



OFFICE OF
CHILDREN'S
SERVICES

**Alaska's Third Annual Progress and Services
Report to the 2020-2024 CFSP**

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Section A. Requirements for the 2023 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

Develop a skilled and stable child protection workforce

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

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

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

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.

OCS continues to have robust engagement and collaboration with Tribes and Tribal Organizations through work on the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact, Tribal State Collaboration Group, Regional Tribal State Committees, and the Tribal Title IV-E Prevention grant. This year, Alaska's Governor implemented a Governor's Parent/Foster Parent Collaborative Council to provide valuable program input from those with lived experience in the child welfare system. OCS has partnered with the Alaska Center for Resource Families to host virtual statewide Foster Parent Forums to better inform the agency on how to improve recruitment and retention efforts for licensed foster parents.

In continued efforts for retention of OCS staff, leadership held Ten Year Plus Forums for staff who have been with the agency for more than ten years. These efforts, combined with survey results, provided insight into why staff might stay with the agency, and what might motivate them to leave employment with OCS. This information has been valuable in adapting efforts for retention. One primary focus is to reduce or eliminate the requirement for OCS staff to be on-call after hours and on weekends. OCS staff were consistent across the forums, and other staff surveys, that on-call does not allow them to obtain a quality work to life balance.

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:

- Governor's Parent/Foster Parent Collaborative Council
- 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
- 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
- Alaska Impact Alliance

- Citizen's Review Panel
- Family Services Training Center
- Foster Parent Forums

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
- Implementation and expansion of evidenced based practices
- 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) continue in Fairbanks. An evaluation of the hearing quality has not been completed in full but is still planned for the future. Scale out of the pilot is not planned to occur until after the full evaluation. The evaluation has delayed as the Judges in Fairbanks are now members of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). This council provides training on quality court hearings. The large CIP group meets three times a year and each subcommittee is discussed. As a tenet of this project, permanency timeframes were reviewed in each judicial district, and it was determined that a new subcommittee would be created under CIP to evaluate judicial districts data related to permanency and assess barriers.

A CIP subcommittee is currently focused on improvements to the provision of family contact across the state. This committee meets approximately four times a year, or more if a presentation from another agency has been arranged. The committee was formed through anecdotal information that family contact was not occurring frequently enough across the state and was not quality family contact. There was an attempt to utilize data to determine if quality of contact or quantity of contact should be the focus of the group. The

OCS ORCA system can run reports regarding family contact, but only when the family contact is documented by an OCS primary caseworker. If family contact is supervised by a relative or family friend, the contact is not documented in ORCA. This is one of the reasons the committee sought a presentation from FosterCare.Team. There is now consideration for the Family and Infant Court to use the program as a pilot.

Another CIP subcommittee is focused on education regarding the CINA court process. The ICWA training that was created last year received national recognition. During this year, transition of the CINA 101 curriculum to virtual/audio platform was contracted. It will be finalized early next year.

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. The subcommittee presented the idea of creating ICWA courts and the First Judicial District is making initial efforts to stand up an ICWA court. The group is attending a conference on ICWA courts.

Parent, Family and Youth Voice

OCS recognizes the benefits of engaging and interacting with both internal and external stakeholders. Engagement with stakeholders, and those with lived experience, leads to services that better fit the needs of the individuals OCS is tasked with serving, increases the agency's accountability, promotes inclusivity, and provides better outcomes for children and families.

OCS interacts and engages with our stakeholders during the development of the Child and Family Services Plan (CSFP), the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) and analyzing data and development of Program Improvement Plans based on the outcome of Child and Family Services Reviews. Stakeholders include legal partners, tribal partners, judges, youth, OCS staff, GAL's, and services providers. Facing Foster Care in Alaska has representatives who actively participate in multiple OCS groups and meetings to provide lived experience in efforts to improve and enhance goals for the department.

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. Though the OSRI case reviews are occurring in the three PIP sites, OCS uses the parent and family experience shared to inform practice change across the state. These case reviews are shared with regional management, as well as OCS leadership, to enhance program change efforts in achieving Alaska's state vision.

Recently the Governor of Alaska has created the Governor's Parent/Foster Parent Collaborative Council. This council is made up of 13 members who are appointed by, and serve at the pleasure of, the Governor. The Governor required membership be a current foster parent, a current relative foster parent, an adoptive family, foster care provider, two adults who have graduated from the foster care system, an OCS employee, a DEED employee, a parent who successfully reunified with their children, a parent who did not successfully reunify with their children, two service providers from organizations providing parenting skills and supportive services, and a GAL. The purpose of the council is for members to provide feedback from lived experiences in the child welfare system and provide recommendations to the Governor and OCS that will improve the safety, permanency, and well-being for Alaska's children and families. The council has subcommittees that are focused on mental health, permanency, reunification, disparity, case worker support, youth, and foster parents.

