators/counselors to develop in-school teacher and peer mentor supports for foster youth.
5. Establish regional foster youth advisory boards to help identify educational barriers and activities to eliminate barriers.
6. Develop resource list of tutors and other supports available, including specific Alaska Native supports, for youth in their community.
7. Include training for foster parents and residential care providers on home to school supports for academic success.

Objective 2: To increase enrollment of foster youth and former foster youth in post-secondary education or vocational training programs.

Activities:

1. Complete inventory of programs in the state that meet qualifying criteria for institutions of higher education.
2. Establish primary contacts with institutions and develop formal agreements between OCS and the institution that identifies services, funding including match funding available from the institution, specialized supports for youth, progress reporting requirements.
3. Establish primary contacts with Alaska Native organizations with established youth and job development programs and develop formal agreements to identify services,

finding including match funding available from the institution, specialized supports for youth, progress reporting requirements.

4. Provide individual consultation and help with application process for post-secondary education or vocational training.
5. Include contact information in exit packets for all youth leaving custody identifying OCS staff available to help with applying for education or vocational training programs in the future.
6. Establish primary contacts between Regional IL specialists and high school administrators/counselors to link foster youth to scholarship opportunities.
7. Request federal review of eligibility criteria to allow ETV supports for youth who exited custody prior to their 16th birthday or for youth who have not completed their high school education.
8. Identify eligible former foster youth and develop mailing lists with current contact information through Alaska Permanent Fund application mailing lists. Provide information on ETV funding and supports.
9. Establish opportunities for youth to visit college campuses, job shadow and volunteer when they identify career and education goals in their transition or exit plans.

Objective 3: To increase completion and/or graduation rates of youth enrolled in post-secondary programs.

Activities:

1. Establish a mentoring program for youth entering a post-secondary education or vocational training program that will provide individual mentors for each youth approved for ETV funding. Link Alaska Native mentors/mentees. Mentors will on a regular and periodic basis, contact the youth to check on progress, provide support and, if needed, referrals for services. Youth will be required to participate in the mentoring program for a minimum of one year.
2. Require progress reports for youth receiving ETV funds
3. For youth with multi-year funding programs, require application renewal at the end of each academic year.
4. Develop resource list of tutors and other supports available for youth in their community or school to support post-secondary academic success.
5. Conduct exit interview with all youth who complete their program of study and with all youth who drop out to identify challenges, supports and improvements to the ETV program.
6. Revise application documents and interview process to include financial/budget plans, housing, reference specifically addressing their readiness for post secondary education and vocational training.

Objective 4: To establish and expand scholarship opportunities for foster youth

Activities:

1. Conduct review of University of Alaska Presidential Tuition Waiver Scholarship for Foster Youth with University Financial Aid Office
2. Develop formal MOU with University of Alaska for continuation of scholarship opportunity
3. Develop resource list of scholarship opportunities through Alaska Native organizations
4. Establish Alaska corporate scholarship program for foster youth

2. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program.

Based on program accomplishments, identified needs and new information, the following work plan is proposed to identify program goals, objectives and activities to expand, and strengthen Alaska's Independent Living Program over the next grant period.

Goal (a) – To help youth transition to self-sufficiency.

Objective 1 – Establish staffing and supports for management of the IL program.

Activities:

1. Establish four Regional IL specialists in FY 05.
2. Develop job description and get approval to hire from Department of Administration, Division of Personnel
3. Recruit and hire staff for Anchorage Regional Office, South Central Regional Office, Southeast Regional Office and Northern Regional Office.
4. Identify training requirements
5. Delegated authority for budget, funding and procurement and case management for youth

Objective 2 – Develop state and regional strategic plans to guide IL program.

Activities:

1. Review final reports and resource guides produced by IL Task Force grantees
2. Request updates on outcomes realized as result of planning efforts
3. Building on task force efforts establish regional/community based IL partnerships for IL services, referrals and supports for youth
4. Using five-year plan as a guide, develop specific work plans for each year with timelines, staff responsibility and outcome measures.

Objective 3 – Develop capacity for data collection and evaluation for IL program.

Activities:

1. Schedule training on Online Resources for Children of Alaska (ORCA) for Regional IL Specialists

2. Review national data and outcome requirements when published in the federal register and;
3. Work with ORCA staff to include National data evaluation requirements in system.
4. Using data from the Child Welfare Evaluation Project develop proposal for Alaska Supplement to the ACLSA; evaluate need for specific life skills training or development of life skills curriculum modules for use by state and Alaska Natives and training curriculum for caregivers, SW and others.

Objective 4 – Develop systematic procedures to implement program.

