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CHILDREN'S
SERVICES

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Year 2021**

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Section A. Requirements for the 2022 APSR

1. COLLABORATION

A Shared Vision

Alaska participated in the State Team Planning Meeting in April of 2019 and created a shared vision for child welfare in Alaska. This shared vision provides goals and direction to align resources and support better outcomes for families.

Alaska's Vision for Child Welfare

Empower Communities to Strengthen Families and Prevent Child Abuse

Partner with Tribes and community agencies to provide support and services to families

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



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Prioritize identified essential child protection services

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

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

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

Meaningful Collaboration

OCS recognizes the benefits of engaging and interacting with both our internal and external stakeholders. Collaboration with stakeholders leads to services that better fit the needs of the individuals we are tasked with serving, provides opportunities for all levels of staff to participate in the development of policy and procedures, increases the agency's accountability, and promotes a more inclusive child welfare system. The inclusion of individuals in which the system affects in decision making can lead to greater confidence in agency initiatives and better outcomes for the children and families served.

The Office of Children's Services interacts and engages with our stakeholders on an ongoing basis through the normal course of business on both a statewide and local level. Current venues in which stakeholders are engaged include but are not limited to:

- Court Improvement Project
- Regional Managers
- PSM I Collective
- Supervisory Leadership Council
- Child Welfare Academy
- Facing Foster Care in Alaska
- Tribal State Collaboration Group
- Tribal Compacting
- Change Management Leadership Team
- Rock Matsu and Rock Juneau
- Beacon Hill
- the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
- Alaska's Citizen Review Panel
- Alaska Youth and Family Network
- Resource Family Advisory Board
- Alaska Center for Resource Families
- University of Alaska

OCS has also benefited from partnering with national partners including:

- Casey Family Programs
- Region X
- Capacity Center Building for States
- State Planning Sessions
- Center for Children and Family Futures
- National Quality Improvement Center for Collaborative Community Court Teams (QIC-CCCT)

Some of the key initiatives include:

- Plans of Safe Care
- Title IV-E Prevention Plan
- Tribal Title IV-E Prevention Grant
- Tribal-State Compacting
- Family and Infant Court

- Family Contact Improvements
- Investigations and Assessment pilot
- 1115 Waiver Gap Analysis
- Parent Navigation
- Joint CIP and OCS Parent Engagement efforts

Court Improvement Project

OCS continues to partner with the Court Improvement Project (CIP) on multiple efforts to improve the engagement of parents, youth, and relatives.

The joint OCS and CIP strategies on Alaska's Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) that includes the Case Review hearing and the updated benchcards and findings court order are almost completed. The hearing and benchcard are fully implemented in the 4th Judicial District in Fairbanks. The benchcard has been successful in reminding judges to discuss the required information for the hearing. An evaluation of the hearing quality has not been completed in full, however, anecdotal information from judges and court parties has been positive in seeing improvements to the court hearings and engagement of parents in case plan activities.

A subcommittee of CIP is currently focused on improvements to the provision of family contact across the state. The committee has been working to identify current trends in family contact to determine if improvement is needed regarding the quantity of contact or the quality of contact. COVID-19 also had significant impacts on family contact during this year. Specifically, a period of time where all contact was virtual and in-person was limited. The subcommittee has also been meeting with different programs that could assist in the increase of family contact documentation by resource families or other supports that are supervising family contact.

Another subcommittee of CIP is focused on education regarding the CINA court process. This year the Education subcommittee focused on converting the training curriculum to virtual delivery. The ICWA training for courts was selected for the first conversion and was developed to be delivered via video platform, online interactive training, or audio. The ICWA training was conducted through Zoom three times during FY 21 and elicited statewide participation.

The CIP ICWA Subcommittee continues to meet and has been working on updating several benchcards, including those used for Emergency Custody Hearings, Non-Emergency Custody Hearings, Permanency Hearings, Termination Hearings, and Registering Tribal Court Orders. The Subcommittee also assisted in updating the CIP ICWA Training with a specific focus on the historical context section. During the most recent meeting, the Subcommittee decided to make a recommendation to the CIP regarding establishing ICWA Courts in Alaska. This proposal will be made during the next CIP meeting.

Parent, Family and Youth Voice

OCS values input from parents, families, and youth who have engaged with the child protection system. This feedback provides insight on how OCS is performing and what improvements need to be made from those with direct experience.

During case reviews, the Onsite Review Instrument (OSRI) requires parents and age-appropriate youth to be interviewed. Those interviews, and the feedback received, are incorporated into the ratings as the instrument is completed. These interviews are an important piece of assessing the engagement in case planning, along with the frequency of contact and communication. These case reviews are shared with regional management as well as OCS

leadership to enhance program change efforts in achieving Alaska’s state vision. The case reviews are filtered through statewide leadership and debriefed with regional management. The feedback received from parents, youth, court parties, ICWA representatives and other stakeholders is used to inform statewide case practice and parent engagement. Information gained from the OSRI case reviews in the three PIP sites are representative of practice strengths and challenges statewide.

Internal and external stakeholder feedback is also incorporated into the continuous quality improvement (CQI) guidelines. Currently, a dedicated program officer is contacting all the mechanisms in which OCS receives feedback, through state office and regions, to consolidate a central instrument to use this information to inform CQI. This is a strategy from the PIP with a completion date set for December of 2021.

The PIP pilot for administrative reviews to be conducted within court hearings is an effort the agency is making to encourage parental voice in their case plan progress and needs. A survey will be issued to gather feedback on if parents felt more knowledgeable about, and engaged with, the court process.

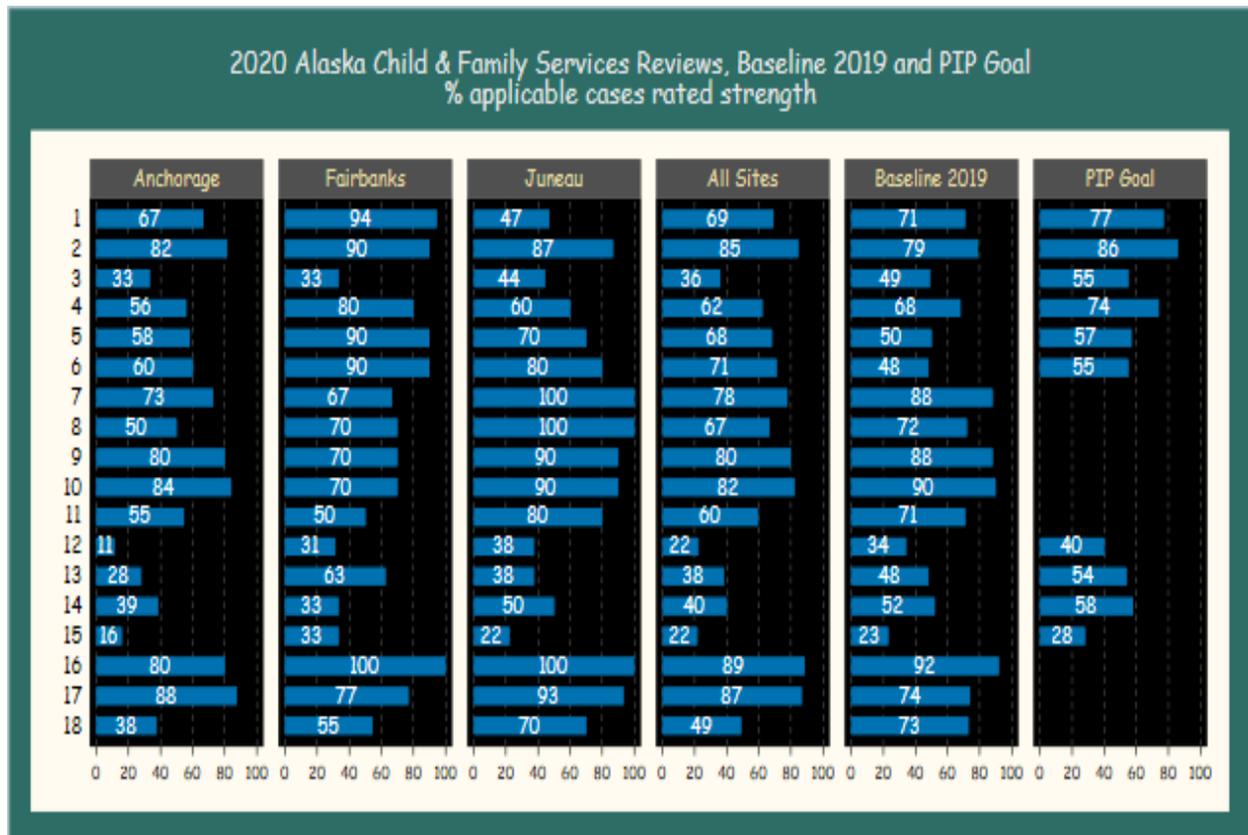
2. UPDATE TO THE ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT PERFORMANCE IN IMPROVING OUTCOMES

Alaska continues to complete case reviews in three review sites for the PIP. Alaska received the baseline calculation and improvement goals in March of 2020. In conjunction with contextual data, Alaska has determined practice areas of strength and concern for outcome areas with strategies for improvement identified in the PIP.

2020 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews, Baseline 2019, and PIP Goal

Items	Anchorage (n = 39 cases)	Fairbanks (n = 18 cases)	Juneau (n = 18 cases)	All Sites 2020 (N = 75 cases)	Baseline 2019 (N=65 cases)	PIP Goal
Item 1: Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment	67%	94%	47%	69%	71%	77%
Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Child (ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry into Foster Care	82%	90%	87%	85%	79%	86%
Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management	33%	33%	44%	36%	49%	55%
Item 4: Stability of Foster Care Placement	56%	80%	60%	62%	68%	74%
Item 5: Permanency Goal for Child	58%	90%	70%	68%	50%	57%
Item 6: Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement	60%	90%	80%	71%	48%	55%
Item 7: Placement with Siblings	73%	67%	100%	78%	88%	
Item 8: Visiting with Parents and Siblings in Foster Care	50%	70%	100%	67%	72%	
Item 9: Preserving Connections	80%	70%	90%	80%	88%	

Items	Anchorage (n = 39 cases)	Fairbanks (n = 18 cases)	Juneau (n = 18 cases)	All Sites 2020 (N = 75 cases)	Baseline 2019 (N=65 cases)	PIP Goal
Item 10: Relative Placement	84%	70%	90%	82%	90%	
Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care with Parents	55%	50%	80%	60%	71%	
Item 12: Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents	11%	31%	38%	22%	34%	40%
Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning	28%	63%	38%	38%	48%	54%
Item 14: Caseworker Visits with Child	39%	33%	50%	40%	52%	58%
Item 15: Caseworker Visits with Parents	16%	33%	22%	22%	23%	28%
Item 16: Educational Needs of the Child	80%	100%	100%	89%	92%	
Item 17: Physical Health of the Child	88%	77%	93%	87%	74%	
Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child	38%	55%	70%	49%	73%	



Safety Outcome 1 and 2:

Alaska has seen a slight decline in timely initiation of investigations within the assigned priority timeframes as 69% of cases achieved a strength rating in this area, according to 2020 CFSR aggregate data, while the 2019 baseline was 71%. Services to prevent removal or reentry into foster care have improved, according to 2020 CFSR aggregate data, as 85% of cases achieved a strength, with appropriate removals occurring when services could not address the safety concerns. The 2019 baseline for this item was 79%. Safety and risk assessment and safety monitoring is an area of concern for both children remaining in their own home and children in foster care, with only 36% of cases achieving a strength according to 2020 CFSR aggregate data. The 2019 baseline for this item was 49%. Practice areas of concern include adequate safety assessment during critical times of the case, monitoring of safety plans, and the ongoing monitoring of risk and safety of all the children. The agency's ability to monitor safety and risk on an ongoing basis suffered from a lack of staffing and retention issues coupled with the implication from COVID-19 restrictions in Alaska.

Alaska is currently implementing several strategies in the PIP to focus on areas of safety. A pilot project focusing on the management of assignment and protocol of the investigation process is underway and has expanded to other field offices. The early results of the pilot demonstrate rates of more timely initiations and closures with the next evaluation step of assessing quality of investigations. A Trial Home Visit tool was created to help assess the risk and safety factors of a family to support through services and monitoring when children are returned home on trial home visits. This tool is being utilized by supervisors to assess the appropriateness of initiating a trial home visit. Staff are utilizing the tool to assess for ongoing safety issues during the trial home visit as well as determine any unmet needs for the family. Safety assessment, planning, and monitoring are reinforced through the mentor program as a transfer of learning for new staff and are a focus for the Coaching Supervisors to Best Practice program. In addition, Alaska engaged in focus groups and root cause analysis regarding the prior models of in-home services deemed not successful. This information will inform Alaska's future in-home model.

Permanency Outcome 1 and 2:

Children in foster care experienced more unplanned placement changes, as evidenced by 62% of cases receiving a strength for stability of foster care placement according to 2020 CFSR data while the 2019 baseline was 68%. Similarly, placement with siblings and relatives is assessed as a practice area that has declined for Alaska, with 78% of cases achieving a strength in sibling placements and 82% of cases receiving a strength for relative placement according to 2020 CFSR data. The 2019 baseline for these items was 88% and 90%. Alaska has experienced a significant drop in the number of licensed foster homes in addition to homes not accepting placements due to concerns relating to COVID-19. Efforts through Team Decision Making meetings and early relative searches support placement with relatives and creates opportunities for siblings to be placed together. Preserving important connections has also seen a slight decrease at 80% (2020 CFSR data), with family contact also struggling in frequency or quality at 67%. 2019 baseline for these items were 88% and 72%. Similarly, ensuring that parents remain involved in their children's activities to preserve the relationship is an area that has declined from 71% (2019 baseline data) to 60% (2020 CFSR data) of cases received a strength. According to 2020 CFSR data, identification of permanency goals at 68% strength and achievement of permanency at 71% strength continue to be an area of upward trends, with both areas maintaining well above the PIP goals of 57% and 55%. Through contextual data and case reviews, Alaska demonstrates areas of strength in achieving reunification in a timely manner.

PIP strategies addressing permanency focus on earlier assessment and dialogue of case plan progress to determine appropriateness of permanency goals. Permanency Specialists assisted in the development and implementation of the ASFA Timeline training. Alaska has fully implemented the supervisory certification of relative search, also required through HB 151. This requires supervisory to certify that a relative search has occurred prior to a non-emergency removal, within 30 days after an emergency removal, and prior to any change in placement.

A pilot in the Fairbanks judicial district, through a joint effort with CIP is operating under a Theory of Change of engaging parents in the court and case process, providing tangible “to-do lists” and holding administrative reviews and/or hearings every 6 months will provide earlier identification of barriers, transparency and progress in the case ultimately providing for timelier permanency. An evaluation has not been completed in full however anecdotal information from judges and court parties indicates that there is improvement in court hearings and parent engagement in case activities. The CIP committee is discussing the scaling out of the pilot to the other judicial districts.

Well-Being Outcome 1, 2, and 3:

Alaska generally performs well in the assessment and provision of services to provide for the educational and physical health of children in foster care, with findings of 89% and 87%, according to CFSR data. Many of the efforts to support and engage in services are fostered through the Resource Families caring for children and the strength of ILP and IEP education programs. The area of mental health wellbeing of children seems to have had a significant drop as 49% of cases received a strength rating according to CFSR data compared to the 2019 baseline of 73%. An area of great concern in practice is caseworker visits with children, parents, and case planning. Alaska recognizes it struggles with the engagement of parents and experiences many barriers due to remoteness, communication complexities, and embodying the value of parental engagement. Service delivery was further complicated with COVID-19 restrictions beginning in March 2020. The use of video conferencing was immediately implemented when COVID-19 restrictions became a barrier to meeting with families. This presented new obstacles in Alaska, such as bandwidth issues and smart device needs for the families we serve. Retention issues peaked in 2020, which impacted the agency’s ability to have the necessary staffing to carry out the work of visiting with families.

Several strategies are identified to focus engagement of parents in the case planning process, needs assessment, and caseworker visitation. As mentioned earlier, the joint CIP pilot project is intended to provide support, engagement, and clarity in the court and case process with parents. With hearings scheduled to occur every 6 months, the intended outcome is active participation and involvement from parents in the case. Anecdotal information from judges and court parties has been positive. OCS was also able to use the funding to purchase smart phones, data plans, and cell phone minutes for parents, children, and Resource Families when face-to-face contact was restricted.

Quarterly webinar trainings are scheduled and to focused on CQI needs of the agency and conducted by the Child Welfare Academy. The initial topics for training include case planning, family engagement, and engagement of fathers. OCS has developed an internal monthly leadership team that reviews and discusses essential services data to develop strategies utilizing the PDSA CQI model. Essential services data discussed include rates of caseworker visits with children, parents, and updated case plans.

Systemic Factor A.

ITEM 19: STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Alaska received a rating of Area Needing Improvement for this item in the 2017 CFSR due to data lags in timely entry of the data elements into ORCA and the difficulties with verifying the data accuracy on demographic information against other data systems such as the Bureau of Vital Statistics birth certificate records. OCS has now fully centralized the birth certificate request process, which allows for the verification of accurate demographic information being documented in ORCA. The centralized team in the Juneau state office submits birth certificate requests to Vital Stats utilizing the information entered into ORCA. If errors are noted by Vital Stats, the centralized team will correct the information in ORCA. They also inform the legal stakeholders, so petitions and other court documents reflect the accurate information. As of June 2021, 97% of children in out-of-home care have their birth certificates uploaded into ORCA.

One of the concerning data entry delays was occurring at case junctures where placement changes occur and are not timely documented within the ORCA system. Alaska recognized that the lack of timely placement documentation in ORCA creates a significant safety risk to children in care. A monthly data report documenting the number of lag days to document placement change is sent to OCS supervisors, managers, program officers, and administrators. During FFY20 OCS reduced the average lag day for placement change documentation by one day. Compliance with timely documentation of placement changes increased by over 3%. Supervisors and managers reported an appreciation for receiving the report by e-mail and not needing to take the time to run the report on their own, therefore using it for staff direction and training purposes.

FFY Statewide Total	Average Days Lag	Placement Changes	Documented within 5 days	% Compliance
FFY19	7.2	2,216	1,623	73.2%
FFY20	6.2	2,162	1,644	76.6%

Systemic Factor B: Case Review System

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

ITEM 20: WRITTEN CASE PLAN

Alaska continues to struggle with including children and parents in case planning based on information from CFSR data which indicates 38% of cases received a strength in this area compared to the 2019 baseline of 48%. Although involving families in the case planning process may need further attention, Essential Services data indicates that case plans are documented as current for children in 80% of cases, while parent case plans are documented as current in 66% of cases statewide. OCS leadership participates in a monthly Essential Services meeting to review data and outcomes essential to child protection. The written case plan for parents and for children are areas discussed and reported on regionally each month. Regional management members discuss barriers and solutions to improve this outcome for families. A statewide leadership focus is conducting regional analysis on case plan data to develop regionally based PDSA intervention to improve outcomes in this area.

ITEM 21: PERIODIC REVIEWS

Data from the Admin Review Report in Orca showed that Alaska continues to have a fully functioning administrative case review system that ensures a periodic review for each child occurs no less frequently than every 6 months. 2020 data from this report indicated that 99.5% of the periodic reviews for each child were occurring timely. In complement to this being an area of strength for Alaska, OCS is working on a joint pilot program with CIP to include administrative reviews as a part of court hearings to further engage parents in the court process and, in turn, hypothesis more timely permanency. The pilot is currently conducted in the Fairbanks judicial district and is being reported and evaluated in the strategy section. While the pilot is being conducted, the QA review team is currently conducted Administrative Reviews for other judicial districts. Other sites such as Juneau and Bethel are being explored for implementation of administrative reviews as part of court hearings.

ITEM 22: PERMANENCY HEARING

Alaska received an overall rating of Strength for Item 22 based on information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews. Information gathered indicated that, on average, permanency hearings occur no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care, and subsequent permanency hearings occur on average every 169 days. Alaska does not anticipate any future changes that may negatively impact the strength rating and is also bolstered by the joint CIP pilot project to ensure a hearing occurs every six months in a court case.