Due to feedback from families and youth, a parent and a youth panel now participate in new employee training. They share lived experience with new OCS staff to assist them in family engagement, meeting needs, respect, and collaboration.

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

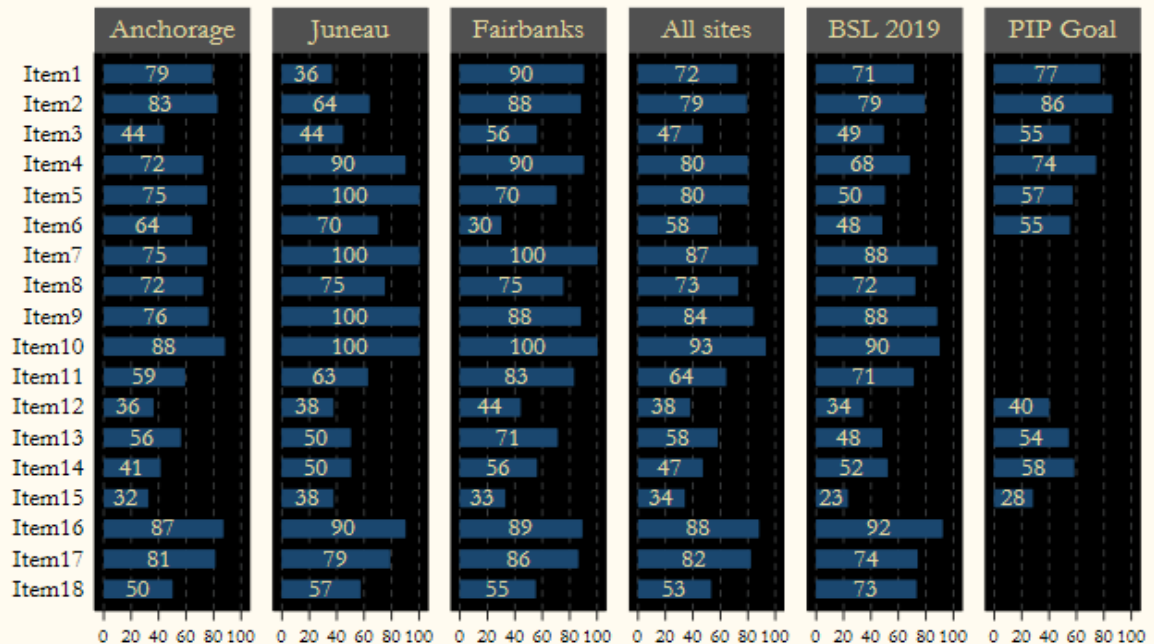
Alaska continues to complete case reviews in three review sites for the PIP. Alaska received the baseline calculation and improvement goals in March of 2020. In conjunction with contextual data, Alaska has determined practice areas of strength and concern for outcome areas with strategies for improvement identified in the PIP. When comparing the three PIP site CFSR scores with statewide data from ORCA, the results are mixed. In some areas the PIP sites are yielding higher percentages while in other areas the statewide data yields higher percentages of compliance. The Essential Services Score Card is additional data that is used by the statewide leadership and managers to assess the agency's progress. AFCARs, statewide data indicators, are also available to evaluate the state's outcome progress as it relates to the national average.

2021 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews, Baseline 2019, and PIP Goal Percent of applicable cases rated strength

Items	CY 2021 Anchorage (n=39)	CY 2021 Juneau (n=18)	CY 2021 Fairbank (n=18)	CY 2021 All Sites (n=75)	BSL19 (n=65)	PIP Goal
Item 1: Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment	78.8%	36.4%	90%	72%	71%	77%
Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Child (ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry Into Foster Care	82.6%	63.6%	88%	79%	79%	86%
Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management	43.6%	44.4%	56%	47%	49%	55%
Item 4: Stability of Foster Care Placement	72.0%	90.0%	90%	80%	68%	74%
Item 5: Permanency Goal for Child	75.0%	100.0%	70%	80%	50%	57%
Item 6: Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement	64.0%	70.0%	30%	58%	48%	55%
Item 7: Placement With Siblings	75.0%	100.0%	100%	87%	88%	N/A
Item 8: Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care	72.0%	75.0%	75%	73%	72%	N/A

Items	CY 2021 Anchorage (n=39)	CY 2021 Juneau (n=18)	CY 2021 Fairbank (n=18)	CY 2021 All Sites (n=75)	BSL19 (n=65)	PIP Goal
Item 9: Preserving Connections	76.0%	100.0%	88%	84%	88%	N/A
Item 10: Relative Placement	88.0%	100.0%	100%	93%	90%	N/A
Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care With Parents	59.1%	62.5%	83%	64%	71%	N/A
Item 12: Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents	36.1%	37.5%	44%	38%	34%	40%
Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning	55.9%	50.0%	71%	58%	48%	54%
Item 14: Caseworker Visits With Child	41.0%	50.0%	56%	47%	52%	58%
Item 15: Caseworker Visits With Parents	32.4%	37.5%	33%	34%	23%	28%
Item 16: Educational Needs of the Child	86.9%	90.0%	89%	88%	92%	N/A
Item 17: Physical Health of the Child	81.1%	78.6%	86%	82%	74%	N/A
Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child	50.0%	57.1%	55%	53%	73%	N/A