Activities:

On-going, update and review procedures as program changes are made

Objective 5 – To provide necessary training and supports for Social Workers, Supervisors, foster parents, residential care providers and non-state program staff on Independent Living policy/procedures, assessment, transition planning, best practices, youth and adolescent development and behaviors.

Activities:

1. Develop training curriculum and schedule regional “road show” training schedule
2. Develop resource guides/handbooks to for Regional trainings
3. Review “Understanding Adolescents” and new SW curriculum to shift focus from behaviors to practice
4. Provide specific training to SW, foster parents, residential care providers on “youth center” case planning to ensure youth are actively involved in the case planning process
5. Provide supports for Transitional Resource Specialist network
6. Develop conference agenda for Statewide fall 2004 convening
7. Review annually the Alaska Foster Parent Training Center contract to update IL training needs for foster parents
8. Review annually contracts with residential care providers to ensure IL case management needs for youth in residential care are met. Participate in program reviews.

Objective 6 – To authorize a range of transitional housing/living options for youth through licensing policy and procedures.

Activities:

1. Set augmented rates for IL licensing specialization
2. Develop regulations to implement Supervised Apartment Living license
3. Develop placement criteria for youth who would benefit from Transitional Living programs
4. Develop program for graduated Transitional Living Program for youth 16 to 21
5. Develop formal partnerships with federal Transitional Living grantees for placement and community supports for foster youth

Objective 7 – To develop a statewide assessment for youth as a component of the case planning process.

Activities:

1. Review active case files to determine frequency of ACLSA completion
2. Review active case files to determine use in developing case plans
3. Identify barriers to ACLSA use
4. Set schedule for regular ACLSA training

Objective 8 – To Provide individual funds for youth to support their transition from foster care to self-sufficiency.

Activities:

1. Develop separate “Request for Funds” form for IL funds
2. Delegate approval for expenditure of funds to Regional IL Specialists
3. Develop guidelines for purchase of goods/services
4. Audit procurement process to ensure funds are disburse to youth in a timely manner
5. Develop Regional resource lists of service providers with expertise in counseling, tutoring etc., for foster youth ages 14 and older.
6. Conduct periodic review of “benefits charts” to make sure they meet the needs of youth
7. Inform SW, foster parents, residential care providers about available services and supports through the IL program on a regular basis.

Objective 9 – To provide opportunities for youth and alumni to influence system improvements.

Activities:

1. Provide on-going supports to establish Youth Advisory Board through recruitment of youth as needed, setting yearly schedule for retreats, implementation supports for YAB work plans
2. Develop process to incorporate YAB system improvements recommendations into IL program planning
3. Define and support YAB advocacy role and activities

Goal (b) – To help youth receive the training education and services necessary to obtain employment

Objective 1 – To provide youth with a variety of opportunities to explore career and employment opportunities.

Activities:

1. Complete cost benefit analysis of Independent Living Institute and Computer camp, including evaluations from youth who have attended the events.
2. Develop regional and community-based life skills training opportunities for youth in care

3. Through Regional IL specialists, establish partnerships with local high schools for youth to explore “career” opportunities

Objective 2 – To identify career goals, outcomes and necessary supports for each youth in foster care.

Activities:

1. Regional IL Specialist review of individual case plans with foster youth to ensure career goals and learning plans are developed
2. Provide training and supports to youth on “youth centered” case planning to ensure youth are actively involved in developing their transition and exit plans.
3. Provide opportunities for youth to explore career goals through apprenticeships, job shadowing and employment opportunities.
4. Develop training and supports for SW, care providers and others on transition and exit planning process that highlights career goal identification and learning plans to support goals.

Goal (c) – To help youth prepare for and enter post secondary training and educational institutions.

Objective 1 – To identify education goals and needs in case planning.

Activities:

1. Regional IL Specialist review of individual case plans with foster youth to ensure education goals and learning plans are developed
2. Develop training and supports for SW, care providers and others on transition and exit planning process that highlights education goals and learning plans to support goals.
3. Provide training and supports to youth on “youth centered” case planning to ensure youth are actively involved in developing their transition and exit plans.

Objective 2 – To increase the number of foster youth who complete high school.

Activities:

1. Through Regional IL specialists, establish partnerships with schools to provide in-school teacher and adult/peer mentoring supports for foster youth.
2. Review policy for youth to “require” high school graduation as a condition of self-emancipation
3. Provide individual tutoring, school based study sessions for foster youth to meet and pass requirements for high school exit exam.
4. See also Education and Training Voucher work plan

Goal (d) – To provide personal and emotional support to youth through mentors and the promotion of interactions with dedicated adults.