ITEM 23: TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 23 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information indicated that Alaska does not have a standardized process to track or ensure that TPR petitions are filed timely or that compelling reasons not to file TPR are documented. The Regional Permanency Planning Specialists created a tool to assist supervisors in asking key questions during staffing with PS Specialists that would trigger timely permanency decisions based on Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) timeframes. This tool has been added to the Family Services Supervisory Staffing tool. Alaska continues to experience a disparity among regional and judicial districts on the process and timeliness associated with filing a TPR petition and when the hearing is conducted. Root cause analysis in rural areas reveals difficulties in achieving active efforts for ICWA in some cases to move forward with TPR.

ITEM 24: NOTICE OF HEARINGS AND REVIEWS TO CAREGIVERS

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 24 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that statewide, there is no standardized method in place to ensure that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care are consistently notified of and have a right to be heard in any review or hearing held with respect to the child. The responsibility for the notification of caregivers of court hearings is still a task that the assigned PS Specialist must complete, and, due to their heavy caseloads and competing priorities, it is not consistently achieved. OCS, in partnership with CIP, has implemented some strategies in the pilot project conducted in Fairbanks. Court parties are notified through the court system; however, caregivers are notified through the QA unit for any hearing conducted in alignment with the Administrative Review schedule. Evaluation for long-term sustainability has not been completed as the pilot has not rolled out statewide. The court system is still evaluating how the hearings are being scheduled. Continued evaluation for QA providing the notice is necessary for capacity to provide this statewide.

Systemic Factor C.

ITEM 25: QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 25 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. The information showed that some elements of a functioning quality assurance system are in place through the state.

OCS has specifically selected CQI as a goal for the CFSP to identify needs and opportunities, research solutions, develop, modify, refine, and better embed solid CQI at all levels of the agency with a focus on a CQI Implementation framework and improved outcomes for children and families. A CQI management process has been evolving, with key decision changes influencing role designation for CQI activities. A decision was made to centralize all Regional Managers (PSM II's) into State Office to develop more of a systemic macro-level purview of CQI. The move to centralization and discussion of roles began in FY20 and will continue into FY21. In addition, OCS has adopted and implemented a CQI framework using the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) model. The model is being utilized in forums such as the CMLT, Essential Services Meeting, and the Quarterly Permanency Meetings. The PDSA model and utilizing data, to include information system data, OSRI reviews, and contextual data, to drive decision making and practice changes is influencing a culture change and being ingrained in practice. The leadership team has engaged in ongoing CQI training with the Center for States, and the agency has recently hired a CQI Program Officer to spearhead this initiative.

Systemic Factor D: Staff and Provider Training

This systemic factor of training incorporates an assessment of the State's performance in Items 26, 27, and 28. Alaska was not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training in the 2017 CSFR. None of the items in this systemic factor were rated as a Strength.

ITEM 26: INITIAL STAFF TRAINING

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 26 based on information from the 2017 Statewide Assessment. The information showed that while the state provides initial training to state staff who deliver services pursuant to the CFSP that includes the basic skills and knowledge required for their positions, the state is not adequately evaluating the training.

A major shift occurred during FY 21, transforming the initial staff training from in-person training to virtual. In creation of the virtual platform of training, the entire curriculum was reviewed in collaboration between CWA and the OCS mentor program. The curriculum was analyzed based on the evaluation information from the surveys of training and through a mentor program evaluation. The examination resulted in changing the training to use case examples more aligned with cases experienced in the field and taped interviews with the mock case participants. In addition to these changes, more specialized focus was brought to the application of the teachings with splitting the practice between investigations and assessment from family services workers. Evaluations continue to be administered to assess impact on learning and improvement through these changes.

The mentor program developed and operationalized practice and protocol topical check lists to ensure that new staff were provided mentoring in all significant areas. The checklist for each new staff provides an opportunity to track what may have been learned and focus mentoring to areas not yet covered.

ITEM 27: ONGOING STAFF TRAINING

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 27 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that the state has no requirement for ongoing staff training hours or processes and tools to assess staff's ongoing training needs and evaluate the effectiveness of training offered.

In FY 21, OCS replicated the regional needs assessment through use of data and leadership meetings to develop the content for the curricula for a sixth week of training utilizing a CQI framework. A change that occurred was transferring the responsibility of the training from the Child Welfare Academy (CWA) to the Mentor Program at OCS. The theory of shifting responsibility will allow more on-demand and flexibility to provide training as needs are identified versus a standard once-a-year scheduled training. Due to the pandemic, the trainings have not occurred in all regional areas due to travel restrictions and capacity. Training is scheduled to occur in each regional area during early FY22.

During FY 21, OCS, in partnership with CWA, created a mandatory training webinar that provided training on the AFSA timelines—establishing permanency goals at the appropriate time in a case and achievement of permanency within timeframes was identified as an area needing improvement during the CFSR. The training was developed as an interactive training that staff and supervisors could complete on their own schedule within a deadline for completion. Staff and supervisors submitted certificates of completion to their regions for tracking. Engaging fathers continues to be an area that OCS can strengthen in practice. A training webinar was developed and scheduled to occur in early FY22.

The OCS mentors continue to be assigned on a rotation to draft and submit monthly frontline articles (the agency newsletter for staff) based on practice issues identified or key issues that are brought to the mentoring program through discussions with assigned new staff.

ITEM 28: FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT TRAINING

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 28 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that while Alaska has training requirements in place for foster parents, tracking and evaluation mechanisms, and opportunities for specialized training, the state does not have training requirements for adoptive parents. Training requirements are in place for Residential Licensed Care Facilities, but there is no data on compliance with the requirements or the effectiveness of the training.

In the past year, all foster and adoptive parent training and support transitioned to a virtual format due to COVID-19 and the Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF) put its effort into adapting its training and curriculum to a video-based, web-based teaching format. In FY21, all training was provided in distance format, including online, audio, or telephonic courses, paper self-study, and video conferencing. All basic classes and the Adoption Learning Path were moved to Zoom, including Core Training for Resource Families, Core Training for Relative Providers, Adopting through OCS, and Building Families through Adoption. This move allowed for a group training format available to all families across the state, and participation significantly increased with the move to a virtual format. OCS and ACRF added a more intensive training workshop format called “webi-conferences” to assist with families meeting the training requirement and offered two-day formats in Fostering the Medically Fragile Child, Parenting Within the Lines, Fostering Early Childhood Mental Health, and Difficult Topics along with a monthly series called FASD Across the Lifespan.

In FY21, ACRF added 37.5 hours of new training courses. During FY20, ACRF held 80 onsite classes and 68 distant delivery classes for a total of 148 classes, reaching 1064 participants. In FY21, with only distance classes available, ACRF held 92 distant delivery classes with a total of 1840 participants. These numbers do not include self-study courses, online courses, or alternative hours recorded from other training sources. Video classes reach a broader swath of the state and bring specialized training courses to all parts of the state equally.

ACRF recruits and trains potential adoptive families for legally free children. The Heart Gallery of Alaska requires all parents interested in going through the Heart Gallery to adopt a legally free child to have participated in the Adoption Learning Path and the PARKA Project through ACRF.

The PARKA recruitment and training project has expanded throughout the state due to the accessibility of web-based classes and support that was developed during the COVID-19 restrictions. This will broaden the outreach of recruitment and training efforts when recruiting for families for legally free children.

Systemic Factor E: Service Array

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

ITEM 29: ARRAY OF SERVICES

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 29 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed significant gaps in service array.

OCS continues to partner with DBH to improve service array to families through the 1115 Medicaid Waiver. DBH has contracted with an Administrative Service Organization, Optum, for provider management, provider maintenance, participant education, authorization, and utilization management. Optum is providing a child welfare liaison to further partner with OCS in provision of these services to the families serviced by the agency.

OCS is also promoting the use of Help Me Grow across the state. Help Me Grow has family support specialists who are a statewide resource for services across the state. This includes services for children and adults, as well as services

to meet concrete needs. Families, caseworkers, and resource families can contact Help Me Grow and be connected directly to service providers.

OCS continually evaluates services provided through grant funds to best meet the needs of the families of Alaska. In an effort towards CQI of service array, OCS has developed reporting forms for use by the grantees for Circles of Support and Family Support Services. This allows OCS to evaluate the number of families the program is serving, the demographics of those families, and outcomes the families experienced after participation. Feedback is then provided to the grantee with a discussion of areas of strengths and areas needing improvement.

ITEM 30: INDIVIDUALIZING SERVICES

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 30 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that the state is challenged to individualize services for several reasons.

Alaska continues implementation efforts for the Cultural Resource Guide to meet the individualized service needs of families involved with the agency. The Cultural Resource Guide icon is located on all computer desktops of OCS employees. Included in the guide is an appendix that provides a list of culturally appropriate services in each region of Alaska, as well as instructions for OCS workers on a process for securing and authorizing the purchase of cultural services through the use of state general funds. The icon is updated on a quarterly basis by the Regional ICWA Specialists and the Public Information Team for DHSS. The guide assists OCS staff in linking families to traditional healing/cultural services provided through traditional healers, tribal members/peer mentors, and tribal elders.

All parents with an active in-home or out-of-home OCS case plan are eligible to engage in services with a Cultural Services Support Provider identified in collaboration between the Tribe, parent, and OCS. This Cultural Services Support Provider can now receive compensation or reimbursement from OCS for their service to the family. For example, an identified Tribal Elder can provide support to the family and receive compensation for that.

Systemic Factor F: Agency Responsiveness to the Community

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

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

Alaska received an overall rating of Strength for Item 31 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that Alaska effectively engages and consults with stakeholders pursuant to the goals and objectives of the CFSP and annual updates to the APSR.

OCS continues to have strong collaborations with regional, state, and national stakeholders and partners. OCS plans for improvement are developed with input and ongoing consultation with Tribal representatives, children and families, service providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies. OCS utilized focus groups with stakeholders to gather information and feedback to assist in development of policies, programs, and evaluations.

ITEM 32: COORDINATION OF CFSP SERVICES WITH OTHER FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Alaska received an overall rating of Strength for Item 32 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that Alaska's services under the CFSP are conducted with services and benefits of other federal programs that assist the same service population.

Through memoranda of agreement, program coordination, and improvements to technology for collaborative efforts, the state's services under the CFSP are being coordinated with services and benefits of other federal programs that assist the same service population. Alaska identified collaborations with the nine divisions of the State's Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Behavioral Health (former foster care youth Medicaid Eligibility), Division of Public Assistance, Department of Revenue, Department of Education,

Bureau of Vital Information, Division of Health care Services (Medicaid), Department of Public Safety and 11 Tribes/Tribal entities

Systemic Factor G: Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

This Systemic Factor was assessed by the measurement of state performance on Items 33, 34, 35, and 36.

Alaska was found to not be in substantial conformity with systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention as one of the four Items in this Systemic Factor was rated as a Strength.

ITEM 33: STANDARDS APPLIED EQUALLY

Alaska received an overall rating of Strength for Item 33 based on information from the 2017 Statewide Assessment. Information showed that standards are applied equally to licensed foster homes and residential childcare institutions. Alaska does not anticipate any changes to this area that would negatively impact this rating.

ITEM 34: REQUIREMENTS FOR CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 34 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Alaska did not provide information to demonstrate that processes were in place for safety planning and monitoring when safety issues are identified in a child's placement, particularly in unlicensed relative homes.

To address this in FY 20, a protocol was developed and trained to outline practice and assessment needed when an APSIN flag hit occurs in an unlicensed relative home. A tool was also created as a quick reference guide to utilize when an APSIN flag occurs. The training was provided to each region in the latter part of FY 20, and evaluation will need to occur to determine if there is an improvement in assessing safety and monitoring when concerns arise in a child's placement.

During FY 21, a process was put in place where any flag, when a response was not received, follow-up emails are sent biweekly to the assigned worker, supervisor, Background Check Supervisor (PSS III), and manager. Follow up emails are recorded with the original notification. Continued outstanding flag hits are reviewed weekly by the PSS III and APSIN Unit supervisors, who escalate to the necessary managers. With this process, response rates on flag hits have increased from 50% to 90% in FY 21.

ITEM 35: DILIGENT RECRUITMENT OF FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE HOMES

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 35 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that the number of children who cannot be returned home exceeds the number of available families.

During COVID-19 Alaska has changed recruitment and retention events from primarily being face-to-face events to increasing recruitment through media, emails, flyers, and other printed material. Retention events are occurring through appreciation videos, emails, thank you cards, and other small gifts to foster parents. An Alaska team meets weekly to identify placements and services for hard-to-place children. These children have medical, developmental, and behavioral needs. There is collaboration with other Divisions within DHSS to assist in identifying placements for Alaska's hard-to-place children.

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

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 36 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Alaska reported it does not have a fully functioning system to ensure successful placement across regional or state lines. Adherence to processes to facilitate inter- and intra-jurisdictional placements are inconsistent. Information in the Statewide Assessment showed that Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children adoption home studies, licensure requests, and parent and relative requests are not completed timely.

OCS continues to make changes to the ICPC program to increase timeliness. A significant change was decreasing the amount of paperwork OCS staff needed to include in the ICPC packet. The ICPC Program Coordinator and Social Services Associate now have access to VacTrak, the OCS Legal Inbox and other resources to centralize the completion of the ICPC requests. This has created a streamlined process for getting ICPC requests to other states in a timely manner.

The ICPC Program Coordinator utilizes NEICE to track incoming and outgoing ICPC. The ICPC unit in state office maintains communication and relationships with other states to improve coordination across state lines. Alaska now uses mostly electronic means to transfer information with NEICE, Alaska's Direct Secure Messaging, or other state-specific encrypted platforms. Documents can be processed and signed using Adobe rather than being printed for processing. Alaska is now keeping all electronic files on the network drive to prevent the need to rescan documents. Medicaid applications for children being placed in Alaska are now centralized within the ICPC Office. ICPC packets, Alaska Medicaid and Comagine are being processed concurrently rather than sequentially. Alaska's ICPC Office is providing training and consultation support to OCS staff regarding ICPC packets and cases to increase timeliness in the ICPC process.

In prior years the ICPC Program Coordinator for OCS had been tracking the Out-of-Town Requests (OTR) submitted from one OCS regional office to another. The Regional Staff Managers determined this was no longer necessary as they were working on improving OTR as a statewide project. Each region has an OTR e-mail address and specified points of contact to monitor that e-mail address. They have made group agreements to be responsive to the specific requests and communicate any delays in their region. The Regional Staff Managers report that the communication has improved greatly however, high level of staff vacancies has directly impacted the ability to prioritize requests from other regions. Regional Staff Managers meet as a group each month where OTR is a standing agenda item.

3. UPDATE TO THE PLAN FOR ENACTING THE STATE'S VISION AND PROGRESS MADE TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES

Goal #1: Develop a Skilled and Stable Child Protection Workforce

STRATEGY 1.A: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION EFFORTS

Concern/ Focus

- By end of year 2017, the vacancy and turnover rate at OCS was at 49%
- High turnover rates impact all areas of case practice

Objectives:

- Create a five-year staff recruitment and retention plan.
- Develop and implement standardized and centralized recruitment. Strategies and tools including longevity bonuses, educational stipends and leave, well-being leave and staff recognition policies.

- Update and embed agency vision, mission, and values through strategic communication plan.
- Statewide Executive Team (SET) will work with Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)
- Human Resources (HR) to create recruitment deliverables.

Measure of Progress and Timeline:

- 5-year plan will be created by March 2020.
- Full implementation of agency Mission, Vision, and Values by March 2020.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports

- Update and embed agency vision, mission, and values through strategic communication plan to include training and mentorship.
- Coordination with DHSS HR on retention and recruitment strategies.

Projected Outcomes

- Decrease turnover rate to 35-40% within 5 years.

2020 Update: OCS has created a 5 Year Staff Recruitment and Retention Plan in effort to reduce staff turnover rate to 35-40% within five years. Objectives on this plan that were implemented during 2019 were longevity bonuses for Protective Services Staff employed with the agency in good standing for two years or longer, educational stipends, and additional well-being leave. In other efforts to retain staff OCS refreshed the agency Mission, Vision and Values and are working to implement this during FY21. OCS has further partnered with DHSS Human Resources to update postings for OCS positions in effort to entice more applicants by indicating the benefits of state employment as well as rewards of working with children and families. Efforts to target new social work graduates from universities within and outside of the state have also occurred.

2021 Update: OCS continues to utilize the 5 Year Staff Recruitment and Retention Plan in effort to reduce staff turnover rate. During the beginning of FY21, staff turnover was at 47.6%. As we close out the fiscal year, staff turnover has reached 57%. Staff exit surveys have been evaluated and revealed themes in several regions and offices that included supervisory and management issues and high caseloads. The Statewide Executive Team (SET) began meeting twice a month to re-assess and evaluate recruitment and retention on a systemic level. SET is conducting a thorough review of enacted strategies, evaluation of impact, and will update the 5 Year Recruitment and Retention Plan for the following year.

OCS leadership began conducting Ten Year Plus Forums with employees who have been with the agency for ten years or more. Questions are asked about why these staff have stayed with the agency, as well as what organizational and personal factors have helped them to stay. Participants are also provided a survey afterwards that allows the opportunity to provide demographic and more detailed information about why they have stayed. These forums are scheduled to continue into the summer. Information gathered will be assessed for themes to inform the 5 Year Recruitment and Retention Plan.

In the last year OCS has moved to competency-based hiring for child protection staff. Competencies include Analytical thinking and problem solving, customer service, integrity and honesty, interpersonal skills, oral communication, and writing. The competency based minimum qualification format does not screen for specific education or experience. Applicants are screened by the hiring manager on competencies, however gained, so any combination of education and experience can be considered qualifying. The number of new hires has increased slightly. OCS is further partnering with DHSS HR to centralize the hiring process in effort to decrease time for PSS IV, PSM I and PSM II staff spent on the hiring process.

In March of 2021 OCS has established a referral program where staff can receive a coat, or other outdoor supply, valued at \$300 if they refer a successful candidate. If that candidate is in their position for a full year, the new employee and referring employee can receive another item valued at \$500.

The updated Vision, Mission, Values and Guiding Principles has been fully implemented. A launch message was sent to all staff by the OCS Director with widespread distribution to community partners and stakeholders. Posters were created, printed, and sent to all offices for display. The updated values were embedded in the interview question bank to be utilized with all new hires.

Focuses for FY22 include creating a promotion path from Social Services Associate to Protective Services Specialist III, performance and longevity incentives, more flexibility with the LOA positions, contract for centralized assessments for families, centralization of additional administrative tasks, creating culture of health and wellness, improve relationships and court culture, and extended mentorship program. Leads have been identified and will utilize the PDSA CQI model.

STRATEGY 1.B: NEW STAFF TRAINING, TRANSFER OF LEARNING, AND CASE ASSIGNMENT

Concern/ Focus

- Need to evaluate and enhance existing training and extend to 6 weeks per House Bill (HB) 151.
- High caseloads negatively impacting quality efforts and engagement.
- Lack statewide consistency in how new staff are oriented to the agency.

Objectives:

- Retain quality staff through enhanced training and reduced caseloads.
- Mentor program will be fully implemented, outlined in policy, with an evaluation component.
- Implement HB 151 gradual caseload requirements and caseload average by June 2020.
- Implement a statewide first year orientation program for new employees that includes required timelines for competency-based evaluations.

Measure of Progress and Timeline:

- Training through the Child Welfare Academy (CWA) will be extended to 6 weeks beginning July 2019. Training will occur in phases to enhance transfer of learning (TOL) through mentorship and field practice.
- Workgroup through the Change Management Leadership Team (CMLT) will develop an implementation process for the competency-based evaluation for PSS I/II staff by 2020.
- Monitoring and reporting mechanism for new caseload assignments will be developed by June 2020.
- By November of 2019 OCS leadership will implement a required new employee orientation packet that outlines the first year of onboarding for a new employee

Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports

- In Partnership with the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) develop measurement and feedback strategies to track the effectiveness of training and TOL.
- Develop a case assignment protocol, to align with the HB 151 caseload average requirements. Embed protocol in the Child Protective Services (CPS) manual
- Create a quarterly all staff mandatory webinar training program. Topics will be identified by data from an Essential Services Scorecard and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI).

- Training will be provided to supervisors and managers for utilization and purpose of the orientation packet and the onboarding process

Projected Outcomes

- CWA evaluation and Annual staff survey will demonstrate that staff feel their training and orientation successfully prepared them for their position.
- At least 50% of the frontline caseworkers in the state will have a caseload average of 13.
- Staff will report feeling more competent in their practice after implementation of changes to new employee and on-going training.

