

State of Alaska

# Department of Health & Social Services

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## **Office of Children's Services (OCS) Accomplishments**

- As of Sept. 1, 2004, there were 2,250 children in state custody. Of those children, 2,021 were in out-of-home care placements. OCS was providing foster care benefits to the foster care providers of 1,095 of those 2,021 children.
- From July 1, 2003, to June 30, 2004, the Subsidized Adoption & Guardianship program provided permanent homes for 320 "hard-to-place" children that were in the permanent custody of the state.
- As of Oct. 31, 2004, there were 2,129 children with continuing adoption or guardianship subsidies. Since July 1, 2004, there have been 73 new adoptions and 11 new guardianships.
- Enrollment in Infant Learning Programs increased from 1,691 during FY02 to 1,721 in FY04, while the wait list decreased from 176 to 133 in the same period.
- Healthy Families Alaska Program served 373 families during fiscal year 04, from July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2004. Indicators of child health show that over 90 percent of the children enrolled had received their immunizations on schedule.

### **2003 Program Improvement Plan**

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF), part of the U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, released its final review of Alaska's child welfare system in September 2002. Alaska developed and began implementing its Program Improvement Plan in September 2003. The plan consists of 114 action steps and 246 benchmarks. At the end of the first year, Alaska was ahead of schedule, having completed 53 percent of the action steps and 64 percent of the required benchmarks.

Most notable OCS accomplishments to-date include:

- **Exceeded both outcome targets for safety of children in our custody.**
  - At the time of the 2002 federal review, the Alaska rate of repeat child maltreatment was 23.9 percent. The goal for June 2005 was 22 percent, but as of March 2004, OCS had exceeded its goal and the rate was down to 17.3 percent.
  - At the time of the review, the incidence of child abuse and neglect for children in foster care was 2.09 percent. The OCS target was 1.77 percent by December 2004. As of June 2004 OCS was ahead of its target at 1.2 percent.
- **Added 26 new positions** to better manage workloads, provide more supervision, establish quality assurance and provide independent living services to youth aging out of foster care.

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- **Family to Family foster care reform.** Received \$500,000 from the Rasmuson Foundation to implement the Family to Family foster care reform initiative in Anchorage. Annie E. Casey is providing technical assistance and training to OCS staff. OCS is part of the national initiative and has begun to change the way it does business at Anchorage OCS.
- **Implemented state-of-the-art computer-based case management system.** Online Resources for Children of Alaska (ORCA) went live on Sept. 4, improving supervision and accountability. ORCA will be fully implemented by January 2005. Other states are already looking at the new OCS system as a model.
- **Enhanced services to youth** who are aging out of the foster care system. The OCS goal is to assure that every child over the age of 14 has a plan to work on skills that will help them move to responsible adulthood. Four new positions will assure that every child has a plan and that the plan is being implemented.
- **Casey Family Programs help develop youth programs.** Casey Family Programs have helped OCS develop a Youth Advisory Board whose members are actively engaged in many OCS planning meetings. In September, OCS convened youth and staff to discuss improvements in OCS services from the child's perspective.
- **Addressing disproportionality of Alaska Native children in state custody.** Sixty percent of OCS children are Alaska Native. Last month OCS convened in Anchorage and engaged over 80 people — tribal elders, tribal staff and OCS staff — in an open and honest discussion about what can be done together to address some of the disproportionality issues. Casey Family Programs provided funds and facilitation.
- **Building a kinship care and support program** and developing policies and procedures for unlicensed relatives who care for children in custody.
- **Restructuring the licensing of foster homes.** OCS foster homes become adoptive homes but OCS does not do complete family assessments until the family decides to adopt the children in their home. In January OCS will implement a new plan to complete family assessments of all families who apply to become foster or adoptive families.
- **Establish a full time statewide recruitment position for foster families** to address the need for foster and adoptive homes. *Wednesday's Child* will begin to air on Alaska Superstation in December.
- **Fund University programs to recruit social workers** to fill vacancies and to enter the social work program.
- **Provide stipends for social work students** to get their social work degree — all federal funds.
- **Distance learning, stipends for rural child welfare workers.** Supported the University in obtaining a grant to develop distance learning program and stipends for rural child welfare workforce.
- **Establish visitation standards** for visitation between workers and children and workers and families.
- **Develop a training program for rural child welfare workers** by partnering with Portland State University to develop a comprehensive training program.
- **Develop a stringent quality assurance process.** The first level of QA has been implemented and the other three levels will be fully implemented by February 2005.
- **Address early childhood intervention.** Early Comprehensive Childhood Systems Grant is addressing the issues of early intervention.
- **Johns Hopkins study on Healthy Families** has been completed.

#### **Number of clients served:**

- WIC served 27,000 individuals each month. WIC Farmer's Market Program provided warrants to 14,000 clients in 83 communities statewide.
- Infant Learning served 1,736 infants/toddlers in FY'04
- Healthy Families Alaska served 353 families in FY '04
- Child Protection and Permanency conducted 11,202 investigations in FY '04.