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Nov. 6, 2006

## **Program Improvement Plan Goals Exceeded**

### **What is the Office of Children's Services (OCS) Program Improvement Plan (PIP)?**

A review to determine Alaska's conformity with the State Plan requirements under Titles IV-B and IV-E of the federal Social Security Act.

### **How was progress measured?**

The U.S. Administration of Children and Families conducted an on-site review of Alaska's Office of Children's Services in 2002. As a result of the review, in September 2003 OCS entered into a two-year Program Improvement Plan with specific action steps, tasks and goals. OCS received an extension in 2005 to complete the PIP. In addition, OCS took on the self-imposed responsibility of enacting a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) program:

- Since the initial on-site review in 2002 and the PIP implementation in 2003, specific cases were examined by OCS as part of the CQI program to assess the safety, permanency and well-being of the children in each case.
- In addition, community stakeholders were interviewed by CQI to assess the overall effectiveness of the system. Community stakeholders will continue to be interviewed annually in the future.

### **What improvements were made?**

It was determined by the U.S. Administration of Children and Families that Alaska successfully accomplished all goals for improvement, and that OCS also moved towards an entire systemic change in services resulting in positive outcomes for the future.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found in Alaska:

- Rate of child maltreatment reduced;
- More timely reunification of children with parents;
- Decreased length of time children wait for a permanent adoptive home;
- Increased stability of foster home placements;
- Alaska's system to protect abused and neglected children has been rejuvenated;
- Deficiencies found in the past have been addressed and corrected.

In addition, OCS affirms that these outcomes have also improved:

- Protection from abuse and neglect strengthened;
- Children are encouraged to stay in the home whenever safe and possible;
- More assurances of permanence and stability in each living situation;
- Licensing of foster children and adoptive care reforms addressed;
- And, recruitment and retention of workers promoted.

**Why is this significant?**

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

- *“OCS successfully implemented major systemic initiatives, such as instituting a Statewide Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) review system, a new safety appraisal system and a new State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS).”*

**What does this mean for the families involved with OCS in the future?**

The Office of Children’s Services has become more family-focused in approach in the process of protecting Alaska’s children.

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