2020 Update: Additional efforts to retain staff and develop a competent workforce include, increasing staff training from 5 weeks to 6 weeks with the sixth week being regionally focused. Policy and procedures have been put in place to implement the HB 151 gradual case load requirements. The mentor program has been fully implemented, and is currently being evaluated, to support staff in the transfer of learning from the classroom to the field. There is a process implemented for frontline protective services staff to receive competency-based evaluations to enhance competencies improving practice in service to families and children.

2021 Update: All regions have fully implemented the sixth week of training into their region. Surveys from staff participating in the sixth week are positive and note the training aligns with regional needs and are helpful to the work they are doing. The 6th week of training is facilitated in partnership with the mentors and regional management.

CWA has developed surveys for staff at the 6th and 12th-month mark of employment to evaluate and inform SKILS. Feedback on the surveys has also indicated differences in responses between I & A and FS staff which informs the mentor program on areas needing further development and focus. Surveys resulted in shifting to the use of real case examples.

Caseload assignment data is continually assessed, and ORCA reporting demonstrates gradual case assignments are occurring for newly hired OCS staff where possible. OCS has been making small but incremental movements to lowering the average caseload numbers. Vacancies have contributed largely to the higher average caseload counts in addition to the steady inflow of foster care cases and recent delays of exiting the system related to the impact of COVID-19 and the court system.

Mentors are assigned to a rotation for ongoing training articles in the Frontline newsletter. The all-staff survey indicated that 79% of respondents agree there are established methods of communication from the state office while keeping them informed of the agency activities.

The most recent quarterly HB 151 Workload report showed an average caseload of 14.1 for PSS I/II staff. The Western and Southcentral regions fall below the required caseload average, Southeast is right at the average, while Anchorage and Northern are above the average. Efforts continue to balance staff turnover and case coverage.

STRATEGY 1.C: IMPROVED, CONSISTENT, MEANINGFUL SUPERVISION, ON THE JOB SUPPORT, CASE GUIDANCE AND MENTORING

Concern/ Focus

- Lack of consistent and quality supervision statewide.
- Lack of standardized training for supervisors.
- Lack of competency-based evaluations for supervisors.

Objectives:

- Supervisors consistently use data in supervisions with case carrying staff.
- Standardized training plan for new and current supervisors
- Develop and implement a supervisory competency-based evaluation by July 2020.

Measure of Progress and Timeline:

- Develop and implement the Online Resource for the Children of Alaska (ORCA) Desktop Feature to allow supervisors real time access to individual case worker data by January 2020.
- Standards will be developed for all new and current supervisors to attend trainings including Academy for Supervisors through Department of Personnel and Labor Relations (DOP), CWA
- Supervisor training, and Coaching Supervisors to Best Practices (CSBP) at CWA by 2020.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports

- Supervisory Leadership Council (SLC) and CMLT to develop a work plan to ensure consistent standards of supervision across the agency. Tools will be included to assist supervisors in data-driven supervision to track and staff key decision points in a case, identify needs and provide areas of coaching.

Projected Outcomes

- On the annual Staff survey, staff will report they receive meaningful and consistent supervision.
- On the annual Staff survey, supervisors will report they receive consistent training on coaching techniques, supervisory requirements, and use of data in supervision.
- The implemented supervisor competency-based evaluation will demonstrate enhanced
- competencies of supervisors and utilization of data, coaching and worker wellbeing in consistent staffing

2020 Update: Efforts to retain staff include enhanced supervision and on-the-job support. The Supervisory Leadership Council (SLC) is working on a standardized training plan for new and current supervisors. There are plans to implement this training plan during FY 2021. A workgroup through Change Management Leadership Team (CMLT) is progressing in the development of a supervisory competency-based evaluation scheduled to be implemented in early FY 2021. SLC has created a standardized tool for supervision to be data driven and track key decision points in a case. This is being piloted currently and will be implemented statewide as the pilot is evaluated. The Desktop feature has been developed within ORCA and is currently being utilized across the state to track, in real time, individual caseworker data.

2021 Update: The ORCA desktop feature was designed and produced in 2019 to allow supervisors access to real-time worker detail on case needs. Feedback on the desktop feature shows it is a useful tool for a snapshot view of caseworker data, but ORCA reports are used more for unit assessment and individual performance. Supervisors provided feedback that they are using the reports from ORCA as a tool more often than the desktop feature. The SLC has included guidance for the consistent use of these reports across the state on the supervision workplan. SLC and CMLT have developed a supervision workplan that includes use of the Essential Services Scorecard, the ORCA desktop feature, and ORCA reports. The workplan is continually adjusted due to delays in other strategies.

The Protective Services Managers I Collective group is working on the implementation and training plan for new supervisors. A program instruction was issued this fiscal year requiring all new supervisors to be enrolled in the “new supervisors training” at the CWA.

The competency-based evaluations have been implemented for staff and supervisors. Anecdotal feedback from managers and supervisors using the competency-based evaluation has been positive. Supervisors felt familiar with the

process of being evaluated using the competency-based evaluation as they were using these competencies to evaluate their staff.

The mentor program continues to be identified as a positive tool for training and transfer of learning for new staff. The mentor program has expanded with another mentor position during this fiscal year. There has now been a request to expand the program further to allow mentors to stay with staff during their first full year. Some staff could be opted out based on demonstrated competency. OCS leadership will evaluate in the coming year how to expand the mentor program to offer mentoring through the first year of employment.

Goal #2: Prioritize Identified Essential Child Protection Services

STRATEGY 2.A: IMPROVED TIMELINESS, ACCURACY, AND CONSISTENCY OF PROTECTIVE SERVICES REPORTS (PSR) AND INITIAL ASSESSMENTS (IA)

Concern/ Focus

- Intake is not currently staffed on the weekends and after standard work hours.
- Not timely initiating cases, especially Priority 3s (P-3), lack of timely and accurate case closures.
- Inaccurate identification of safety threats and ineffective monitoring of safety plans.
- Lack of process for assessing risk and child safety when a concern is reported in a Resource Family Home.

Objectives:

- Refine and continue efforts to standardize Centralized intake.
- Increase timely initiations to Priority 3 reports.
- Require supervisory staffing note in ORCA if initiation is not going to occur within timeframes.
- Improve the timely and accurate completion of initial assessments.
- Cases determined to need on-going safety management will have their needs safety managed in the parent's home.
- Implement clear process for assessing risk and child safety timely when an Alaska Public Safety Information Network (APSIN) flag hit reveals a new safety concern to the child in the unlicensed Resource Family Home.

Measure of Progress and Timeline:

- By August of 2019, Intake Specialists will be in the office extended hours on weekends and from 7am until midnight during the weekdays.
- ORCA and Case Review data monitoring will indicate timely initiation of P-3 reports in 75% of cases by July 2021.
- Initial Assessment initiations will be included in the Essential Services Scorecard by July 2020.
- By July 2020 monitor the supervisor staffing report in ORCA to ensure compliance with documented reasons why an IA is not being initiated timely.
- By March 2020 develop CQI system with measurements, progress timeframes and a feedback loop with staff, regional managers, and leadership to track and monitor priority response times.
- ORCA and Case Review data monitoring will indicate timely completion and accurate assessments in 75% of cases by July 2024.
- By September 2020 CQI, Research Unit, and QA, in addition to stakeholder feedback will conduct a root cause analysis to identify systemic issues and/or practice model issues that cause initial assessments to not be completed timely and accurately.
- By June of 2024 identify and implement appropriate interventions based on the root cause analysis for the IA process. Including evaluation of the intervention.

- Develop policy and procedure for response to APSIN flag hits in unlicensed Resource Family Homes by June 2020.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports

- Continued CQI efforts to improve quality of reports and a PSR Dispute Process are being developed.
- Centralized Intake Manager conducts training with regional staff and outreach to solicit feedback.
- IA workgroup will develop and implement a webinar training and competency based test for priority response times.
- Supervision guidance developed by SLC and CMLT for supervisors to utilize ORCA reports/desktop feature to track initiation rates for Priority 3 reports.
- IA workgroup will develop a guide for practice strategies to better manage workload adjustments when turnover occurs.
- Develop and implement policy for supervisory oversight requiring the use of ORCA reports/desktop features to identify open Initial Assessments, and staff these with the PSS to clarify steps needed to complete accurate and quality assessment of all open reports. Measured through OSRI case review.
- Supervisory training and mentorship related to accurate assessment of risk and intervention decisions.

Projected Outcomes

- Timely and accurate assessment of safety for children as evidenced by ORCA and Quality Assurance (QA) outcome data.
- The Onsite Review Instrument (OSRI) reviews will indicate that children are safely maintained in the parent home when appropriate.
- Supervisory staffing ORCA report will demonstrate that supervisors are entering a supervisory staffing note for delayed initiations 90% of the time by end of CFSP.
- Policy and procedure define process for assessing safety of children when a new concern is received on an unlicensed Resource Family Home.

2020 Update: The Program Officer for the Resource Family Section created a clear strategy and process for assessing when an APSIN flag hit is received in a Resource Family home. A training was created to reinforce the expectation that each APSIN flag hit alert must be responded to and sent to the APSIN unit. Training has been provided in 2 of the five regions. OCS has experienced delays in the training due to COVID-19. Root cause problem analysis, data collection, and case reviews were conducted in coordination with the PIP goal number 2. The activity was expanded to hold statewide leadership focus groups to discuss issues with the quality and timeliness of Initial Assessments. Through the problem analysis work two direct links were identified (1) the volume of initial assessments that need to be conducted and (2) accountability. Alaska submitted a revision strategy that was approved by CB in March of 2020. Efforts are underway to achieve the new strategies based on the Investigations and Initial Assessment pilot.

2021 Update: This fiscal year, a program instruction was issued that included consistent statewide expectations of documentation on IAs that included late initiations, any waivers to protocol, and delays to timely case closure. Ninety days after the program instruction was issued, a statewide assessment was conducted of all IAs not initiated timely. The assessment included a field office detail, priority level of the report, number of days late if supervisory staffing was entered, and what the reasoning was behind the delay. Over half of the delayed IAs had a supervisory staffing note, which primarily noted COVID-19 as a reason for the delay in initiation. Especially in rural areas, due to local COVID-19 ordinances and declarations, OCS has experienced a decrease in timely initiation rates. Data of late initiations do not show a disparity among the different priority levels of the report.

The Investigations and Assessment pilot (I & A pilot) in Anchorage and Wasilla began last year. During this fiscal year, the pilot scaled out to Fairbanks, Utqiagvik, and Kotzebue. Staff in all regions provided feedback in surveys. Surveys revealed a positive attitude from most participants. Feedback also indicated appreciation of the structure and morning DATA meetings to assist in the organization and prioritizing their time. Areas of need based on survey results are directed towards Generalist staff who split their time between I & A and FS.

A DATA board was created for the I & A pilot. This board has been changed, based on feedback and needs, including being made large and including column headers that are aligned with practice and case flow. Due to COVID-19, a visual data board was created to be used virtually. An expectations guide was finalized after feedback and input were solicited from the regions. Implementation supports are still needed to monitor and ensure supervisors and managers are conducting quality case reviews.

An ORCA report is used to monitor initiation and closure rates. Data was skewed during a period of time due to COVID and intake not screening in P-3 reports. Case reviews during this time reflected overall good information collection, collateral contacts, and decision making. Supervisors in the regions are teaming up with pilot supervisors to conduct case reviews in an effort to enhance supervisor skills in these case reviews. Initial feedback of the pilot indicated that some aspects of the I & A process were helpful when vacancies occurred. The transparency of where the case was at the time of the vacancy and updated documentation aids in the transfer of the case. Timely closures and lower caseloads have been attributed to the low number of IAs needing to be reassigned.

Monthly discussion of the I & A pilot occurs during CMLT meeting. Readiness assessments are conducted with potential scale-out field office sites. During this fiscal year Juneau and Ketchikan offices were identified for scale-out of the pilot. Due to vacancies and other concerns, that has been delayed. IA pilot structure has been communicated to the DHSS Commissioner. OCS has garnered support for the new IA structure with leadership within the agency and the Department.

Efforts on these goals continue through different strategies and activities. Alaska has seen a slight decline of timely initiation of investigations within the assigned priority timeframes as 69% of cases achieved a strength rating in this area, according to 2020 CFSR aggregate data, while the 2019 baseline was 71%. Services to prevent removal or reentry into foster care has improved, according to 2020 CFSR aggregate data, as 85% of cases achieved a strength, with appropriate removals occurring when services could not address the safety concerns. The 2019 baseline for this item was 79%. A FY21 evaluation of the I & A pilot found that supervisory staffing notes for late initiations had occurred in 54% of the cases across the state

STRATEGY 2.B: BUILD INFRASTRUCTURE AND IMPLEMENT STATEWIDE IN-HOME SERVICES AND INCREASE SERVICE ARRAY

Concern/ Focus

- Alaska is lacking an in-home services model.
- Families are not adequately linked to services.
- Families will be connected with culturally appropriate services.
- Competencies to identify when children can be returned to the family home and appropriate safety planning and monitoring are lacking.

Objectives:

- Implement an in-home services model.
- A system for collecting qualitative/case review data on in-home cases established.
- Enhance supervisory competency and oversight of safety planning and assessment
- Develop CQI process for Service Array.

- Cultural Resource Guide will be fully implemented for use by staff.
- The mentor program will reinforce training and transfer of learning regarding assessment of parental behavioral change, safety planning and monitoring during a trial home visit.

Measure of Progress and Timeline:

- By November 2019 review promising practices, existing policy, and outcomes for in home cases in Alaska to assist in needs assessment and CQI.
- By June of 2022 implement in-home model pilot in selected region and evaluate effectiveness prior to scaling up statewide.
- In-home model will be fully implemented with In Home Services Policy and Procedures by June of 2024.
- By February 2020 develop a targeted staffing process, that includes safety measurement tools, to plan for when children can safely return home for a trial home visit and on-going safety monitoring.
- Partner with Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) and contractor to conduct Behavioral Health Services Gap Analysis by July 2019.
- By September 2020 develop online tools and other resources for staff to stay informed about new and current services and referral procedures in their communities.
- By March 2021 develop a measurement plan to assess improved service accessibility, availability, and delivery of new Home-Based Family Treatment and Traditional Healing services

Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports

- Provide training to staff and community partners.
- OCS and CWA will ensure that all supervisory staff complete the coaching program to ensure enhanced competency to safety plan, assess parents' behavior change, level of engagement and sustainability of child safety in the parents' home.
- Develop and implement supervisory strategies and timeframes for meeting with workers specific to monitoring safety, parent progress and continued assessment of need and engagement.
- Follow up training and feedback loop regarding implementation and usefulness of the Cultural Resource Guide.
- Mentors provide training and transfer of learning to new OCS front line protective services specialists on assessment of parental behavioral change, safety planning and monitoring of safety.
- Train staff on the new policy and procedure for assessing unlicensed Resource Families when an APSIN flag hit occurs.

Projected Outcomes

- Development and implementation of an in-home services model.
- OSRI reviews will indicate an increase in compliance for Safety Outcome 2 and Well-Being Outcome 1.
- Outcomes from OSRI reviews will demonstrate that children remain safely in their own homes whenever possible.

2020 Update: OCS is currently evaluating in home programs and policies within Alaska and other states. The department is in the process of finalizing the Family First Prevention Services Plan which will serve families with their children remaining in the home. OCS has also created a grant opportunity for Title IV-E Tribes and Tribal Organizations to serve a caseload of families who would benefit from services with safety managed in the home environment. OCS has partnered with CWA to provide technical support and training for the Tribal partners. The Cultural Resource Guide has been fully implemented. Training has occurred and all OCS staff have the Cultural Resource Guide icon on their desktop. The Guide is routinely updated by the Regional ICWA Specialists in

coordination with the DHSS Public Information Team. The Mentor Program developed a transfer of learning tool to provide a guide of pertinent topics that need to be trained and mentored to new staff which includes the assessment of safety of children in the home through safety planning and assessment of parental behavioral change for trial home visits.

2021 Update: During FY21 it was determined that Alaska will be putting the FFPSA Prevention Plan on hold. OCS will need to engage stakeholders and community partners to evaluate evidence-based practices across the state. Once this evaluation has been completed, OCS can evaluate capacity for resubmitting the state Prevention Plan, implementing within the agency, and evaluating the program.

OCS has implemented the Tribal Title IV-E Prevention grant. This is a general fund grant that OCS put out a request for proposals to Title IV-E Tribes across the state. Title IV-E Tribal grantees participated in training through the Child Welfare Academy. The grantees are partnering with OCS staff to identify appropriate prevention cases. Referrals have just begun to occur late FY 21.

The Cultural Resource Guide remains on the desktops of all OCS staff and is regularly updated by the Regional ICWA Specialists in partnership with the DHSS Public Information Team.

A CMLT workgroup developed two trial home visit tools. The first tool is to be utilized during supervisory staffing to assist in determining the appropriateness of a trial home visit based on behavior change. The second tool provides guidance and expectations regarding continual safety monitoring during the THV. It also provides reminders to staff on subjects to inquire about during the case worker visit. It was determined each PSM I would implement these tools and practices into their specific regions. Feedback from qualitative case reviews and the mentors indicate use in some areas of the state, but not all. The PSM I Collective agreed that revisiting this with supervisors so this tool can be used consistently across the state.

The APSIN flag hit training is available on the CWA website and is required for staff to complete during the onboarding process. This training provides a guide on how to respond when an APSIN flag hit occurs for an unlicensed relative.

Efforts on these goals are ongoing through several strategies and activities. Services to prevent removal or reentry into foster care have improved, according to 2020 CFSR aggregate data, as 85% of cases achieved a strength, with appropriate removals occurring when services could not address the safety concerns. The 2019 baseline for this item was 79%.

STRATEGY 2.C: IMPROVE ENGAGEMENT WITH PARENTS AND RELATIVES

Concern/ Focus

- Earlier identification and engagement of relatives.
- Lack of engagement with parents through case worker visits and case planning.
- Family Contact is inconsistently administered statewide and lacks meaningful family engagement.

Objectives:

- Increase engagement with relatives and parents.
- Clear direction will be provided, to each level of the agency, on what reports they are required to use during supervision to ensure early identification and engagement of parents and relatives.
- Partner with Tribes through Tribal State Compacting to continue efforts on Relative Search and engagement.
- Partner with community agencies to enhance the quality and frequency of family contact.

Measure of Progress and Timeline:

- Embed supervisory certification of relative search required by HB 151 by September 2019.
- ORCA Research Unit will review reports required to ensure data is clear, easily accessible, and quick launch time by January 2021.
- A pilot of community engaged family contact to include training will occur in the Mat Su Valley in November 2019.
- The family contact pilot will be evaluated for impact to family engagement and permanency outcomes until June 2022.
- If family contact pilot evaluation is positive, scaling up incrementally statewide will occur by June 2024.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports

- Supervisors will receive training on elements of a case including, relative search and notification, parent engagement and timely initial referral for services, and case worker visits (CWV), that are required to be staffed at point of removal.
- Protective Services Managers will be required to review CWV data, relative search data, and case plan data during each supervision with PSS IV.
- Establish evaluation of successful activities and method for modification, compared to existing OCS processes for relative search.

Projected Outcomes

- ORCA reports will reflect an increased number of children in care in a relative placement.
- Noticing data will reflect relatives are identified and noticed of their right to request placement at the earliest need of out of home placement.
- OSRI reviews will indicate improvements to Permanency Outcome 2.

2020 Update: Training on the required supervisory certification of relative search was provided to all supervisors and managers in FY19. Further evaluation demonstrated the need for a more thoughtful

implementation plan other than the additionally administrative task of entering a supervisory staffing note. Some regions have been very thorough in their certification and there is potential this could be embedded statewide due to the new IA pilot. OCS continues to collaborate with Tribes and Tribal Organizations through the Compact for the relative search scope of work. Co-signers of the compact are currently completing initial and on-going relative searches for cases referred. The family contact scope of work will be implemented in early FY20. A Request for Proposal for family contact (grant) services in the urban areas of the State. Services will be aligned for consistency in the quality and frequency of family contact. ORCA has reviewed reports and made updates to the Essential Services Scorecard, Permanency Scorecard, and the Desktop feature to maintain that reports are easily accessible with quick launch times.