Objective 1 – To provide mentors for youth in school settings to promote educational success

Activities:

1. Establish partnerships with local school districts to provide on-site school adult mentors for foster youth
2. Establish community or school base peer support groups for foster youth

Objective 2 – To provide mentors for youth to help them acquire and strengthen daily living skills

Activities:

1. Monitor current mentoring grants awarded in FY 04 with continuation options in FY 05 and 06 to ensure grantees meet special grant conditions.
2. Review and renew continuation grants in 05 and 06 with changes to grant conditions as needed.

Objective 3 – To provide mentors for youth enrolled in post-secondary education and vocational training programs.

Activities

1. Explore contract with Orphan Foundation to provide mentoring services for youth receiving ETV funds
2. Establish a mentoring program for youth entering post-secondary education or vocational training (see ETV Work Plan – Objective 3).

Goal (e) – To provide financial, housing, counseling, employment, education and other appropriate support and services to former foster care recipients between the age of 18 and 21 years of age.

Objective 1 – To extend IL funds, services and supports to youth age 18 to 21.

Activities:

1. Audit procurement process to ensure funds are disbursed to youth in a timely manner
2. Conduct periodic review of “benefits charts” to make sure they meet the needs of youth
3. Develop procedures and authority to shift approval and procurement process for out-of-custody funds from Central office IL coordinator to Regional IL Specialists.

Objective 2: To provide case management for youth no longer in custody.

1. Continue case management grant with Covenant House through 05, develop new grant Request for Proposal for case management services for FY 06 – 08.
2. Develop procedures and authority to shift case management services from Central Office IL coordinator to Regional IL staff.

Objective 3 – To provide transitional housing options for youth who need housing and supports when the leave custody.

See Goal (a), Objective 6.

Goal (f) – To make available vouchers for education and training, including postsecondary education to youth who have aged out of foster care

See ETV work plan, Objectives 1 and 2

Services to Youth Ages 18 – 21

Please refer to Goal (e) Objectives 1 and 2

Room and Board:

Alaska defined “room and board” in the first five year plan as 1st months rent and security/damage deposit for youth who age out of custody at 18 and have not yet reached age of 21. During the next four years, the definition was expanded to allow for: (1) crises housing assistance (up to \$850) for youth who have lost their job and need assistance with rent until another job is secured; and (2) housing assistance (up to \$1,500 maximum) where up to three months rental assistance is provided at 100% of 1st months rent, 50% of 2nd months rent and 25% of 3rd months rent. Youth must have in been in care for at least six months and on their 18th birthday to be eligible for housing assistance and provide verification of employment, pending employment or other financial support. This housing support has assisted youth who have obtained some stability through employment, pending employment or other financial support, it does not address needs of youth who need housing for longer periods of time, while they are finishing high school or need a more structured living environment after they leave foster care.

3.Services for youth. Description of how the sate will serve youth of various ages and at various stages of achieving independence.

Youth under age 16. Child Protection Services Policy requires that beginning at age 14 youth in custody are required to have a case plan that includes completion of the Ansell-Casey Life Skills assessment. At age 14 the focus of the ACLSA is on basic life skills that include areas such as personal and self-care, cooking and cleaning, time management. The case plan must also consider objectives that address transition from foster care to self-sufficiency. Youth age 14 and older are eligible to access Independent Living funds for goods and services to support acquisition or improvement of life skills Additionally, case plans must address school progress, achievements and needed improvements. Independent Living funds can also be request for tutoring and other school supports not provided through the school district or not identified in the youth’s Individual Education Plan. IL case management and services are provided by the primary social worker in partnership with foster or residential care providers. Youth who live in the Anchorage area can also receive case management services through a

grant with the youth and job development program at Covenant House. Authority to access IL funds and develop and review IL objectives for individual case plans will be delegated to the Regional IL Specialist when the hiring and placement process is complete.

Youth age 16 to 18. Youth at age 16 are required to take the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment and OCS recommends that youth take the assessment every six months.

New OCS policy requires that youth have a transition plan at age 16 and an exit plan at age 17. Youth can access Independent Living funds to support the activities identified in their transition and exit plans and can apply for ETV funds if they have completed high school or obtained a GED. Youth are also eligible to attend the Independent Living Institute and Computer Camp. IL case management and services are provided by the primary social worker in partnership with foster or residential care providers. Youth who live in the Anchorage area can also receive case management services through a grant with the youth and job development program at Covenant House. Authority to access IL funds and develop and review individual transition and exit plans will be delegated to the Regional IL Specialist when the hiring and placement process is complete.