2021 Update: The HB151 required Supervisory Certification of Relative Search has been fully implemented across the state. A CMLT member met with supervisors across the state to provide feedback on how to integrate this certification into their supervisory process. The Program Manager for ORCA took these ideas and created examples in ORCA. Those examples were sent out to PSS IVs to vote on which one they would prefer. Based on feedback received, a new entry was created in ORCA, and went live in March of 2021, labeled Supervisory Certification of Relative Search. This category of activity note can be created through a supervisory staffing or relative search activity note. When supervisors/managers select that method of contact, the narrative box will pre-populate with language stating, "This is a supervisory certification that a relative search..." supervisors can then fill in the rest of that statement.

A workgroup was established for the Relative Search scope of work through the Compact to determine evaluation methodology and documentation strategies. It was found that there was not a way to evaluate the impact of this compact service for enhanced quality as there are general activity notes entered into ORCA for a relative search. Unless a manual audit occurred, there is not a mechanism within ORCA to discern if the relative search was conducted by a Tribe through the Compact or OCS. Feedback from Co-signers indicates there has been an increase of relatives identified for Native children when a referral has been received for this scope of work.

There have been ongoing efforts in the Mat-Su valley to increase the quantity and quality of family contact. During this fiscal year, the group completed the Family Contact Best Practice Guide for Foster Parents & Family Time Supporters. The first training using this guide was also provided. The training was converted to virtual due to COVID-19. An evaluation process was created for parents to complete, and this will be implemented in the next fiscal year with tablets purchased by Rock Matsu. This will assist in assessing the parent and family's perception of the family time provided. The Group continues to meet with OCS monthly to discuss strengths and challenges. The parent survey will be discussed in these meetings as well. Another success from this fiscal year was the creation of micro-videos on family contact and protective factors.

The PSM I Collective is creating guidelines for supervisory use of ORCA data reports regarding initiations, open IAs, case worker visits with children and parents, case plans, and other reports related to permanency.

Efforts on these goals continue through different strategies and activities. Similarly, placement with siblings and relatives is assessed as a practice area that has declined for Alaska, with 78% of cases achieving a strength in sibling placements and 82% of cases receiving a strength for relative placement according to 2020 CFSR data. The 2019 baseline for these items was 88% and 90%.

STRATEGY 2.D: INCREASE PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT AND REDUCE TIME TO PERMANENCY THROUGH OCS STRATEGIES AND JOINT OCS/CIP STRATEGIES

Concern/ Focus

- Alaska does not achieve timely permanency.
- Lack of accountability and progress due to length of time between court hearings following the 12-month permanency hearing.

Objectives:

- Court Improvement Project (CIP) and OCS will develop several new strategies to increase timeliness to permanency.
- OCS will implement strategies for supervisory oversight of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) timeframes to reduce time to permanency.
- Permanency Planning Specialists will track potential barriers to permanency and find ways to remove barriers to permanency.
- Develop 3-4 required supervisory staffing questions for cases at 9 months which are nearing the 12 months ASFA decision, and monthly thereafter, and expectations to identify activities to achieve permanency.
- Targeted staffing process will be created for individual cases where the child(ren) have been in care for more than 12 months and continue with a primary goal of reunification, children in care more than 24 months and are placed with a relative for 6 months or longer, legally free children who are not placed in a permanent home, and children in Trial Home Visit (THV) longer than 180 days.

Measure of Progress and Timeline:

- Benchcards will be updated to focus on permanency and parental engagement to include Judiciary oversight of case plans, family contact, and tasks to be completed for the next hearing by September 2019.
- Institute additional court hearings to occur every 6 months after a permanency hearing to support continued parental engagement and increased judicial oversight of deadlines at a pilot site by September 2019.
- Create a training video for parents related to the Child In Need of Aid (CINA) process narrated from a parent's perspective by June 2020.
- Create a template designed to give parents at the conclusion of hearings clarifying case plan activities, next hearing dates, and follow up items to be piloted by September 2019. Evaluation of the pilot will inform scaling out to other judicial districts by June 2022.
- If the evaluation deems that the pilot is successful, the strategies will be rolled out statewide by June 2024.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports

- Judges will be trained on the importance of permanency and use of the updated bench cards.
- Pre-and Posttest will be utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of the training.
- Develop and implement a mechanism for data collection and reporting on the pilot strategies quarterly and OCS/CIP meetings.
- Implement a process for all new parents in CINA court to view the video.
- Training and mentorship to all staff and supervisors on ASFA timeframes and compelling reasons, to include supervisory guidance, court report process and CQI feedback loop.
- Training for Permanency
- Specialists and their supervisors.

Projected Outcomes

- ORCA and Court Data will reflect decreased time to permanency for children in care at the pilot location.
- Court parties will report Increased parental engagement in court process and case planning through CIP evaluation
- Court parties will report transparency of case progress in court hearings through CIP evaluation
- Evaluation of the pilot site will inform decisions on scaling out statewide with associated implementation timeframe planning.

2020 Update: OCS continues to partner with the Court Improvement Project to improve engagement of parents and relatives. Case review hearing were successfully scheduled and heard at six-month intervals in the Fairbanks district. The Case Review benchcard was completed and is being piloted during hearings. The Case Review Findings court order was also created, and initial piloting resulted in revisions being required. During FY20 CIP and Casey Family Programs hosted a legal training on permanency that was attended by multidisciplinary CINA practitioners including judges, GALs, OCS staff, Tribal Representatives, CASAs, agency, and parent attorneys. A training is being created that will include pre and posttests. OCS staff are currently using the "To Do" form and providing it to parents at the conclusion of the hearing. OCS has implemented a Statewide Quarterly Permanency Meeting to review permanency related regional data and discuss root issues and strategies.

2021 Update: The OCS and CIP joint pilot in the 4th Judicial District, Fairbanks, is well underway. All presiding CINA judges in the 4th Judicial District are utilizing the updated benchcard, and court forms to engage parents in court. The additional permanency hearing is also occurring regularly in all cases. Multiple trainings have been provided to Judges on the importance of permanency and quality hearings. Bench and practitioner meetings are held to discuss barriers and challenges, including problem-solving cases where parents do not show for hearings and how participation can be encouraged more.

The CIP subcommittee meets quarterly and reviews the ages of all pending cases as a discussion for permanency timeframes. There is anecdotal feedback from Judges and court parties that supports improvement in court hearings and engagement of parents in case activities. The CIP committee will be discussing scaling out of the pilot to other judicial districts with the current feedback from court parties and case data while the hearing quality evaluation is still delayed. Further discussions are occurring in the subcommittee regarding full evaluation of the pilot.

A CINA orientation video was created and can be located on multiple websites.

CMLT, Regional Permanency Specialists, and CWA partnered to create an ASFA timeframe training for OCS staff. During FY 21, this training was completed and utilized statewide to increase knowledge and practice in steps towards permanency. Embedded in this training were the 3-4 permanency questions, developed by the Regional Permanency Specialists and SLC, for supervisors to utilize in identifying the next steps towards permanency. The training lives on the CWA website and is required for new staff. It can also be referenced as a reminder for current staff.

The Regional Permanency Specialists utilize the Statewide Permanency Scorecard, in ORCA, as a targeted staffing guide for cases where child(ren) have been in care for more than 12 months and continue with a primary goal of reunification, children in care more than 24 months and are placed with a relative for 6 months or longer, legally free children who are not placed in a permanent home, and children in Trial Home Visit (THV) longer than 180 days. During FY 21, the State Office Subsidized Adoption and Guardianship unit have worked to centralize all subsidy negotiations across the state to allow permanency staff to focus on these target groups of children. Currently, the centralized unit is doing subsidy negotiations for Southeast, Western, Anchorage, and Northern Regions. They plan to roll out this centralization to the Southcentral region in September of 2021.

Efforts continue on these goals through different strategies and activities. According to 2020 CFPSR data, identification of permanency goals at 68% strength and achievement of permanency at 71% strength continues to be an area of upward trends, with both areas maintaining well above the PIP goals of 57% and 55%. Through contextual data and case reviews, Alaska demonstrates areas of strength in achieving reunification in a timely manner.

Goal 3: Partner with Tribes and Community Agencies to Provide Supports and Services to Families.

STRATEGY 3.A: PLANS OF SAFE CARE

Concern/ Focus

- Alaska has a lack of community engagement and meaningful multidisciplinary engagement for Plans of Safe Care.

Objectives

- Babies with pre-natal substance exposure and the affected family or caregivers receive the treatment and support needed.

Measure of Progress and Timeline

- Develop an action plan for a
- pilot testing community-based Plans of Safe Care in the Mat-Su Valley by January 2020.
- Utilize CQI to evaluate pilot implementation to inform statewide rollout and timeframe planning by January 2021.
- If evaluation is positive rollout Plans of Safe Care Statewide by June 2024.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports

- Partner with other divisions within DHSS, non-state entities and national consultants to create a pilot and roll out Statewide.

Projected Outcomes

- All substance affected babies will have a Plan for Safe Care.
- Support will be provided to babies, and their families, who are affected by substance use and prenatal substance exposure.
- OCS will accurately report all instances of substance affected babies and the number of Plans of Safe Care.

2020 Update: OCS continues to develop Plans of Safe Care (POSC) in collaboration with service providers, local medical providers, other divisions of DHSS, Tribes, and the faith-based community. Pilot sites are identified in Juneau and the Mat-Su Valley. OCS intends to utilize a portion of the FFPSA transition funds to support a service provider in hiring a position to do the hands-on work with families for POSC. OCS is also making changes to the Circles of Support grant for those agencies to also turn their focus to POSC. An RSA with the Child Welfare Academy is being developed to provide training and technical assistance to the specialists working with families on POSC.

2021 Update: Alaska utilized both CAPTA and FFPSA transition funding for direct services positions within community-based agencies in the pilot sites of Wasilla and Juneau. Alaska posted a request for proposals in both areas and received a proposal from Juneau, but not Wasilla. Bartlett Hospital in Juneau will serve as the pilot site for Alaska's POSC. The pilot has been named Hello BABY (Building Alaska's Babies With You) and will be instrumental in implementing POSC for non-child-welfare-involved families across the state.

Bartlett has hired their Hello BABY coordinator and has begun working with families in the last months of FY21. The POSC Steering Committee and Stakeholder Group remain active. OCS is partnering with the Department of Public Health and Bartlett hospital to evaluate the effectiveness of Hello BABY. Bartlett is also looking at completing a process evaluation and will report quarterly to OCS on the number of families served.

STRATEGY 3.B: LINK AT RISK FAMILIES IDENTIFIED IN SCREENED OUT REPORTS TO TRIBAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Concern/ Focus

- Support is not provided to families reported to, but screened out by OCS.

Objectives

- Create a system for which families receive services following a screened-out report in efforts to prevent additional reports and potential screen ins.

Measure of Progress and Timeline

- Engage key stakeholders in the exploration stage, including parents and youth by June 2020.
- Explore statutory support, including fiscal allocations, and contractual authority for data sharing by FY 2021.
- Initiate a demonstration pilot for Mat-Su by January 2021.
- Utilize CQI to evaluate pilot implementation to inform statewide rollout and timeframe planning by January 2023.
- If evaluation is positive rollout Plans of Safe Care Statewide by June 2024.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports

- Provide for dedicated state

- and local staff to implement the early intervention program.
- Partner with Tribes to maintain specific strategies are integrated into program development, including linkages with culturally specific community providers.
- Provide training and application of learning opportunities for CQI.

Projected Outcomes

- Reduction in repeat screen outs for families in the piloted locations through PSR data.
- Piloted community-based agencies report families being served through screen out reports.

2020 Update: OCS has developed a process for sending screened out Protective Services Reports to tribes. A position has been identified within Intake to e-mail the screened-out reports through a secure e-mail system. Through Tribal State Collaboration meetings as well as Tribal Compacting, OCS is encouraging Tribes and Tribal Organizations to contact the families of these screened out reports.

2021 Update: OCS continues to maintain a position, within the intake unit, that distributes screened out reports to Tribes. The Tribal State Compacting Group successfully negotiated a Prevention scope of work this fiscal year. The group will continue to meet regarding the implementation of this scope during the next fiscal year.

OCS, in partnership with the Hello BABY pilot in Juneau, is navigating the process for how the pilot can serve families with a screened-out report by OCS. Hello BABY will already serve families through Plans of Safe Care when not required to report to OCS. The Plans of Safe Care Steering Committee wants to be sure that families reported to OCS and ultimately the report is screened out, how to be sure the family is offered services through Hello BABY. Planning on this process will continue into FY22.

STRATEGY 3.C: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT AN APPROVED TITLE IV-E PREVENTION PROGRAM PLAN

Concern/ Focus

- Utilize new opportunities under the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) to support the prevention of families from entering the child welfare system.

Objectives:

- Alaska will consult and coordinate with Tribal, State, and private entities in the development of a prevention program to ensure a continuum of care for children, parents and caregivers receiving prevention services.
- Identify eligibility for candidates for care population.
- Identify and rate prevention services to be included in the prevention program.

Measure of Progress and Timeline:

- OCS will submit a Title IV-E Prevention plan to the Children's Bureau by December 2019.
- OCS will implement prevention services by October 2021.
- Develop a method for implementing and monitoring prevention services with fidelity.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports

- Child welfare workforce will be trained on the development of family prevention plan.
- Identify evaluation strategy for prevention services.

Projected Outcomes

- ORCA reports will demonstrate that more children are being served in their home and safely decrease the number of children in out of home care.

2020 Update: OCS began planning for the Family First Prevention Services Act by engaging four main stakeholder groups; community-based services, Tribal IV-E, child welfare workforce, and Medicaid. The OCS Director developed a master FFPSA power point and started holding several webinars for stakeholders across the state, as is standard operating procedure due to the vastness and cost of doing business in Alaska. OCS also brought together leaders within the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) to explore deepening relationships to enhance services for joint interventions with families involved in the child welfare system. Child and family eligibility for the Title IV-E Prevention Program is based on a child being at imminent risk of entry into the foster care, but able to safely remain at home or in a kinship placement with receipt of approved well supported evidence-based services in conjunction with other relevant services under the child's prevention plan. A child exiting foster care to a trial home visit with their caregiver, or a child in foster care who is a pregnant or parenting foster youth are also eligible for prevention services under the Title IV-E Prevention Program. Alaska's initial Title IV-E service array will be limited to the select services that are currently approved through the Title IV-E Clearinghouse and services deemed to be culturally appropriate and provided through a Title IV-E Tribe or Tribal organization to Alaska Native families with a Prevention Plan. OCS submitted a draft of the Title IV-E Prevention Plan in January of 2020. Feedback was received for improvement of the plan which will be submitted in late summer of 2020.

2021 Update: Alaska submitted the second draft of the Family First Prevention Services Plan in October of 2020. Feedback was received on November 12, 2020. A meeting was held with OCS, Region X, and other CB representatives in December to discuss the feedback. As OCS began working on those edits, it became clear that a thorough evaluation of evidenced-based practices in Alaska needs to occur. The evaluation will need to determine where the evidenced-based practices are, if they are being provided with fidelity to the model, who the payer is, and the level of evidence. This evaluation will inform Alaska's ability to move forward with a Family First Prevention Plan. Until the time this evaluation can occur, OCS has put efforts towards an approved prevention plan on hold. There is potential that the Alaska Mental Health Trust can assist with the evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in the new fiscal year.

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

STRATEGY 4.A: CREATE A CQI SYSTEM THAT ENGAGES THE ENTIRE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

Concern/ Focus

- No common guiding principles, values, or processes for CQI that is sustainable across the agency.
- Differing values and expectations on what CQI is and should be for the agency
- OCS implements new programs but is lacking on the necessary focused follow through for implementation that allows for changes to new initiatives along the way.

Objectives:

- Create a CQI Organizational Structure, and management process that clearly defines the leadership role in CQI, embeds CQI processes with all programing efforts and modifications to that program changes are made based on CQI.
- Reorganization of the CQI functions into one statewide unit, whereby, all data, quality assurance, reporting, data analysis, evaluation, and findings are centralized.

Measure of Progress and Timeline:

- Restructuring Executive Steering Committee (ESC) to CMLT to be completed by September 2020.
- Identify and utilize a CQI implementation framework to be completed by September 2020.
- Centralization of CQI staff functions into one centralized unit by September 2020.
- Imbed a CQI culture throughout the agency across organizational units and all staffing levels by June 2024.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports

- Utilize the Center for States in evaluating and consultation for redesign, formalize and implement a CQI work plan.
- Utilize Center for States to assist in the evaluation of the capacity of the ESC and restructure to implement CQI processes to support strategies and outcomes.

Projected Outcomes

- Include data elements as a standing agenda item in the restructured CMLT to support data driven decision making.
- Evaluate and document implemented program improvement measures and the decision to continue, adapt or discard improvement interventions based on the evaluation
- The annual staff survey will reflect staff of all levels feeling included in CQI activities by the end of the CFSP.

2020 Update: A CQI management process is evolving and being infused in the management culture at OCS. All key practice decision changes are made with a lens of incorporating a plan for CQI. OCS made the decision to centralize Regional Managers (PSM II) into State Office to develop more of a systemic macro level purview of CQI. In addition, OCS has adopted a CQI framework using the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) model. This model has been trained and utilized in all change management forums such as the CMLT, Essential Services Meeting, and Quarterly Statewide Permanency Meetings. Cultivation of CQI culture will be on-going throughout the five-year plan. In addition, OCS has partnered with the Capacity Building Center to provide targeted CQI training to leadership staff members to embed CQI practices within the regions.

2021 Update: The CQI PDSA process has been trained and utilized in all change management forums, including the recent update to staff recruitment and retention efforts. The cultivation of CQI culture is ongoing with the organizational structure and foundation adopted in utilizing the PDSA model. Alaska partnered with the Capacity Building Center for States to provide monthly CQI trainings to OCS leadership during this fiscal year. Individual Regional Managers utilized technical assistance in the development and measure of PDSAs. The training challenged participants to relate the learning to their own work and practice to create personal action plans that cultivated CQI.

OCS leadership continues to support the Staff Advisory Board, the Supervisory Leadership Council, and the PSM I Collective. These groups provide direct feedback from their peers and staff to inform policy and practice change. The annual staff survey results, July 2020, showed that 41% of respondents agreed there is opportunity for them to provide information and suggestions to state office management. Of respondents, 52% agreed there were opportunities to provide information and suggestions to regional management. Survey results also indicate that 79% of responding staff believes there are established methods of communication from the state office through memorandums, newsletters, and meetings that keep staff informed of OCS activities.

STRATEGY 4.B: INTEGRATION OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER'S DATA SOURCES IN THE OCS CQI PROCESS

Concern/ Focus

- No formal process to solicit internal and external stakeholder input feedback at all levels.

Objectives:

- Integration of internal and external stakeholder's data sources in the OCS CQI process for robust assessment and evaluation.

Measure of Progress and Timeline:

- Develop and implement formalized ingrained processes for inclusion of key internal and external stakeholders including roles and data sources by the completion of the CFSP.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports

- Create a feedback loop
- as a part of the CQI process involving internal and external key stakeholders.
- Utilize the Center for States in evaluating and consultation for redesign, formalize and implement a CQI work plan

Projected Outcomes

- Have an institutionalized method and process for providing feedback to stakeholders and adjusting programs and processes that will be reflected in reporting of agency activities

2020 Update: OCS did not implement formal steps or strategies towards internal and external feedback loops during FY 2019. As this is a PIP strategy with target implementation for Quarter 8, it is the capstone piece to implementation for a robust CQI administrative system. The re-structuring, training, and adopting of a PDSA cycle provide the foundation to build upon with intention of this strategy implemented last. OCS has incorporated informal structures of using CMLT, SLC and the Staff Advisory Board for soliciting input and feedback. In addition, OCS has been incorporating external data and information through the Citizens Review Panel, CFSR outcome reports and contextual data for senior leadership discussions.

2021 Update: Mechanisms in which OCS receives stakeholder feedback and input were centralized and documented through outreach with Regions and State Office. This effort is in support of developing internal and external stakeholder feedback to be incorporated into the CQI procedure manual. The intent is to formalize all venues OCS receives and communicates with stakeholders to a centralized point, most likely CMLT, where the information can be utilized in CQI implementation and decision making. Due to the challenges of COVID-19, OCS has negotiated to extend this particular strategy for 6 months to allow the development of the procedures and implementation to engage stakeholders. OCS has drafted the CQI procedures and consulted with the Capacity Building Center on further technical assistance for FY 22.

Implementation and Program Supports

OCS continues to engage in training and technical assistance through the Capacity Building Center for States and Casey Family Programs. Specifically, the Capacity Building Center for States has been extremely valuable in Alaska's efforts in building a CQI informed child welfare agency. Casey Family Programs has been a valuable partner in joint strategies with the CIP as well as the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact. OCS has realigned positions within the agency to support PIP and CFSP efforts. This includes the creation of a Social Services Program Officer to oversee the implementation of prevention strategies as well as a model for in-home services. OCS has contracted out assistance from other resources for additional PIP strategies, including the supervisory management guidelines and the Tribal Title IV-E Prevention program. Currently, OCS does not anticipate the need for additional training nor technical assistance.

4. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Foundational Administrative Structure

Alaska administers the Quality Assurance system and CQI framework through its state office to provide oversight and consistency in implementation. The Quality Assurance unit is centralized and is responsible for qualitative case reviews, critical incident case reviews, and Administrative Reviews. The makeup of the unit is five Program Coordinators and a Research Analyst with management from a Program Officer.

Alaska utilizes a CQI framework of the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) model to reinforce the utilization of CQI in practice analysis, system change, and implementation. The statewide leadership team focused on CQI, the Change Management Leadership Team (CMLT), incorporates the PDSA in the implementation of PIP strategies and evaluation of impact. CMLT meets monthly to discuss and assess PDSA implementation activities.

In addition, the Statewide Executive Team (SET) uses the PDSA model to identify and evaluate leadership priorities and measurements. Initiatives are grounded in using data, research, specific interventions, and evaluations to not only inform implementation but also provide information and feedback to stakeholders.

Essential Services meetings continue to occur monthly to assess regional data and identify practice themes contained within the aggregate data. The participants include leadership positions in State Office and all Protective Services Managers I and II's from each region. A quarterly Permanency Meeting was also re-designed to distribute permanency data and creation of PDSA's to impact permanency on a regional level. In FY 2020, a permanency project was developed using CQI to identify target populations and specific strategies to address permanency. The project is currently in implementation, and outcomes will be measured as activities are monitored, and permanency is achieved.

In FY 2021, targeted training on CQI with the Capacity Building Center occurred with leadership positions and members of CMLT and SET. The CQI training was adapted to use the PDSA model that Alaska has adopted. In addition to the CQI training, the Capacity Building Center has provided technical assistance to regional managers and state office program managers to develop PDSA's for identified problems or improvements within their scope of responsibility. The training has offered an expansion of knowledge to Alaska leadership on conducting thorough root cause analysis and intervention selection grounded in data.

The Quality Assurance unit is highly trained and experienced in the use of the Federal OSRI tool and Alaska's practice model. This enables the unit to independently review cases, and reliability is checked through group case review trainings. The unit is also utilized to conduct sample case reviews for data and qualitative information purposes as outlined in PDSA measurement plans.

Quality Data Collection

Alaska has several mechanisms for collection of qualitative and quantitative data and assurances of data accuracy. Through the CQI assessment process, Alaska has verified that there are procedures in place to review data accuracy, provision of data dictionaries, and multiple live access reports managed by the Research Unit. Data collected and further reported is aligned with requirements and guidelines provided by the Children's Bureau. Data tests are completed to verify accuracy of data reported from the CCWIS system, and issues resolved prior to submission. Alaska is confident in its submission of AFCARS and NCANDS data in relation to issued requirements and memorandums.

Qualitative data is collected through various means of case reviews, surveys, and focus groups. Currently, Alaska is under a measurement plan for the PIP; therefore, case reviews are conducted under the measurement plan structure of the QA unit with a secondary review prior to submission for Federal review in the OSRI. Internal reliability testing

is conducted with QA staff conducting reviews on a single case for training and item application. QA staff are trained and follow the written procedures developed for case review and completion of the OSRI instrument.

Surveys are analyzed and provided through the Research Analyst, which provides statistical analysis of data and enhanced visual of qualitative narratives. In addition to surveys, the Research Analyst aggregates data from targeted case reviews as part of measurement plans in PDSA's. As an example, a sample case review was conducted solely on investigations and assessments in field offices where a pilot project was implemented. The case reviews conducted by the QA unit were aggregated, and a statistical and qualitative report was produced to inform pilot outcomes and improvement areas.

Case Record Review Data and Process

For FY 21 and FY 22, Alaska is conducting case reviews as identified in the approved measurement plan for the PIP. The sample is extracted from the Research Analyst aligned with the requirements of the sample for the review period. Cases are sampled from the targeted review sites of the PIP and conducted as prescribed in the Federal OSRI tool. Alaska follows all of the case review requirements to include interviews where applicable with caseworkers, children, youth, parents, foster parents, GAL's, and tribal staff to support the ratings of items in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being.

Cases are reviewed by a QA program coordinator with a secondary review conducted by the Social Services Program Officer. A sample of cases is provided for oversight review by the Children's Bureau contractors. After approval of cases and a field site visit is completed, statistical analysis is completed on each item area. A field report is completed by the QA unit, which includes the statistical analysis of the items along with a narrative describing the practice seen for each item as demonstrated in the case reviews. Debrief meetings are scheduled with the field office to discuss item ratings and facilitating dialogue regarding practice strengths and areas needed improvement. In FY 21, field office case review outcomes are being reviewed at a statewide leadership level to discuss systemic issues that may be present and also areas in which regions may be supported.

During FY 21, several requested case record reviews were conducted when practice or case-related questions or issues arose. The QA unit follows the OSRI assessment of practice when conducted these reviews and issues a report of findings to the requesting field office.

Alaska has not yet assessed the capacity to conduct a State Review for the upcoming round of CSFR. Alaska is currently undergoing the PIP until the measurement period ends in December 2023. Alaska anticipates once learning more of the changes and requirements of round 4 can assess state capacity to conduct a state-led review.

Analysis and Dissemination of Quality Data

Dissemination of quality data is centralized through the Research Unit and the Quality Assurance Unit. This provides consistency in the data analyzation and format for dissemination. Alaska's SACWIS system houses several reports that can be accessed on demand by OCS staff to aid in case management, supervision, and systemic review of essential services for the internal need of quality data. Public or stakeholder inquiries of data are filtered through the Research Unit, providing consistency in data production and presentation. In FY 21, reports identified in the PIP to be utilized for structured staffing and as measurement tools were reviewed and assessed by the Research Unit to verify on-demand accessibility.

Within the Quality Assurance Unit, the Research Analyst analyzes all surveys and case record review reports. This allows specific training to the items and related narrative that provides consistency in analysis and data consumption.

The Quality Assurance Unit also produces critical incident reports that are disseminated to state and regional leadership for debriefing and understanding.

In FY 21, a comprehensive fatality report was disseminated by the QA unit with specific systemic recommendations to address in an effort for the prevention of child fatalities. In addition, the all-staff survey and tribal survey were administered, and reports were generated to inform internal and external feedback on the OCS. The Safety Program within OCS developed a tracking system and comprehensive report on the incident reports received by OCS staff to identify and present safety statistical data that can be addressed through additional safety mitigation strategies.

Feedback to Stakeholders and Decision Makers and Adjustment of Programs and Process

OCS utilizes several vehicles in providing feedback internally and externally. The main vein of program and process information is generated through CMLT. CMLT is comprised of OCS leadership staff, program coordinators, and external stakeholders such as the Child Welfare Academy. Within CMLT, all points of PDSA are discussed and report out of barriers, successes, and implementation completion. This functions as a centralized information-sharing point that filters updates internally through regions, other state office staff, and stakeholders through the representatives on CMLT. All program improvement plan strategies are coordinated and implemented through CMLT.

Program updates and progress are presented through several partnership forums that OCS collaborates with stakeholders. These data information sharing collectives include Tribal State Collaboration, Tribal Compacting, Citizen Review Panel, Court Improvement Project, Foster Parent Advisory Board, Child Welfare Academy/School of Social Work, and the youth advisory group Facing Foster Care in Alaska. Feedback to these organized collectives include PIP progress and strategies as well as essential services data to include safety and permanency measures.

In FY 21, OCS collaborated with the Capacity Building Center to refine the mechanism in which internal and external feedback is cycled through OCS. Draft procedures were developed, and it is anticipated in FY 22, OCS will have guidelines and procedures to formalize the stakeholder feedback loop. After CQI training, Alaska has assessed increased enhancement of obtaining stakeholder input and feedback and root cause analysis is being conducted and as part of measurement plans.

5. UPDATE ON THE SERVICE DESCRIPTIONS

Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program (Title IV-B, Subpart 1)

All title IV-B I funding received is awarded to community-based family services grants. The FFY20 allocation of IV-B I funding was \$73,502, which provided a limited amount of funding for family preservation in the communities of Wasilla, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Nome, Soldotna, and Juneau. In SFY 2020, 179 families and 327 children were served by this program. These services are designed to serve families and children who have been determined by OCS to be at risk of out-of-home placement and/or children who are transitioning to or recently placed back in the home with their families after an out-of-home placement. The services funded through the family preservation grant are service coordination, service plan implementation and monitoring, assessment of family progress, parent education and support, and transportation services.

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN ADOPTED FROM OTHER COUNTRIES (SECTION 422(B)(11) OF THE ACT))

OCS awards a grant to The Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF) to provide training and support to adoptive families to promote safe and strong homes for adoptive children. Families can access the grant services regardless of if they adopted domestically or internationally. ACRF reports that in the past year, they provided support for

approximately 4 families who are adopting or have already adopted a child from another country. In the past year, no children were identified as entering foster care after being adopted from another country.

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF FIVE (SECTION 422(B)(18) OF THE ACT)

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

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

- **Denali KidCare.** Administered through the Division of Health Care Services, Alaska's Federal Children's Health Insurance Program is known as Denali KidCare. The program offers comprehensive health insurance coverage for children and teens. Additionally, the CHIP program is required to partner with the Public Health, Maternal Child Health, OCS, and DJJ to ensure child and adolescent access to Medicaid services and delivery of quality health care, including children with special health care needs to all Alaskan children.
- **Early Periodic Screening Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT).** The EPSDT program provides coverage of all medically necessary Medicaid services to correct or ameliorate a child's physical or mental condition, regardless of whether such services are covered under a State's Medicaid State Plan. All children in state custody receive an EPSDT screening within 30 days from removal.
- **The Infant Learning Program (ILP).** Housed in the Division of Senior and Disability Services ensures that all infants and toddlers with disabilities in the State who are eligible for early intervention services are identified, located, evaluated, and provided appropriate services. As required by federal law, this program utilizes a Child Find System that is coordinated with:
 - Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV)
 - Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT)
 - Programs under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000
 - Head Start and Early Head Start
 - SSI program under Title XVI of the SS Act
 - Child protection and child welfare programs under the state agency responsible for administering the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)
 - Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI)
 - Childcare programs in the state

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

- **Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS).** The Women’s Children’s and Family Health (WCFH) section, housed in the Division of Public Health, administers the federally funded Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant for Alaska. This grant aims to integrate and coordinate services for the early childhood population and to improve outcomes in children’s developmental health and family well-being indicators. This work is community-based in nature. The focus of this grant is to increase the use of evidence-based developmental screening. Often, developmental concerns aren’t identified until a child enters school. This project aims to identify those concerns early and connect families with needed supports. ECCS focuses on five critical components:
 - Collective impact;
 - Continuous Quality Improvement;
 - Help Me Grow;
 - Strengthening Families; and
 - Technical assistance.
- **Complex Behavioral Collaborative (CBC).** Housed within the DBH the CBC helps providers meet the needs of Medicaid clients with complex needs who are often aggressive, assaultive, and difficult to support. The CBC program offers consultation and training to providers and clients’ natural supports, including family members.

EFFORTS TO TRACK AND PREVENT CHILD MALTREATMENT DEATHS

OCS developed a comprehensive report of fatalities that occurred in 2020. Fatalities in Alaska were cross-referenced with OCS data, the Maternal and Child Death Review (MCDR) data, and the Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT) data. The report distinguished fatalities by demographic characteristics, category of death, OCS history documented with the family, and if OCS investigated the fatality. Based on the data contained within the report, several recommendations and areas of prevention were identified to include reviewing the High-Risk Infant (HRI) protocol, Safe Sleep training, and suicide training. OCS Executive Team is scheduled to review the report and discuss the recommended actions. It is anticipated the report will be published on OCS website, in addition, to be used for internal and external dialogue regarding factors contributing to the death of children and youth. OCS anticipates continued use of the annual report in a format that may be published.

OCS continues to have representation at both the MCDR and CFRT monthly meetings. A change occurred in FY 21 to have the same individual from OCS attend both meetings to close any information gaps or missed reports. Collaboration at these meetings continues to benefit identification of practice or protocol deficiencies and the opportunity to report child safety concerns to intake when reporting should have occurred but did not.

In FY 21, each child maltreatment death or suspicion of maltreatment with OCS history received a child fatality review. The report includes, where identified, regional or systemic practice recommendations. The review report, once finished, is disseminated to Regional leadership in which the death occurred, the Director, Division Operations Manager, and Administrator at OCS. A debrief and discussion is scheduled with regional management to address any concerns or opportunity for learning.

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR DISASTER RELIEF ACT

On January 22, 2020, Alaska submitted its intended use plan for Child Welfare Disaster Relief Funds under ACYF-CB-PI-20-01. The funds were requested and appropriated because of a November 30, 2018, magnitude 7.1 earthquake that struck South Central Alaska, which affected Anchorage, Eagle River, and Wasilla. In the intended use plan, Alaska indicated its plan to spend the relief funds in Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna Valley on parent navigation services for parents currently involved in the child protection system. The goal was to help strengthen, preserve, and unify families.

Alaska posted a request for proposals to initiate a contract to help provide additional time and attention that parents need to navigate the court process and provider networks. The requested proposal had zero interest, and a contract could not be initiated.

Alaska has submitted a request to adjust its intended use plan to the following items:

- A new, larger vehicle for the Southcentral Regional Office. Staffing levels of this office have grown alongside a steady population growth within the Matanuska-Susitna Valley. The vehicle will be used to transport children to family contacts.
- Technology related to documenting family contacts and case management. The technology would include keyboards for family contact rooms that integrate with cell phones for efficient activity note entry, printers, and wireless headsets for staff necessary due to an office-wide telephone upgrade.
- A significant restocking of supplies in OCS offices in Anchorage and Wasilla such as meals, diapers, cleaning supplies, toys.

Alaska will provide an update on the approved use of these funds in the third APSR in June of 2022.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING TO PREVENT, PREPARE FOR, OR RESPOND TO CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019

Per ACYF-CB-PI-20-11, the State of Alaska was required to provide a narrative report describing the planned use of the supplemental title IV-B, subpart 1 funds provided through the CARES Act in response to the coronavirus and to ensure the provision of vital services to children and families. Alaska was allotted \$15,686.

Alaska utilized the supplemental funds to provide COVID-19 testing for OCS staff to ensure that employees traveling into outlying areas of Alaska do not inadvertently bring the virus into those rural, Alaska Native villages where access to medical facilities is limited. COVID-19 employee testing complies with OCS PI 20-06, which requires testing to occur 48 hours prior to the travel occurring.

The testing allows for in-person contact in hub communities and outlying villages for monthly caseworker visits, family contact, licensing visits to foster homes, investigations, and assessments. Most villages will not allow OCS staff to enter without a recent negative test result.

Marylee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) (Title IV-B, Subpart 2)

Alaska's FFY19 allocation of PSSF (IV-B II) was \$435,601. Alaska blends Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) PSSF funding with other sources of funding to ensure the provision of the four categories of services through funding grants to non-profit and Tribal organizations or agencies.

FAMILY REUNIFICATION

OCS continues to prioritize funding family reunification services with PSSF funding due to the high numbers of children in out-of-home care. OCS provides family reunification grants in Anchorage, Southcentral and Northern regions to the specific communities of Anchorage, Wasilla/Palmer, Nome, Fairbanks, Ketchikan, Prince of Wales Island, and Utqiagvik. While the grant services are available to support parents in meeting their case plan goals, the grants have been primarily used by OCS field offices to provide the valuable service of facilitating family contact. Field office staff do not have sufficient resources to provide the frequency of family contact necessary to promote family reunification. Therefore, grant services have been integral in making family contact available. In SFY 2020, 236 families and 426 children were served by the family reunification program. As the number of children in out-of-home placement has continued to increase, the demand for this service remains high. FY20 was the final year of this grant, and for FY21, OCS streamlined the focus to a Family Contact grant.

ADOPTION SUPPORT AND PROMOTION

OCS is currently funding Adoption Support and Promotion services with title IV-E adoption program savings. The adoption support services are delivered through a grant awarded to the ACRF. The grant was established to provide seamless continuation of support for adoptive and guardianship families through pre- and post-adoption/guardianship services. This ongoing collaboration with ACRF provides for improved outcomes for children and families through the provision of services, including family preparation services, information and referral, crisis intervention, and case management. The population served through this grant includes all families in Alaska who have adopted children through public and private adoptions. Services are available statewide to include training, self-study courses, and telephonic services.

ACRF provides a series of classes called “The Adoption Learning Path” geared toward preparing families to adopt special needs children from foster care. When the family completes the series of classes, ACRF helps the family generate a “family profile,” which is shared with OCS staff throughout the state. This process has assisted in matching children needing permanent homes with families who understand the needs of children in care and are ready to care for them.

In addition to these adoption support services, ACRF also provides intensive education and preparation as well as matching support and post-adoption support to a limited number of families per year in the regions of Southcentral and Anchorage as part of the Resource Family Training grant. This is an effort to match legally free children in care with trained adoptive families and to promote placement stability for these children who may have a high level of special needs and who have been difficult to match.

SERVICE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FOR FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

Family Support Services (FSS) grants are currently funded with Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) funds. In recent years, these funds have been utilized to fund these primary prevention grants to Alaska’s three most heavily populated communities. They are awarded to community-based providers who have services that increase the strength and stability of families, increase the parents’ competence in their parenting skills, afford children a safe, stable, and supportive family environment, and otherwise enhance child development. The target population of this grant program is children ages 0-12 years of age, with special consideration given to children ages birth to three years. Other targeted populations are families experiencing disability of a family member and/or homeless youth.

The core services of FSS include in-home support, parent education, facilitated access to resources, transportation services, and service coordination. The programs promote participation in early childhood services, medical services, educational and employment services. FSS works with families who need support for basic needs, skill acquisition, and crisis stabilization. All three of the current grantees utilize evidence-based curriculums, including Nurturing Families and Parents as Teachers. In SFY 2020, 95 families and 155 children were reached by family support services.

OCS also awarded a CBCAP funded prevention grant to provide primary prevention services to Alaskans in rural areas. The prevention grant was awarded to the Alaska Children’s Trust (ACT). In SFY20 ACT provided mini-grants for parent education in rural communities around the state. The communities which received the grants to provide parenting education programs included Juneau, Kenai, Sitka, Kodiak, North Slope, Ketchikan, Homer, King Salmon, Kotzebue, and Nome. During FY20, 782 parents participated in these rural parenting education programs.

Family Preservation Services grants are awarded by OCS to community-based family services providers. OCS blends PSSF, IV-B I, and other sources of funding to support these grants. In SFY 2020, 179 families and 327 children in the communities of Wasilla, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Nome, Soldotna, and Juneau were served by this program. These services are designed to serve families and children who have been determined by OCS to be at risk of out-of-home placement and/or children who are transitioning to or recently placed back in the home with their families after an out-of-home placement. The services funded through the grant are service coordination, service plan implementation

and monitoring, assessment of family progress, parent education and support, and transportation services. A referral must be made to the family preservation programs by the OCS worker. The child protection case may or may not remain open, depending on risk and safety factors. The grant continues the integration of the Strengthening Families protective factors and trauma-informed practices to serve the existing target population.

Alaska spends at least 20 percent of IV-B, subpart 2 funds on service delivery of family preservation, community-based family support, family reunification and adoption promotion and support services.

POPULATIONS AT GREATEST RISK OF MALTREATMENT (SECTION 432(A)(10) OF THE ACT)

Alaska Native children, age birth to five years, continue to be the population at greatest risk of maltreatment. This group of children makes up 6.5% of the general population of children in Alaska but makes up 26.6% of the substantiated protective services reports. Further, 6.9% of Alaska Native children in this age group experienced substantiated maltreatment.

OCS dedicates a significant amount of time and resources targeted at nurturing relationships with Tribal partners, developing practice and policy strategies aimed at Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) compliance, targeted Alaska Native foster home recruitment, and the purchase of culturally appropriate family support services.