Youth age 18 through 20. With the passage and signing of legislation allowing the state to provide services to youth over age 18, this age group is eligible to apply for IL funds and is also eligible for the new ETV funds. Currently youth who are accessing IL funds left custody before the policy change requiring youth have an exit plan that identifies and plans for how IL and ETV funding will be used. Case management and planning for services and supports is currently provided directly by the IL program coordinator and for youth who live in the Anchorage area through a grant with the youth and job development program at Covenant House. Authority to access out of custody IL funds and develop and review individual transition and exit plans will be delegated to the Regional IL Specialist when the hiring and placement process is complete.

Youth likely to remain in foster care. For youth who enter OCS custody at age 16 or who reach age 16 while in custody, the SW and permanency evaluation team would consider the youth's goals, the families' progress towards regaining custody and pending proceedings regarding permanency, such as adoption or self-emancipation. SW may identify the permanency goal as independent living. Youth who are likely to have the goal of independent living are youth who have entered OCS custody on or after age 16.

4. Involvement of the public and private sector. Description of how the State involves the public and private sectors in helping adolescents in foster care achieve self-sufficient independence;

and

5. Consultation with Stakeholders. Description of how the State involves Alaska Native Tribes, public and private organizations in development of the plan.

In July 2000, a statewide planning meeting for key stakeholders – including Tribes and public/private organizations providing services to youth was held. The meeting resulted in the development of a strategic plan to guide program development. In 2001, grants were provided to support five regional Community Task Forces in the communities of Fairbanks, Anchorage, Juneau, Barrow and Mat-Su. These community efforts focused on serving youth both within their respective communities and outlying regions, allowing consideration of the diverse needs in the state, which can vary greatly from region to region. Each task force was required to actively solicit input and membership of Alaska Native organizations. One task force grantee was the Fairbanks Native Association. The FY 05-09 draft plan will be distributed to the original task force grantees so that the regional priorities identified through their efforts can be included in the statewide plan.

An important partnership between Casey Family Programs and the state has developed over the past four years. Casey has provided funds, in-kind support and collaborative planning that has been critical for implementation of the IL program. OCS and Casey have developed a joint work plan and the goals and objectives of that plan have been incorporated into the state plan.

In FY 04, the State in partnership with Casey Family Programs established the Alaska Youth Advisory Board. The Board has held two retreats and two more are scheduled in June and August of 2004. One of the goals of the Board is to advocate for systems change for foster youth. Youth will have an opportunity to comment on the plan at the June retreat and as the Board becomes more active they can request that the plan be updated to include their recommendations.

The IL Program Coordinator participates in the annual statewide ICWA conference and is scheduled on the agenda each year for presentations and updates on the IL program. A draft of the five-year plan is sent directly to Tribal ICWA coordinators for review and comment.

OCS grantees are asked directly to comment on the five-year plan. The IL program has 5 active grants – four mentoring and one case management grant. Comments on the draft plan are also solicited from foster parents through the Alaska Foster Parent Training Academy and from residential facilities that have residential care contracts with OCS.

6. Service Coordination. Description of how the State coordinates with “other Federal and State programs for youth; consults and coordinates with Alaska Native Tribes and ensures benefits are made available to Alaska Native youth.

(1) Alaska does not contract out specific IL services, but uses a system of referrals for services. Primary referrals are to state, federal or community providers. Referrals may include mental health assessment and services, counseling, health care through community health centers or Native Health Corporations, housing assistance through the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (HUD, Section 8, public housing authority for Alaska), drug and

substance abuse treatment programs, employment services and vocational training programs. The IL coordinator has participated in two task forces focused on youth sponsored by the Division of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities and the Department of Education and Early Development.

(2) IL benefits are made available to all Native youth in OCS foster care through their primary caseworker, foster or residential care provider. There are 262 federally recognized tribes in Alaska. Alaska Natives are 16 percent of the population, but comprise a much higher percentage of the population in rural Alaska. Natives are a majority in approximately 176 villages and small cities and are a substantial part of the population in over 200 communities. Only one of these cities is located within a “reservation” common to the lower 48. Organized municipal governments may govern native communities and have Native Councils with federally approved Indian Reorganization Act councils. Almost all of the villages have village corporations formed pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and may also be served by one or more regional non-profit organizations, which provide services to Alaska Natives.

Consulting with Native Tribes is no small task in Alaska. Primary contact for purposes of providing services to foster youth is through the Indian Child Welfare workers and coordinators; and through direct contact with youth services providers in Native Corporations, Councils or Indian Health Organizations. An example of this is the recent partnerships between Case Family Programs, OCS and the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA). Working together funds and supports were pooled between the ETV funding, CCTHITA youth development program and Casey Family Programs to send a former foster Native youth to a college in Colorado. As a result of this contact, the group has gone on to provide team IL presentations, joint case management for youth; and planning for community supports for housing, job training and development. Service coordination through the Regional OCS offices is primarily sustained through worker-to-worker contact. Service coordination could be enhanced through establishing primary partnerships.