Despite agency efforts, a higher percentage of Alaska Native children in this age group have experienced substantiated maltreatment than in previous years. Alaska needs to continue a true partnership and government-to-government relationship with Tribes and Tribal Organizations to truly transform child welfare. OCS has also partnered with Tribes and the Child Welfare Academy to identify curriculums to train child welfare staff on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

CY 2020 Substantiation Rate

Age Range	Child Race	% Of AK Ages 0-17	% Of Total Children Ages 0 to 17 With a Substantiation	% Of Age Group Maltreated
Ages 0-5	Native	6.5%	26.6%	6.9%
Ages 0-5	Non-Native	26.1%	13.1%	0.8%
Ages 6-10	Native	6.1%	19.1%	5.3%
Ages 6-10	Non-Native	22.8%	8.8%	0.7%
Ages 11-15	Native	5.5%	15.7%	4.9%
Ages 11-15	Non-Native	22.6%	9.7%	0.7%
Ages 16-17	Native	2.0%	4.4%	3.7%
Ages 16-17	Non-Native	8.4%	2.5%	0.5%

Sources: ORCA RR0002, Run dates: 1/1/20-12/31/20 and from <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/>

EMERGENCY FUNDING FOR THE MARYLEE ALLEN PROMOTING SAFE AND STABLE FAMILIES (PSSF) FUNDING (DIVISION X – SEE: ACYF-CB-PI-21-04)

For FFY20 and FFY21 Alaska was awarded \$146,420.00 to support foster youth and families through the pandemic. OCS is utilizing this award to support caseworker visits, in the home, to increase ongoing safety assessment at every contact.

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR FUNDING (TITLE IV-B, SUBPART 2)

OCS was awarded Kinship Navigator funding for 2018-2020. OCS has partnered with the Division of Senior and Disability Services (DSDS) to maximize existing funding available to support relative caregivers in caring for children. DSDS awards a grant for the National Family Caregiver Support (NFCS) program to the Volunteers of America (VOA) organization. The purpose of the NFCS grant is to provide information to caregivers about available services, assistance to caregivers in gaining access to services and individual counseling, organization of support groups, and caregiver training. The target population of VOA's grant is grandparents and individuals 55 and older who are related to the child(ren) in their care. This SDS grant is amended with Kinship Navigator funding to expand services for all kin who are caring for children, regardless of age. While many services are occurring in the city of Anchorage, Volunteers of America has used the kinship navigator funding to expand kinship navigation services to underserved parts of the state, particularly in rural areas. VOA's *Support for Alaskans Raising Their Kin* [website](#).

Caregivers can enroll in a network that provides statewide support for Alaskans raising their kin. The program provides ongoing support groups, informational campaigns, case management, financial assistance, a lending library, a statewide newsletter, and a toll-free hotline for counseling and referrals. VOA also promotes the use of Help Me Grow and Alaska's 2-1-1, as resources for finding help in the local community. They also provide a number for currently enrolled VOA youth or families and a separate number for families who may need to access services and supports.

Highlights from the FY20 Kinship Program:

- In August of 2020, the Kinship program partnered with local businesses and provided school supplies to 35 children of enrolled kinship caregivers.
- During the 2020 Holiday season, the Kinship program was able to provide presents for 60 children in kinship care.
- In November, the Kinship Program created a new position called the Kinship Network Facilitator. This position has focused on enhancing caregiver health and wellness statewide during the pandemic. They have provided COVID-19 related educational opportunities, PPE for caregivers, nutrition support and efforts to reduce isolation.
- The program has begun implementing a kinship book club and Bingo night in recent months to combat the reported caregiver isolation experienced by kinship families.
- In November, the Kinship Program opened a pantry for relative caregivers. The pantry provides food, cleaning supplies, personal hygiene items, children's clothes, winter gear and PPE.

The largest challenge seen in the past year was due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Kinship Program continued to provide all services offered. Many activities were switched to being virtual. Staff adapted services to fit the needs of vulnerable clients by increasing home deliveries and grocery shopping for families who are considered high risk for COVID-19. Additionally, staff maintained a monthly newsletter with various topics relating to relevant issues facing relatives raising relative children in Alaska. Plans to continue this partnership with the DSDS grantee for the next state fiscal year.

The Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF) provides resources for families interested in caring for children who are in foster care, as well as adoptive and guardianship families. Their [website](#) provides a [resource listing](#) for relatives. ACRF and VOA have a formalized Memorandum of Agreement to partner together for the provision of family support services for kin raising children.

Additionally, Alaska OCS has developed a [guide](#) for kin who are interested in becoming guardians to children placed with them in foster care

MONTHLY CASEWORKER VISIT FORMULA GRANTS AND STANDARDS FOR CASEWORKER VISITS

Alaska received \$37,213.00 in title IV-B, subpart 2 funding for FFY 2019. This money was used to offset the cost of travel required to make monthly case worker visits. States are required to report data on monthly case worker visits with children in foster care by December 15 of each year. OCS submitted the following data on November 9, 2020:

- **STANDARD #1:** The total number of visits made by caseworkers on a monthly basis to children in foster care during a fiscal year must not be less than **95%** of the total number of such visits that would occur if each child were visited once every month while in care.

FFY 2020 OCS DATA: the total number of visits made by OCS caseworkers on a monthly basis to children in foster care was **71%**; this is a slight increase from FFY 2019.

- **STANDARD #2:** At least **50%** of the total number of monthly visits made by caseworkers to children in foster care during a fiscal year must occur in the child's residence.

FFY 2020 OCS DATA: **75%** of the monthly visits by OCS caseworkers to children in foster care occurred in the child's residence, which is an increase from FFY 2019.

FFY 2020 Data

Region	Item 1: Total Children	Item 2 Data: Total Monthly Visits	Item 3 Data: Total Months in Care	Item 4 Data: Total Visits in Child's Residence	Measures: % of visits made on a monthly basis by caseworkers to children in foster car	Measures: % of visits that occurred in the residence of the child
Anchorage	1,586	9,805	13,313	7,495	73%	76%
Northern	783	4,549	6,963	2,971	65%	65%
Southcentral	1,024	6,857	8,757	5,482	78%	79%
Southeast	272	1,923	2,326	1,587	82%	82%
Western	269	992	2,439	593	40%	59%
Statewide	3,936	24,130	33,802	18,131	71%	75%

*** Source: RR00124 Run dates: 10/1/2019-9/30/2020

OCS received notice from the Children's Bureau in April of 2021 that based on Alaska's failure to meet the FFY 2020 monthly caseworker visit performance standard, the FFP rate for the Title IV-B, subpart 2, Child Welfare Services program funding for FFY 2021 is now reduced by 5 percent. Alaska's new FFP rate for Title IV-B Subpart 2 in FFY 2021 is 70%.

Engaging children and youth during caseworker visits support an accurate assessment of safety, permanency, and well-being. OCS continues to focus on the essential services of caseworker visits during monthly leadership meetings. Regions share ideas and challenges to completing and documenting caseworker visits in efforts to improve outcomes for children.

Staff shortages and turnover continue to impact the ability of the agency to meet the statutory performance standards. OCS leadership is dedicated to the priority of identifying and implementing strategies for improved staff retention. The Child Welfare academy developed and implemented a training for OCS staff on how to engage with children and parents virtually. Specifically, during the on-set of COVID, the mentor unit provided training specific to virtual engagement. OCS began a cell phone program through the Service Array unit where parents and resource families could access smart phones for virtual case engagement.

ADDITIONAL SERVICES INFORMATION

Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payments (section 473A of the Act)

Alaska is using the ALGI payments to fund, in part, a statewide grant that promotes the achievement of timely permanency through the provision of adoption and guardianship home studies. These are provided for families adopting or becoming guardians to children in foster care who cannot be reunified with their family of origin.

The state has not encountered any challenges with timely expenditure of the funds. The amount of incentive funding to Alaska has been decreasing from year to year. The ALGI funds will continue to be used to fund a statewide grant for the provision of adoption and guardianship home studies.

Adoption Savings (section 473(a)(8) of the Act) Adoption Savings:

Alaska calculates its Adoption Savings using an ‘actual’ calculation method. For FFY 2020, Alaska had a savings of \$2,373,365.

How Adoption Savings Were Spent:

Adoption Savings were spent on activities such as brief case management, crisis intervention, services, and supports for post-adoption/guardianship families. Savings were also used for resource family training, mental health services not covered by Medicaid, one-time expenditures to maintain placement, and family support services. Alaska does not have any unused savings from the previous year. All savings have been spent within the year accrued.

How Adoption Savings Will be Spent:

There are no anticipated changes in how OCS utilizes the Adoption Savings in the coming year. Currently, Alaska is able to access and spend the funds without difficulties.

Family First Prevention Services Act Transition Grants

Alaska has utilized Family First Transition Grants to fund the Juneau pilot program for Plans of Safe Care, now named Hello BABY. The program is a combination of micro and macro work related to responding to the hospital and developing a plan of safe care with families who were born with prenatal substance exposure. The program will also be working with other community providers in a collaborative effort of preventing children from being placed in out-of-home care. The operational cost of this program is \$839,349.00.

John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (The Chafee Program) (Section 477 of the Act)

OCS administers the Chafee Program through its Services Array Unit. A program coordinator is assigned to manage seven statewide staff who provide Chafee services directly to youth. The IL Program Coordinator manages grants and contracts awarded to providers of Chafee Services, as well as coordinates and collaborates with community partners who deliver services to IL-eligible youth. These services focus on mentorship, youth retreats, and housing support. Each OCS region has a Regional Independent Living Specialist (RILS) designated to work with youth, with an

additional RILS in both Anchorage and Southcentral, Alaska’s two most populous regions. Although the larger regions have more community resources available for foster youth and alumni, the IL Program makes every effort to provide equitable distribution of services and funding statewide. As such, in this past year, the IL program has redistributed the RILS position from the Western Region to the Northern Region. The caseload for Northern’s RILS has been growing without plateau and is more comparable to the Southcentral region with the similar urban and rural split of the service delivery area. This redistribution has proven to be effective in providing increased IL services to more youth in the Northern Region. The IL program attends to the needs of youth and staff in the Western region as youth from that region are placed all over the state and have much higher needs requiring enhance casework with specific attention to achieving adult guardianships and conservatorships. The RILS work directly with individual youth to assess needs and to assist the youth with their individualized goals.

Region	# of staff	# of IL Eligible Youth	# of NYTD services delivered
Northern	2	190	239
Anchorage	2	365	1450
South Central	2	213	461
Southeast	1	124	208

The Independent Living (IL) Program supports the transition into adulthood for eligible youth, which is defined as youth ages 16-21 in out-of-home care or youth who were in out-of-home care on or after their 16th birthday and are no longer in foster care. This includes youth who are or have been in Tribal foster care. The IL program serves foster youth ages 14 and 15 in a limited fashion, focusing on credit reports and transition planning. In this past year, and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the governor suspended the age requirement in AS.47.05.065(c)(1)(B) for foster care placement. This allows youth who are aging out of foster care the option to remain in foster care and for foster families to continue to receive financial support to provide for the youth. This extension was made available to three youth who were turning 21 during FY20, two of whom elected to remain in custody.

The IL Program offers regularly scheduled life skills activities, classes, and training opportunities for youth and alumni. In this past year, all Life Skills classes have been delivered biweekly and virtually over video conferencing in partnership with Facing Foster Care in Alaska (FFCA), FFCA’s youth board, the Office of Youth Empowerment, and the Education and Training Voucher Program. Providing classes virtually has allowed for statewide community partners to engage as guest speakers delivering NYTD skill development opportunities. With enhanced statewide virtual program delivery, OCS has also seen a marked increase in youth engagement, average of 30 youth per Life Skills class and up to 60 per youth virtual retreats.

Modification of the IL program delivery model to engage youth in services online, virtually, and at social distances has proven successful during this past year. Partnerships between the IL program and community partners have evolved from regional to statewide, thereby increasing connections with youth and statewide resources. Further, the IL program has created a library of life skill development/NYTD service videos for youth to access on their own time, essentially a virtual correspondence skill-building opportunity.

When pandemic emergencies and shutdown orders were declared, the IL program responded to help ensure the safety and well-being of youth. Response to the COVID-19 crisis included immediate relocation of college and residential school students, contacting eligible IL youth, and verifying internet and telephone connection capabilities, and issuing devices to ensure continued connections to school, work and families. In the last few months of FY20, and in direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Governor of Alaska amended AS.47.05.065(c)(1)(B) to suspend the age

requirement for foster care placement to allow youth turning 21, a choice of remaining in foster care through June 30, 2020.

The IL program utilizes the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) to survey youth in efforts to assess their education levels, employment, housing, completing high school, attending advanced classes, if they've had children and whether they've been incarcerated or engaged in substance abuse treatment. The information gathered is used to guide programmatic activities, providing guidance to service delivery, and clearly identifying areas needing programmatic focus. In this past year, the IL program partnered with the University of Alaska Anchorage to support field interns. The IL program provided field supervision for a Bachelor of Human Services intern who completed surveys timely, successfully contacting youth participants. The UAA intern was essential to completion of the surveys and data entry which is essential to maintain compliance with federal reporting.

The IL program makes diligent efforts to develop strong community partnerships, creating a network of services to support eligible IL youth. In the past year these connections were greatly enhanced. Community partners regularly presented at IL Life Skills classes, including: Planned Parenthood, Office of Youth Empowerment, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Suicide Prevention services, and Alaska Housing Finance Corporation. Additionally, the IL program has weekly meeting with partner agencies such as Covenant House, Volunteers of America, National 4-H and 4-H Bethel, and Kawerak Native Tribe. Rich partnerships also continue with Facing Foster Care in Alaska (FFCA), Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, the Child Welfare Academy, Covenant House, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Nine Star Education and Employment Services, Division of Healthcare Services, Division of Senior and Disability Services, Division of Public Assistance, and Tribal Partners across the state. This network of partnerships enhances service delivery for youth and provides opportunities to learn about independently accessing services after exit from custody.

The Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act has created a need for enhanced and expedited program planning efforts. OCS made immediate efforts to create internal funding structures and distribution plans utilizing contracts, grants, and methods that are currently in place, alleviating administrative delays in distribution to the extent possible. Alaska will be issuing cash grants directly to youth that are distributed from OCS and Facing Foster Care in Alaska's contract utilizing the agencies Youth Board. Additionally, Alaska plans for the Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act include developing a new spending and eligibility matrix, expanding assistance to youth ages 14-27, conducting outreach to youth notifying them of available resources, developing Youth Thrive trainings, contracting youth to develop IL learning modules, and partnering with tribal programs.

FFCA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the foster care system, developing leadership skills among current and former foster youth ages 15-24, and creating a network of peer support for foster youth throughout the state. FFCA's Youth Leadership Board meets quarterly with OCS leadership to discuss agency agendas, legislation, policy development and areas needing improvement and to develop retreat agendas and supportive planning. In the past year, FFCA and the Youth Board have organized and led three retreats focusing on skills necessary to become a healthy adult. During those retreats, 74 participating youth learned everything from healthy relationships to banking and developed future planning skills. This past fall, FFCA held a vocational and training focused retreat that introduced 27 youth to employment and training institutions, military recruiters, and Job Corps. Planning is underway to creatively provide the same level of skill and relationship-building opportunities while remaining safe and healthy during this time of social distancing.

Retreat dates	# of attendees	Services delivered
December 2020	53	The Virtual Retreat was planned and facilitated by the FFCA Youth Leadership Board and staff. Topics included Healthy and Safety, Nutrition and Budgeting, Social Connections, and Foster Youth Rights. Participants were also invited to participate in social time and games. Throughout the retreat, youth were able to participate in hands-on learning of life skills utilizing a variety of materials mailed ahead of time in their conference bags. The two-day agenda is outlined below.
March 2021	41	The Youth Board focused on coping skills through the COVID-19 Pandemic and how to manage anxiety and isolation.
May 2021	35	Career Conference focused on exposing attendees to various career and vocational training options. Workshops included planning for the future, career and job readiness, military, Education and Training Voucher, and careers in the trades.

OCS continues to partner with grantee, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Alaska (BBBS) to provide enhanced mentorship opportunities in Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley. The BBBS Sync staff structure changed in the last fiscal year. In the past fiscal year, 29 youth were referred to the mentoring program and 12 have been matched with an adult mentor, with three matches pending for the month of May 2021. During the months of June - September 2020, BBBS contracted with Les Gara for Sync volunteer recruitment. Since June 2020, BBBS has successfully helped 32 volunteers complete the enrollment process and all 32 volunteers are now ready to be matched or are currently in matches. Since COVID-19, BBBS now completes all interviews with youth and volunteers virtually through video conference. Matches currently have the option to have their first meeting be conducted in-person with staff present, indoors or outdoors. If participants have not been vaccinated the meeting occurs outside, all parties are required to wear masks and maintain distance. If all parties have been vaccinated, they are not required to wear masks and are encouraged to maintain distance. Matches have been encouraged to meet and connect virtually while in-person meetings are also an option. If matches choose to meet in-person on a regular basis, BBBS requires all participants to complete a COVID-19 waiver to ensure safety regulations are followed from the most current state mandate.

In 2012, OCS and the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) executed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in which AHFC agreed to provide rental assistance to youth aging out of foster care referred by the OCS creating the Making A Home Program. Through this Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) program the IL program has reliably filled all 15 vouchers every year, and supported youth in their own homes.

In 2019, AHFC received an award of 21 Foster Youth to Independence Initiative (FYI) vouchers, which targets a similar population as the Making A Home program. This has deepened the partnership between AHFC and OCS. Availability of the FYI vouchers is currently centralized to the urban areas of Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Mat-Su, and Soldotna. OCS continues to secure commitments from supportive services throughout Alaska, which will lead to FYI vouchers becoming available in additional communities. As with the Making a Home Program, OCS verifies household eligibility and maintains the current referral and operational processes observed by the program. This program provides youth-specific vouchers, in which names of eligible youth are included in the application to HUD, who then issues vouchers via AHFC. This program was revised by HUD in September 2020, and the new revision has eased the referral process. Currently, 25 vouchers are available to youth. As of May 15, 2021 OCS has referred

56 eligible youth to the FYI housing program, of which eleven (11) initially secured leases and five are shopping for apartments. AHFC currently has ten (10) referrals in process.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHERS (ETV) PROGRAM (SECTION 477(I) OF THE ACT)

The IL program continues to observe a close business agreement with the University of Alaska’s, Child Welfare Academy (CWA), to administer ETV programming to former foster youth up to age 23. Notably, over the past five years, Alaska has been able to expend all funds to ETV applicants to date. Youth engaged in the ETV program receive more direct, on-campus support and have a caring adult to assist with the struggles of attending college and securing resources for their education.

Since the submission of the 2020-2024 CFSP, the ETV program has had to make significant changes to program delivery. The end of the 2020 academic year aligned with pandemic-related emergency mandates and shutdown orders. This emergency was first felt by our college and residential school students as campuses were closed, and students received 48-hour notice to vacate their educational and campus-based homes. Working closely together, ETV and the IL program staff were able to rehouse youth within 24 hours and ensure each youth had the ability to connect with their teachers and classes remotely.

The ETV program continues to provide an annual Education Conference for eligible current and former foster youth that are interested in exploring post-secondary education opportunities. The IL and ETV program are working to restructure this event quickly to connect youth to distance and remote learning available to them for the academic year 21-22.

In the past year, CWA and the OCS IL Program Coordinator have developed a new partnership with Alaska Pacific University to provide ten Promise Tuition Grants. If youth meet qualifications, funds are sent to the qualified post-secondary education and training center to cover the cost of tuition, fees, books, room, and board.

To ensure the total amount of educational assistance does not exceed to total cost of attendance, University of Alaska campuses monitor student enrollment, the number of credits involved and estimates the cost of attendance. The CWA Youth Education Coordinator can view financial aid awards, including any grants, loans, and scholarships beyond ETV. The CWA Youth Education Coordinator determines their award up to the \$5000 limit and provides that information to the school’s Financial Aid Department. Financial aid has further layers of review and will hold ETV assistance until all other aid has been applied to a student’s account. If a student has been over awarded or doesn't show a financial need, they will return the funds. For students at non-UA Campuses, the CWA Youth Education Coordinator reviews the student’s overall costs as determined by that school, completes a college funding worksheet, and determines the student’s level of financial need. The CWA Youth Education Coordinator provides this information to the OCS RILS, who then submit the request to the IL Coordinator to have a check sent directly to the school along with an award letter from the CWA Youth Education Coordinator outlining eligibility. Financial Aid provides a further layer of review. If a student withdraws or fails, has too much aid, or drops some credits, financial aid notifies the CWA Youth Education Coordinator, and funds are returned.

Post-Secondary Education and Vocational Participation

Academic Year	# Youth attending Post- Secondary (Under Age 23)	Number of Youth Who Received ETV Funds	Number of Youth Who Received Presidential Tuition Waiver	Number of Youth who Received an OCS Tuition Scholarship	College Graduates
2017-2018	60	60 (36 new)	28 (14 new)	27	6

Academic Year	# Youth attending Post- Secondary (Under Age 23)	Number of Youth Who Received ETV Funds	Number of Youth Who Received Presidential Tuition Waiver	Number of Youth who Received an OCS Tuition Scholarship	College Graduates
2018-2019	53	53 (25 new)	28 (15 new)	13	10
2019-2020	52	52 (26 new)	30 (15 new)	22	6
2020-2021	50	50 (16 new)	32	10	6

CHAFEE TRAINING

The RILS continue to provide training to OCS staff in their region and recruit youth and alumni to participate in the training events. New agency staff orientation includes training on the needs of IL youth and the resources available to youth within their region as well as statewide. The IL Program works with the Resource Family Training grantee to further incorporate independent living components into their training curriculum. The RILS partner with FFCA to recruit youth panels to assist in training foster parents in their regions. The IL Program offers training to legal partners, CASA volunteers, Guardians ad Litem, Tribes, community mental health programs, as well as hold trainings as requested by the community and regional offices. In the past reporting period, the IL staff have provided training to the regional Tribal/State group in all five regions. In this past year, the IL program has conducted several trainings for OCS staff and partners related to the rigorous process required to support youth attaining Adult Guardianships. In July 2020 IL staff attended a virtual Human Trafficking Conference presented by the UAA Human Services, Justice and Social Work program that provided a new perspective to how we understand human trafficking. The training was different from any previously available in that it focused on the history of trafficking humans through to today, that slavery and indentured servitude were some of the first forms of trafficking. This information is pivotal and specifically to the experience of vulnerable older foster youth in Alaska who are most likely to be preyed upon and trafficked. Continuing this learning the IL staff attended the Child Sex Trafficking training in May 2021, presented by the National Criminal Justice Training Center.

In the time of COVID-19 maintaining connections has been paramount to IL service delivery and includes connection with partner agencies and programs. The IL program has hosted several partner agencies to the weekly program meetings which have included presentations from: Kawerak, Volunteers of America, the Alaska Native Student Center, the Alaska Native Cultural Center and Museum, the Unguwat Resilience and Connection program, Bethel 4-H, and Alaska Finance Housing Corporation

CONSULTATION WITH TRIBES (SECTION 477(B)(3)(G) OF THE ACT)

In effort to consult, collaborate and coordinate with all federally recognized Tribes within Alaska, and ensure Chafee and ETV benefits, program development and service delivery are available to children in Tribal custody, quarterly teleconference meetings are facilitated by the IL Program Coordinator. Consistency has built stronger connections and increased attendance between the IL program and Alaska's Tribes. Information about the Chafee program and quarterly teleconferences is provided to all 229 federally recognized Tribes in Alaska, including all required forms to access Chafee services, resources, and funding. Tribes that participate have reported a stronger connection with the RILS and increased understanding of the services provided and how to access them. The RILS across the state have developed deeper connections to support youth in Tribal custody, partnering to provide a wealth of expertise for youth transitioning from foster care to adulthood.

IL and ETV program eligibility for Tribal youth is determined identically to youth in state's custody which includes verification of a court order with the date of custody of the youth from both state caseworkers and Tribal caseworkers. Specifically, in this past year, partnering with Sitka Tribe of Alaska and our Federal Region X partners, it

was determined that youth who were Wards of the Tribal Court and entered Tribal Guardianship as eligible for Chafee services and resources. This determination was made after extensive communication between the state, Tribe, and federal agencies, working closely to determine program eligibility while maintaining sovereignty and within federal definitions. These communications have led to a deeper partnership with Sitka Tribe representatives with Alaska IL Program Coordinator providing technical assistance to Sitka Tribe's developing IV- E plan. In the Southeast region the IL program has partnered with Tlingit and Haida Youth Healing to Wellness Court. The Youth Healing to Wellness Court provides referrals to the Tribal navigator program that supports youth and families engaged in child protection services and educational support and includes the OCS IL program and specialists as the referral and supportive agents. An addition to the IL activities, this past year has included the developing partnership with Kawerak. Kawerak is launching an ePortfolio six-month project for IL eligible youth from the Bering Strait Region, utilizing the Healing the Canoe curriculum to support youth learning about themselves, their Tribal heritage and developing skills to plan for their futures. The RILS have partnered to support youth referrals and financial support made possible through the Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act. The IL program and Kawerak have provided youth with equipment and services to support online access and program participation for those in remote and rural locations.

6. Consultation and Coordination Between States and Tribes

Gathering Input From Tribes

OCS continues to engage in several collaborative opportunities with Tribes, including the Tribal State Collaboration Group, Tribal State Advisory Team, Regional Tribal State teams, Tribal Title IV-E, and the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact. Collaboration with Tribes also continues to occur regarding the state plans whether to implement Title IV-E Prevention Services under FFPSA. Further ongoing input will continue to be gathered from Tribes regarding the implementation of prevention services delivered by the Tribes to high-risk families that come to the attention of the state.

During the January 2021 Statewide TSCG Convening, information was shared with Tribes regarding bifurcation of OCS into two separate divisions, elevation of the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact to the Commissioner's office, and reorganization of OCS Regions from a five-region structure to a four-region structure. At the end of the TSCG meeting, it was announced that the Commissioner's Office will be requesting formal consultation with Tribes regarding these topics. Prior to Tribal Consultation occurring, it was recommended that the State attend Alaska Native Governance and Protocols training which took place on May 17-18, 2021. Another training with Tribal-State leaders will be scheduled with First Alaskans Institute to set a unified framework for Tribal Consultation sometime in the fall.

On June 2, 2021, the final report for the OCS 2020 Tribal Survey was published. This survey was sent to all Alaska's Tribes with 72 responses. This 16% lower response rate than the 2019 Tribal Survey can largely be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, however there were still key takeaways from this effort to gather input from Tribes. Many Tribes (84%) are satisfied with OCS efforts to involve Tribes in relative searches, notifying them of Protective Services Reports, and placing siblings together. Many respondents expressed that cultural continuity and collaborative efforts to involve the Tribes in service delivery and ongoing communication needs further attention (49%).

ONGOING COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION WITH TRIBES

On July 1, 2020, OCS officially launched the new Mission, Vision, Guiding Principles, and Core Values. The update to the mission statement, guiding principles, and establishment of core values references the agency's ongoing commitment to partnering with Tribes. One of the Guiding Principles states "Tribes and OCS have a respectful government-to-government relationship." With 66% of children in state custody being Alaska Native or American

Indian, it is critical for OCS staff to understand the political status of Alaska Native and American Indian Tribal members that ICWA is based on.

The OCS Director meets every other month with the Tribal Caucus Co-Chairs, representing all five regions of the state. This meeting is focused on providing mutual program updates, problem-solving Tribal-State initiatives, or barriers to ICWA implementation. The Tribal State Advisory Team comprised of the Tribal-State Co-Chairs and members of the OCS leadership team, meet every other month to discuss similar topics and to identify action steps. One of the items TSAT is currently working on is deciding which Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion curriculum to implement upon reviewing the proposal submitted by the Tribal-State workgroup that was formed to address this critical need.

In the ongoing response to stop the spread of COVID-19 many Tribal communities continued to limit travel to and from their community to protect the health of local citizens. On November 16, 2020, OCS re-issued Program Instruction 20-04 regarding coordinating with Tribal communities prior to conducting an initial assessment. When OCS receives a Protective Services Report involving a child residing in a Tribal community, OCS notifies the Tribe of the report and requests their support to enter the community. Throughout the past year, there have been many examples of increased collaboration and strengthened partnership through the procedures outlined in this PI, and the hope is that these protocols will continue to be followed post-pandemic.

In hopes of fulfilling OCS vacancies efficiently, the Tribal Participation on OCS Hiring Panels workgroup reassembled to implement a Centralized Hiring process for PSS I's and II's. This group includes Tribal partners from various regions throughout the state with a goal of identifying a Tribal representative to serve on each hiring panel. This workgroup is also developing a list of interview questions that speak to a candidate's values, knowledge of local cultures, and willingness to partner with Tribes to ensure OCS is hiring staff who are committed to embracing the spirit and values of ICWA.

A Tribal-State workgroup was also established to further implement the process of identifying and compensating Cultural Support Service Providers. All parents with an active in-home or out-of-home OCS case plan are eligible to engage in services with a Cultural Support Services Provider that has been identified in collaboration between the Tribe, parent, and OCS. Through utilization of the *Cultural Resources for Alaska Families Traditional Health and Wellness Guide*, we hope that parents will be offered the opportunity to engage in culturally relevant services and that this will be reflected on their case plans. On May 19, 2021, OCS staff were invited to attend training regarding Cultural Support Service Providers. For those who were unable to attend, a micro-learning video is available to view on the UAA Child Welfare Academy webpage.

Tribal representatives from each region continue to participate on the Regional General Variance Committee for OCS foster care licensing. Tribal partners also serve on the OCS policy development workgroup where their feedback and suggestions are incorporated into policy changes.

Following the February 2020 Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact negotiations, Co-Signers and OCS worked in collaboration to enhance infrastructures and supports for a referral and service delivery process for the Family Contact, Licensing Assist, and Safety Evaluations of Relative Homes Scopes of Work. In addition, Co-Signers and OCS continue to develop a data system to assess and achieve negotiated benchmarks and service delivery outcomes. Safety Evaluation of Relative Homes training was held on July 7, 2020 for Co-Signers. On July 8-9, 2020, Co-Signers received all day trainings for Licensing Assist. On July 23, 2020, Co-Signers participated in a Family Contact training. All trainings and training materials were developed collaboratively by the State and Tribes with support from UAA Child Welfare Academy. The trainings were recorded and provided to Co-Signers by both State and Tribal subject matter experts.

During FY 2021 the Compact Services Workgroup resumed, and the following subgroups were developed to support implementation and service delivery: Implementation Team, Compact Data Subgroup, and a Training Subgroup. Examples of deliverables developed by these workgroups include Business Process Mapping, Co-Signer Readiness Check sheet, a summary report for each Scope of Work, a detailed report by child or case that includes data specific to each Scope of Work. The first convening of the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact Data Workgroup was December 1, 2020, the group met twice a week for two months and went to weekly meetings. The Compact Data Workgroup developed draft data reports to inform benchmarks, implementation, and continuous quality improvement of each Scope of Work. During the May 2021 negotiations, Tribal and State Caucuses consented to the Compact Data Workgroup working with Casey Families Data support team to help establish more meaningful benchmarks to bring to the August negotiation for FY 23. Prior to implementation of all Scopes of Work, data systems were not developed to allow for meaningful and immediate tracking, Co-Signers and OCS spend a good party of FY 21 developing such a system. Co-Signers will be able to use and access these reports in ORCA Report Manager once securities and a Compact Confidentiality Agreement is finalized.

For FY 21, both the State and Tribes welcomed the support of Casey Family Programs who funded two consultants to help move implementation forward and assist in developing tools to help implement a service delivery process for each Scope of Work. While providing their support and technical assistance, the Casey Family Program consultants also assessed successes and challenges of the Compact. They provided a Tribal Child Welfare Compact Technical Assistance Findings and Recommendations Report in February 2021.

During the negotiations held May 12th and 13th, 2021 for FY22, Co-Signers and the State added one new Scope of Work, Prevention. For the FY 23 negotiations scheduled for August 23rd – 25th, 2021, the State is proposing the development of a plan for expanding Tribal Title IV-E Agreements, and to discuss exploring other funding mechanisms such as encounter rates.

UPDATE ON COLLABORATIVE WORK EFFORTS WITH TRIBES WHO PROVIDE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

OCS continues to operate Tribal Title IV-E Pass-Through Program, which involves 10 Tribes/Tribal Organizations who represent nearly half of the federally recognized Tribes in Alaska. Tribal Title IV-E partners have utilized reimbursements on allowable expenses to leverage limited financial resources, further enhancing their child welfare programs. Each of the 10 Tribes/Tribal Organizations entered a new agreement with the State, which incorporated language agreed upon through the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact negotiations. OCS has had continued negotiations with Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (Tlingit & Haida) to amend their existing Title IV-E Maintenance Agreement to allow additional services, support, and funding which supports expansion of their infrastructure and the capacity to increase their caseload.

In FY2021, the state launched a Tribal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Grant. Eight Tribes/Tribal Organizations partnered with the state to develop a program that would follow federal FFPSA requirements. Although the state does not have an approved FFPSA plan, this program is assisting in building the necessary infrastructure to operate a FFPSA prevention program. The Tribes are providing prevention services to candidates for care such as substance-exposed newborns and their parents; parents of children under the age of five; and parents or caregivers who were in foster care as a child in effort to prevent out-of-home placement.

In FY2021 Co-Signers of the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact and the State worked on implementing 5 Scopes of Work: Initial Diligent Relative Search, Ongoing Placement Search, Family Contact, Licensing Assist, and Safety Evaluation of Relative Homes. Co-Signers focused on providing the services for the Scopes of Work they could implement first and would phase in the others as their capacity, infrastructures and supports were enhanced for other Scopes. Between 07/01/20 - 05/05/21 there were 152 unduplicated referrals for Initial Diligent and Ongoing Placement Searches accepted and assigned to Co-Signers. For Family Contact 15 referrals were accepted and assigned

to 7 Co-Signers between 11/17/20-05/05/21. For Licensing Assist there were 27 Licensing referrals that were accepted and assigned to 3 Co-Signers between 01/15/21-05/05/21. For Safety Evaluations, 7 cases have been referred and assigned to 3 Co-Signers between 12/22/20-05/05/21.

MONITORING COMPLIANCE WITH ICWA

On April 15, 2021, implementation to support new AFCARS (Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System) requirements began. The April release included many changes including that workers must document whether OCS made inquiries as to whether a child is an Indian child as defined by ICWA. Text and radio buttons have been added to the ICWA tab of the Person Management page for this information. Additionally, three dates were added to the ICWA tab of the Person Management page. A date is required if the answer is "yes" to the associated question concerning the individual's membership in a tribe or the individual's eligibility for membership through a parent.

In June 2021, the 2020 Tribal State Data Indicators were published that shows several positive trends. In

2014, 42% of Alaska Native/American Indian children were placed with extended family. Now, 51% of AN/AI children were with extended family in 2020. There has also been a decrease in AN/AI children placed in out-of-preference placements from 35% in 2014 to 33% in 2020. The number of reunifications has increased from 48% in 2014 to 53% in 2020 and the number of adoptions or guardianships to ICWA preference placements have also increased from 92 in 2014 to 137 in 2020. The number of Tribal children with an intervening Tribe has also increased from 46% in 2016 to 60% in 2020.

Through Regional ICWA Specialists conducting out-of-preference placement meetings and Compact Co-Signers conducting relative searches, a lot of work continues on identifying and placing children in ICWA preference placements. This diligence has led to an increase in Alaska Native/American Indian children being placed in first preference placement with extended family. As of May 24, 2021, 54% of all AN/AI children in out-of-home placement were placed in first preference placement with extended family. Another 14% were placed in ICWA preference 2, 3, and 4 placements.

It is the goal for Tribes and OCS to have a respectful government-to-government relationship and for OCS staff to understand the importance of ICWA in protecting the best interests of Indian children. In July 2015, a process was developed to address contested ICWA issues to ensure that OCS leadership was made aware of any disagreement with Tribal governments. While this "Contested ICWA Matter Memo Process" has been a way to monitor compliance with ICWA, a new process has been drafted through meetings with each OCS Region in hopes of identifying and resolving these matters sooner, thus further shifting from a compliance-driven approach to a values-driven approach.

Through collaboration between OCS Regional ICWA Specialists and Tribal partners, ICWA II training has been being virtually delivered since May 2020 and continues to be offered every other month to both OCS staff and Tribal Child Welfare staff. Since February 2021, the ICWA Specialist team has also been providing monthly training opportunities to staff on various ICWA topics, which has been a big success.

DISCUSSIONS WITH TRIBAL PARTNERS SPECIFIC TO CFCIP

The OCS Independent Living Program Coordinator facilitates quarterly teleconferences to provide Tribes with information about Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. The goal of these teleconferences is to consult, collaborate and coordinate with all federally recognized Tribes within Alaska, and ensure Chafee and ETV benefits, program development, and service delivery are available to children in Tribal custody. Consistency has built stronger connections and increased attendance between the IL program and Alaska's Tribes. Information about the Chafee program and quarterly teleconferences is provided to all 229 federally recognized Tribes in Alaska, including all

required forms to access Chafee services, resources, and funding. The IL program will continue to host quarterly Tribal teleconferences to provide IL and Chafee technical assistance for Tribes and youth in Tribal Foster care. The Chafee eligibility requirements are the same for youth in state custody as for youth in Tribal custody. Youth in Tribal custody are eligible for all IL and ETV program services and resources.

IL and ETV program eligibility for Tribal youth is determined identically to youth in state's custody, verification of a court order with the date of custody of the youth from both state caseworkers and Tribal caseworkers alike. There have been no requests by Tribes to develop an agreement with OCS or to build a Tribal Chafee or ETV program. In the Southeast region the IL program has partnered with Tlingit and Haida Youth Healing to Wellness Court. The Youth Healing to Wellness Court provides referrals to the Tribal navigator program that supports youth and families engaged in child protection services. An addition to the IL activities, this past year has included developing a partnership with Kawerak, in the Northern region, who have staff in the Anchorage region. Kawerak is launching an ePortfolio six-month project for IL eligible youth from the Bering Strait Region, utilizing the Healing the Canoe curriculum to support youth learning about themselves, their tribal heritage, and developing skills to plan for their futures. The RILS have partnered to support youth referrals and financial support made possible through the Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act. The IL program and Kawerak have strategized providing youth with equipment and services to support online access and program participation for youth in remote and rural locations.

SHARING 2020 APSR WITH TRIBES

OCS will provide a copy of the submitted 2021 APSR to Gloria Gorman with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The report will be disseminated to Tribal partners through the Tribal State Collaboration Group Tribal Caucus listserve. Additionally, the submitted report will be posted on the public-facing State of Alaska OCS website.

Section B. CAPTA State Plan Requirements and Updates

1. DESCRIBE SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES, IF ANY, TO STATE LAW OR REGULATIONS, INCLUDING LAWS AND REGULATIONS RELATING TO THE PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

There have been no substantive changes in the state laws or regulations related to the prevention of child abuse and neglect that affect the state's eligibility for the CAPTA state grant. The requirements for mandated reporters changed in Alaska for allegations of sexual abuse. Effective September 1, 2020 State law (A.S.

47.17.020(a)) requires all mandated r-eporters, who make a report of suspected sex offenses to OCS, to additionally report the harm to the nearest law enforcement agency. This year HB 105 was enacted and signed into law. Section 55 of this Act Relating to the care of juveniles and to juvenile justice amends Alaska's Mandatory Reporter Statute (AS 47.17.020) to include the following new category of mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect: "juvenile probation officers, and staff of juvenile detention facilities and juvenile treatment facilities (as those terms are defined in AS 47.12.990)".

2. DESCRIBE ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FROM THE STATE'S PREVIOUSLY APPROVED CAPTA PLAN IN HOW THE STATE PROPOSES TO USE FUNDS TO SUPPORT THE 14 PROGRAM AREAS ENUMERATED IN SECTION 106(A) OF CAPTA

There have been no significant changes in the state's approved CAPTA plan related to how funds are used to support the program areas.