Identified Needs: Establishing primary contacts between each of the Native organizations, corporations or village councils and corresponding OCS Regional IL specialists.

IL funds may be used to purchase services that are not available through community or other public providers. If SW identifies services that are not available in a community, or gaps in services, the IL coordinator will work with agencies to build service capacity.

7. Medicaid Services. Description of how the State has used Medicaid to provide services to youth ages 18 to 21.

Through an existing State Medicaid program, Denali KidCare any youth who reaches age 18 in the foster care system may continue Medicaid coverage until age 20 if they meet income

eligibility guidelines. Another program, under 21 Medicaid, is available for youth age 20; however income limits are more stringent. As part of the transition/exit planning process, youth are informed about health insurance programs and are walked through the eligibility determination and application process. Discussions with youth about the importance of preventive health care, regular and periodic checkups and treatment of illness and injury are included in the agenda for the Independent Living Conference.

8. Determining Eligibility. Discussion of the criteria the State uses for determining eligibility for benefits and services under the IL and ETV programs, including the process for developing the criteria.

Through Child Protective Services Policy and Procedures, any youth in OCS custody beginning at age 14 is eligible for IL services and supports. Need for services is established through the case planning process beginning with the administration of the Ansell-Casey Life Skills assessment, development of a transition and/or exit plan that identifies goals and outcomes to be achieved, develops a learning plan and authorizes the procurement of needed services and supports. Social workers have primary responsibility for this process in partnership with the youth and caregiver and if appropriate the youth's birth family. This criterion was developed through review and approval process for policy and procedures.

The State has authorized IL and ETV supports can be extended to youth who are no longer in custody. The law states that youth ages 16 to 21 are can apply for benefits. The State has refined eligibility criteria to stipulate that youth must have been in custody for at least six months. Room and Board supports are allowed only for youth who left OCS custody at age 18 as per federal guidelines. These criteria were developed through legislative hearings and through passage of a bill and signature into law by the Governor in June 2002.

IL and ETV funds are directly available for youth to purchase goods and services. Criteria and limits on the use of these funds are established through published "Benefits Charts." The benefits charts are continually reviewed to make sure they are reasonable and meet the needs of youth. Benefits are based primarily on the federal guidelines for IL and ETV funds.

9. Fair and Equitable Services. Discussion of how the state ensures fair and equitable treatment of benefit recipients.

Alaska has established policy and procedures to direct the Alaska IL Program. Funds are assigned to each Regional office to support procurement of goods and services for youth in custody and funds for youth no longer in custody are distributed through the Central Office IL coordinator. SW staff in each Regional Office have assigned responsibility for implementing IL program policy and procedure if they have youth age 14 and above in their caseload. Training and supports are provided to staff through a statewide training system and to foster parents through the Alaska Foster Parent Training Center. Staff for residential care facilities are included in training opportunities.

Technical support and training on an as needed basis is available through the IL Program Coordinator for staff, residential care providers, and foster parents. Grants to private and non-profit organizations for mentoring, case management and other services are used to extend services directly to youth. The IL Program Coordinator is responsible for program oversight, service coordination, grant management and planning, and program development. In FY 05, the program will be expanded to place a Regional IL Specialist in each Regional Office. These staff will report directly to the IL Program Coordinator. This system of staffing, training, supports and program coordination ensures all eligible youth are identified, assessment and case planning is accomplished, and IL services are identified and provided to youth.

10. Public Comment. Description of how comments from the public, (both written and oral) influenced the content of the plan.

A draft plan was made available to all service providers, state staff, public and private program partners, Alaska Native Tribal organizations, the Alaska Foster Youth Advisory Board and the general public for comment. Comments, both written and oral, were accepted, reviewed and incorporated into the plan if appropriate. Comments were also solicited on an on-going basis on barriers to services, program improvements and identified needs. During FY 04, the following meetings, trainings and conferences were used as a forum to offer the opportunity to comment on the pending five year plan: Tribal/State meetings, Residential Care Providers annual meeting, Licensing staff annual meeting, IL program grantee RFP process, Casey Family Programs/OCS work plan development, Ansell-Casey Life Skills Certification Training.

Individual conversations with foster parents, youth, staff, public school teachers, counselors, services providers and others were also used as opportunities to gather information on program improvements.

CERTIFICATIONS & ASSURANCES

CFS 101

ADDENDUM