3. DESCRIBE HOW CAPTA STATE GRANT FUNDS WERE USED, ALONE OR IN COMBINATION WITH OTHER FEDERAL FUNDS IN SUPPORT OF THE STATE'S APPROVED CAPTA PLAN TO MEET THE PURPOSES OF THE PROGRAM SINCE THE STATE SUBMITTED ITS LAST UPDATE ON JUNE 30, 2019

CAPTA funds continued to support a variety of training and technical assistance efforts with OCS community partner agencies, grantees, and staff. Training offered during this reporting period included: Childfirst® Alaska Forensic Interviewing; maintenance and updating of web-based training on child abuse and neglect, including mandatory reporter training; and an outreach campaign to notify mandatory reporters of changes to the Alaska child abuse reporting statute. In addition, OCS grantees were provided individualized technical assistance as requested as well as program development guidance. Here is a list of specific projects and activities funded by CAPTA during this reporting period:

Childfirst® Alaska Coordination: The Child Welfare Academy (CWA) continued providing assistance with coordination of trainings statewide. This year the CWA worked with the Zero Abuse Project to develop a virtual platform and process for continuing to offer forensic interview training in Alaska during the COVID-19 epidemic. The transition was successful with only minor technical issues during the implementation. One 5-day Childfirst® Forensic Interviewer Training (virtual & available to applicants attending statewide) was provided from October 26-30, 2020 and another from April 5-9, 2021. In addition, a 3-day Understanding the Forensic Interview Training is scheduled for June 28-30, 2021. CWA is also assisting with planning for a one-day Strategic Planning meeting for the Alaska Childfirst® Leadership Team and Instructors to occur in August in Anchorage. CWA coordinated quarterly meetings of the Alaska Childfirst® Leadership Team, usually by teleconference, distributed minutes and created agendas. The Childfirst® Alaska website was also maintained and updated.

Training and Technical Assistance to OCS Grantees and Community Partners: Training and technical assistance are delivered through a business agreement with CWA. This project continues to support direct training and technical assistance for Alaska's CACs and community-based family support programs as well as other OCS partners and grantees. This year consultation and training planning was conducted with the developing CAC Program in Sitka (Sitka Tribe). Consultation and support were also provided to the Juneau Multidisciplinary Child Protection Team (SAFE CAC in Juneau); Alaska CARES CAC in Anchorage; the Kenai CAC (Haven House), the Fairbanks CAC (Resource Center for parents and Children); and to the Native Tribe of Barrow (CAC in development).

CAPTA funds were also utilized to provide technical assistance and coordination support (again utilizing staff at the UAA Child Welfare Academy) for updating of the Alaska Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Guidelines, a best practices resource document for Alaska's MDTs created by the Alaska Children's Justice Act Task Force in cooperation with the Alaska Office of Children's Services, the Alaska Department of Public Safety, the Alaska Children's Alliance, and numerous other agency, statewide and community partners. The work on this project will be ongoing in 2021-22.

CAPTA funds were used to maintain and update the Mandated Reporter training in 2021. This training is for the public but also serves as training for Alaska's mandatory reporters. Although the training was given a thorough review and update in 2020, additional updates are made from time to time as edits are identified or as new information needs to be added. This year among a few other minor changes, additional resources were linked to the training to provide educators and medical providers with information helpful for identifying child abuse and neglect when working with children online.

CAPTA funds were also utilized to create additional posters, refrigerator magnets, and business cards as part of a continuing statewide media campaign that advertises the availability of the online training, as well as the toll-free number and e-mail for Centralized OCS Intake.

4. PROVIDE AN UPDATE ON THE STATE'S CONTINUED EFFORTS TO SUPPORT AND ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF INFANTS BORN AND IDENTIFIED AS BEING AFFECTED BY SUBSTANCE ABUSE OR WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS RESULTING FROM PRENATAL DRUG EXPOSURE, OR A FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER

OCS co-hosted a Statewide Kick-Off Meeting for Alaska's POSC Initiative in May 2019. This meeting was well received and helped to form a strong cross-collaborative interest and commitment to pursue a comprehensive approach to serving substance-affected infants and their families in our state. Since that date, a statewide POSC steering committee and policy subcommittee have formed to begin the work of developing statewide screening, notification/reporting procedures, and tools needed to implement POSC.

Alaska utilized both CAPTA and FFPSA transition funding for direct services positions within community-based agencies in pilot sites of Wasilla and Juneau. Alaska posted a request for proposals in both areas and received a proposal from Juneau, but not Wasilla. Bartlett Hospital in Juneau will serve as the pilot site for Alaska's POSC. The pilot has been named Hello BABY (Building Alaska's Babies With You) and will be instrumental in implementing POSC for non-child-welfare-involved families across the state.

Bartlett has hired their Hello BABY coordinator and will soon begin working with families. The POSC Steering Committee and Stakeholder Group remain active. OCS is partnering with the Department of Public Health and Bartlett hospital to evaluate the effectiveness of Hello BABY.

The State of Alaska, Division of Public Health (DPH), Section of Women's, Children's and

Family Health (WCFH) launched the Alaska 4P's Plus project. This is a collaborative project between Alaska Division of Behavioral Health, Office of Children's Services (OCS), health care workers, and birthing centers, this program helps to address the needs of substance-exposed infants and their mothers, including requirements to make appropriate referrals to OCS and other essential services. The project's primary goal is to provide health care workers, especially those in perinatal care settings, with evidence-based tools, skills, and processes designed for early detection of infants at risk of or having been exposed to, substances, including alcohol, used by their mothers during pregnancy. The earliest identification of these infants optimizes opportunities for health care workers to plan and provide for immediate and ongoing medical care and interventions for both the infant and their affected family and/or caregivers. The state has committed to maintain funding for and support expansion of the 4Ps Plus[©] screening to include all delivering facilities and expand to prenatal care visits. Some tribal health organizations are assessing their current prenatal care processes for best approaches of integrating the APSP's 4Ps Plus[©] screening, brief intervention, and referral to care (SBIRT).

Other Alaska resources for addressing maternal opioid use and Neonatal Opioid Withdrawn Syndrome include:

- The All Alaska Pediatric Partnership (AAPP) has created Help Me Grow Alaska, a program that will provide active case management to link families to needed services, including addiction services.
- Alaska DHSS, Office of Substance Misuse and Addiction Prevention, provides technical assistance to opioid response community coalitions across the state and is coordinating the opioid response across departments in state government.
- MAT by obstetrics providers, in addition to community methadone and buprenorphine programs, expands the treatment options for mothers.
- Alaska DHSS, Infant Learning Program coordinates services for infants with disabilities.
- Alaska DHSS, Office of Children's Services (OCS), serves as Alaska's child welfare agency. OCS is the lead agency tasked with developing a system and policy to support the implementation of Plans of Safe

Care as required under CAPTA. Plans of Safe Care encompass family support, interventions that build the capacity for communities to support substance-affected babies and their families and includes comprehensive care for the baby, mother, family, and community.

- Alaska DHSS Division of Behavioral Health funds APSP and SBIRT efforts.
- The Alaska Perinatal Quality Collaborative was launched in January 2019 to promote high-quality maternal and newborn care across Alaska.
- Alaska DHSS Public Health Centers in 22 communities perform SBIRT on pregnant women.
- Alaska Regional Hospital 180 Program provides an Inpatient Behavioral Health Treatment Program for Substance Abuse with 1-year case management.
- Stone Soup Group provides support to families of children with disabilities.

5. NAME, ADDRESS, AND EMAIL FOR THE STATE CAPTA COORDINATOR (STATE LIAISON OFFICER)

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6. SUPPLEMENTAL CAPTA STATE GRANT FUNDS PROVIDED THROUGH THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

Alaska is currently participating in engagement activities with stakeholders and community partners to assess and evaluate further resource allocation needs for child abuse prevention and neglect through the Alaska Impact Alliance. In addition, OCS is currently evaluating pilot projects to determine if expansion of projects are a viable use of these additional funds.

Section C. Updates to Targeted Plans within the 2020-2024 CFSP

1. FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT DILIGENT RECRUITMENT PLAN

In FY21, COVID-19 has changed the way OCS recruits and retains resource family homes. OCS has moved towards media recruitment and retention postings and fliers versus face-to-face recruitment and retention. OCS is working to identify creative ways to meet the needs of children in care. Below are new goals added for the FY22 Statewide Plan for Recruitment and Retention of Resource Families:

- Alaska now has orientation classes through the Alaska Center for Resource Families to recruit Emergency Shelter Homes.
- Under the Licensing Assist Scope of Work, Alaska is working with Tribal partners to recruit and retain resource families.
- The Office of Children's Services meets both internally and externally to locate placements for Alaska's hard-to-place children.

2. HEALTH CARE OVERSIGHT AND COORDINATION PLAN

OCS updated the Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan in FY19. There are no additional updates or changes to the plan since that time. OCS has been working closely with Health Care Services in effort to maintain children in state custody are up to date on Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) appointments. Medicaid reports are shared monthly to inform the agency on children in care that are not current on their screening appointments. These efforts have proven successful as OCS has improved from 18% of children placed in out of home care being up to date on their EPSDT to 47% being up to date.

OCS policy (CPS manual 6.3.2) details that procedure and requirements for administration of psychotropic medications with oversight from the OCS Nurse Consultants. OCS nurses continue to review all prescriptions of psychotropic medication, with additional monitoring required for children age five or younger receiving psychotropic medications, children of any age who are receiving four or more psychotropic medications, and children of any age receiving two or more atypical antipsychotic medications.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, OCS staff and the nurse consultants worked with resource families and parents to assist in maintaining children in care received all their necessary medical services while maintaining safety measure to reduce potential exposure to the virus. Telemedicine was successfully utilized across the state. Children in care were able to maintain necessary appointments, services, and medications during this time.

3. DISASTER PLAN

OCS experienced large changes in leadership, which required some changes to the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). The updated statewide COOP is attached to the 2021 APSR.

This year OCS needed to implement mitigation protocols and policies due to the COVID-19 pandemic. OCS made extensive efforts to reduce the spread and risk of exposure to COVID-19 within the work environments and through the workforce. Following the recommendations of the CDC, OCS implemented new policies and procedures which included mandatory use of PPE, social distancing measures, telecommute agreements for employees who could conduct business from home, reorganization of workspaces to reduce contact, intensive cleaning and sanitation of workplaces and vehicles, response protocols for incidents of exposures within the workplace and/or workforce. Regular safety briefings and instructions were implemented by the OCS safety officer. Virtual business practices were put in place when appropriate and reasonable.

On October 19, 2020 a 7.4 earthquake occurred just off Sand Point, Alaska. Tsunami warnings occurred in the surrounding areas including Kodiak and Cold Bay. OCS responded immediately in assessing the Kodiak staff member's safety and any needs from surrounding foster families. Thankfully there were no injuries, or any further action needed.

On December 2, 2020 the Haines community in Alaska experienced a large landslide. This was a 600-foot landslide after heavy rainfall the previous days. Thirty individuals were evacuated from their homes and four homes were destroyed. Several community roads were washed out and required major repairs. OCS does not have an office or staff in Haines. There were no children in OCS custody in Haines during the landslide.

In May of 2021 the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services experienced a security breach to several servers. OCS was minimally impacted with the loss of Sharepoint, access to the NABCS database for background checks, and the OCS website was down. The state continues efforts to assess the safety of the servers and rebuild where needed. As of June, OCS continues to not have access to Sharepoint, and the website is not fully up and running.

4. TRAINING PLAN

There have been no changes or updates to the training plan during FY21. With COVID-19 all trainings were conducted virtually this fiscal year.

Section D. Statistical and Supporting Information

1. CAPTA ANNUAL STATE DATA REPORT

Information on Child Protective Service Workforce

Education, Qualifications, and Training Requirements for CPS Professionals: In the last year OCS has moved to competency-based hiring for child protection staff. Competencies include Analytical thinking and problem solving, customer service, integrity and honesty, interpersonal skills, oral communication, and writing. The competency based minimum qualification format does not screen for specific education or experience. Applicants are screened by the hiring manager on competencies, however, gained, so any combination of education and experience can be considered qualifying.

OCS does not have a minimum number of continuing education requirements for staff, but trainings are provided throughout the year for ongoing staff development. In the past year, the training for new employees increased to 6 weeks, which now includes regionally focused staff development. The mentor program has been anecdotally successful in assisting new staff with the transfer of learning from the classroom to the field setting. A full evaluation of the mentor program is under development with the University of Alaska. Due to COVID-19 Alaska is also working diligently to transition from an in-person classroom format to a virtual training platform.

Demographic Information on Personnel:

Job Class	Female	Male	Total	Average Annual Rate
PSM I	8	1	9	\$98,749.16
PSM II	5	0	5	\$101,840.96
PS Specialist I	41	18	59	\$52,319.16
PS Specialist II	114	39	153	\$64,089.62
PS Specialist III	11	3	14	\$73,562.36
PS Specialist IV	40	9	49	\$91,505.14
Total	219	70	289	\$68,526.35

Job Class	AK Native / American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Pacific Is/ Hawaiian	Two or more Races	White	Total
PSM I	0	0	0	0	1	0	8	9
PSM II	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5

Job Class	AK Native /American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Pacific Is/ Hawaiian	Two or more Races	White	Total
PS Specialist I	0	0	5	10	0	5	35	59
PS Specialist II	10	3	15	10	2	7	106	153
PS Specialist III	4	1	1	0	0	0	8	14
PS Specialist IV	7	2	4		2	1	33	49
Total	25	6	25	21	4	13	195	289

Job Class	AK Native /American Indian Female	AK Native /American Indian Male	Asian Female	Asian Male	Black Female	Black Male	Hispanic Female	Hispanic Male	Pacific Is / Hawaiian Female	Two or More Races Female	Two or more Races Male	White Female	White Male	Total
PSM I	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	7	1	9
PSM II	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5		5
PS Specialist I	4	0	0	0	3	2	6	4	0	4	1	24	11	59
PS Specialist II	9	1	2	1	9	6	6	4	2	5	2	81	25	153
PS Specialist III	4	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	2	14
PS Specialist IV	5	2	1	1	3	1		0	2	1	00	28	5	49
Total	22	3	3	3	16	9	13	8	4	10	3	151	44	289

Age Groups

Job Class	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 and over	Total
PSM I	0	5	4	0	0	9
PSM II	0	2	2	2	0	5
PS Specialist I	20	15	15	8	1	59
PS Specialist II	31	39	43	32	8	153

Job Class	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 and over	Total
PS Specialist III		4	5	3	2	14
PS Specialist IV	1	14	20	12	2	49
Total	52	79	89	56	13	289

Caseload/Workload Information for PS Specialists: The Alaska’s Children Deserve a Loving Home Act, new average caseload requirements went into effect in June 2020. OCS has created a policy and process to align with the new caseload assignment requirements.

On 4/1/2021, there were 2,232 open cases with 45 supervisors providing direct supervision to 233 caseworkers. According to this point in time data:

- Supervisors support 5.2 caseworkers
- Supervisors provide oversight for 50 cases
- Caseload is 10 cases per caseworker
- Turnover at the PSS level is 57.1%

*Source: RU determined open CPS and PIPR cases. Supervisors and workers are determined from DHSS OCS Protective Services EE. Intake staff is subtracted from the report to achieve the total for this update.

Juvenile Justice Transfers

Three youth transferred from the care of Alaska’s child protection system to the State’s juvenile justice system. See the table below for previous year transfers.

OCS Discharges to DJJ

Discharge Year	Discharge Reason	Discharges
SFY16	Transfer to DJJ	2
SFY17	Transfer to DJJ	1
SFY18	Transfer to DJJ	1
SFY 19	Transfer to DJJ	3
SFY 20	Transfer to DJJ	2

2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHERS

School Year	Total ETVs Awarded	Number of New ETVs
Final Number: 2019-2020 School Year (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020)	52	26
2020-2021 School Year* (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021)	45	16

*in some cases this might be an estimated number since the APSR is due on June 30.

3. INTER-COUNTRY ADOPTIONS

During FFY 2020, no children were identified as having been adopted from other countries and entering OCS custody as a result of abuse or neglect. ACRF, who holds a grant for post adoption support services, continues to provide brief case management, crisis intervention, training, and education to adoptive families to promote safe and strong homes for adoptive children, regardless of if they were adopted domestically or internationally.

4. MONTHLY CASEWORKER VISIT DATA

OCS will submit required data on monthly caseworker visits with children in foster care no later than December 15, 2021, as required. Last year's data* showed that the total number of visits made by caseworkers on a monthly basis to children in foster care was less than the required 95% as OCS achieved 71%. This is an increase from the previous year's data. The percent of children visited in their home was 75%, which exceeds the 50% federal standard.

*Source: RR00124 Federal Monthly Caseworker Visits Measure, FFY20

Section E. Financial Information

1. PAYMENT LIMITATIONS

A. Title IV-B, Subpart 1

States may not spend more title IV-B, subpart 1 funds for childcare, foster care maintenance and adoption assistance payments than the state expended for those purposes in FY2005 (section 424 © of the Act). Alaska spent \$0 of title IV-B, subpart 1 funds for administrative costs. Alaska does not utilize title IV-B I/II funds for administrative costs.

B. Title IV-B, Subpart 2

States are required to spend a significant portion of the title IV-B, subpart 2 PSSF grant for each of the four service categories of PSSF: family preservation, community-based family support, time-limited family reunification, and adoption promotion and support services.

Per the CVS-101, Part III, Alaska received \$541,200 in FFY 2019 funds from title IV-B, subpart 2 and spent those funds as follows:

- \$11,445 or 2% of its FFY2019 award on family preservation services.
- \$177,708 or 33% of its FFY2019 award on community-based family support services.
- \$352,047 or 65% of its FFY2019 award on time-limited family reunification services.
- Alaska did not spend any of its FFY2019 award on adoption promotion and support services.

Per the attached CFS-101, Part III, Alaska did not spend any of its FFY2019 award on administrative costs.

Alaska spent \$34,726 on Monthly Caseworker Visits.

In FFY 2019, OCS did not expend approximately 20% of the grant on each of the four PSSF service categories. Funds were spent disproportionately during FFY 2019, because of continuing changes in utilization rate of grant services. Family Reunification services were again prioritized for funding because the capacity of service providers needed to be increased to meet the demand for the services in the urban areas. Family Preservation services were partially funded by other sources

C. Chafee Program

States are required to certify that no more than 30 percent of their allotment of federal Chafee funds will be expended for room and board for youth who left foster care after the age of 18 years of age and have not yet attained age 21. For states that operate an extended foster care program and that choose to exercise the Chafee option to serve youth up to age 23, the limitation applies to providing room and board to youth who left foster care after attaining ages 18 and have not yet attained age 23.

In FFY2019, OCS expended 3 percent of its allotment of federal Chafee funds on room and board for youth who left foster care after the age of 18 years of age who had not yet turned 21. The funds were utilized for Tenant-Based Rental Assistance coupons.

2. CURRENT YEAR FUNDING—FY 2020 REALLOTMENTS, REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING AND SUBMITTING A REVISED CFS-101 BUDGET REQUEST

Reallotments

OCS did not receive any allotments in the current year.

Revisions – Submitting a Revised Part I

Submitting a Revised Part I: There were no revisions in the current year.

3. FY 2021 BUDGET REQUEST—CFS-101, PARTS I AND II

Alaska submitted Part I of the CFS-101 form to request Title IV-B, subpart I (CWS) and Title IV-B, subpart II (PSSF and Monthly Caseworker Visit funds), CAPTA, CFCIP, and ETV funds. In addition, Alaska completed Part II to include the estimated amount of funds to be spent in each program area by source, the estimated number of individuals and families to be served, and the geographic service area within which the services are to be provided. Required financial reporting forms are located in Appendix H.

4. FY 2018 TITLE IV-B EXPENDITURE REPORT—CFS-101, PART III

Alaska has completed the CFS-101, Part III to report the actual amount of funds expended in each program area of title IV-B funding by source, the number of individuals and families served, and the geographic service area within which the services were provided. Required financial reporting forms are located in Appendix H.

5. EXPENDITURE PERIODS AND SUBMISSION OF STANDARD FORM 425 (SF-425) FEDERAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Alaska reports expenditures under Title IV-B, subparts 1 and 2, CAPTA, CFCIP, and ETV programs on the Financial Status Report, SF-425 typically by December 31 of each year, which is 90 days after federal fiscal year-end.

Section F. Supporting Documents

Attachment A. Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan.

Attachment B. Alaska Health Care Oversight Plan.

Attachment C. Alaska Disaster Plan

Attachment D. Alaska Training Plan FY2021

Alaska CFS101 Part 1 Reallotment signed

Alaska CFS-101 Part 1 Reallotment

Alaska CFS-101 Part 1 thru Part 3 FY2021

Alaska CFS101 Part 3 signed