2021 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews, Baseline 2019 and PIP Goal Percent of applicable cases rated strength



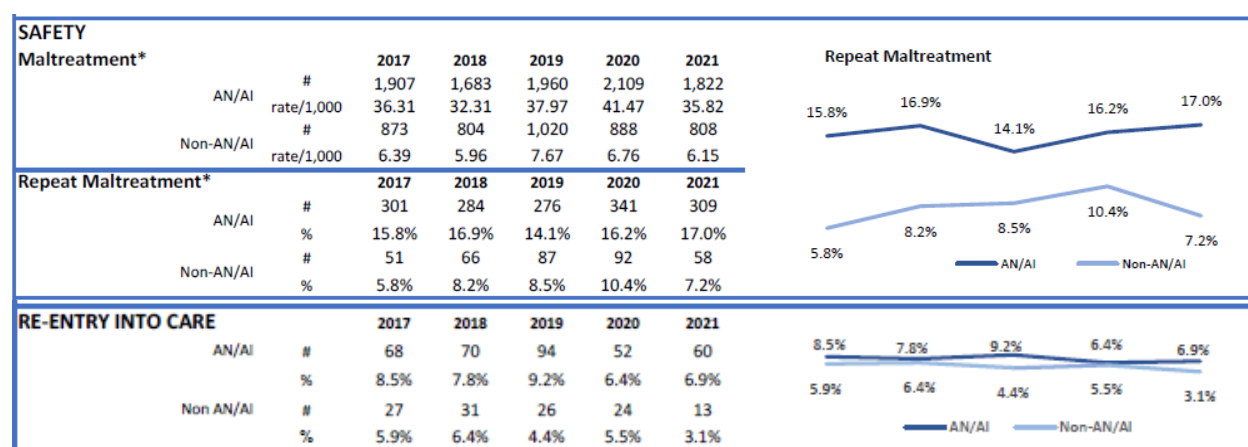
Safety Outcome 1 and 2:

Alaska has seen an increase in timely initiations of investigations with 72% in 2021 from 69% in 2020 CFSR data and 2019 baseline data of 71%. Anchorage experienced the most dramatic increase in this area with a 12% increase from 2020 to 2021. As a result of QA feedback from CFSR reviews, the field office developed a strategy to address the priority 3 timeframe initiation rates. This PIP site had an initiative that they would treat all priority 3 reports as if they were priority 2 reports in hopes that staff would make earlier attempts to initiate as opposed to waiting until the 7-day timeframe was near. This, coupled with close monitoring by the supervisors and managers, seems to have contributed to improved initiation rates. The few cases that were initiated late were both of priority 2 and priority 3 timeframe reports.

The Juneau PIP site struggled with staffing as their entire investigation unit resigned and new staff were hired and trained. The Juneau PIP site experienced a decrease in timely initiations from 47% in 2020 to 36% in 2021. Whenever possible, staff from various offices across the state were sent to Juneau to assist with investigations when the investigation unit was vacant, but this did not eliminate the impact of Juneau's staffing shortages. The Fairbanks PIP site remained stable in this area. Statewide aggregate data was lower in initiation rates of 61% in comparison to the three PIP sites aggregate data of 72%. The Essential Services data indicates that the Western regional offices are struggling the most with initiation rates which are as low as 34%. Rural Alaska has unique travel challenges that are often exacerbated by weather issues. The limitations of Essential Services data is that situations that are out of the agency's control, such as weather issues, are unable to be factored into the data but this is a common challenge for Western Alaska. If a family

does not reside in Bethel, initiation in the Western Region will require travel by plane, boat, and sometimes snow machine. Additionally, COVID restrictions were in place during 2020 and part of 2021, where several villages were restricted to outside travelers.

Services to prevent removal or reentry into foster care have declined in 2021, with 79% of cases reviewed for CFSR achieved a strength in comparison to 2020 CFSR aggregate data of 85% of cases achieved a strength, with appropriate removals occurring when services could not address the safety concerns. The Juneau PIP was struggling the most in this area with only 64% of the applicable cases scoring a strength. It was identified that in the Juneau PIP site there were struggles with providing immediate services to address the identified safety threats. A contributing factor was stemming from delays of transferring cases from the initial assessment stages to family services as well as delays in the referral process for the Tribal Title IV-E Prevention program. The situation was more inherent in the In-Home cases. As mentioned above, there were significant staffing issues for the Juneau PIP site with workers from various regions attempting to provide support with initial assessments.



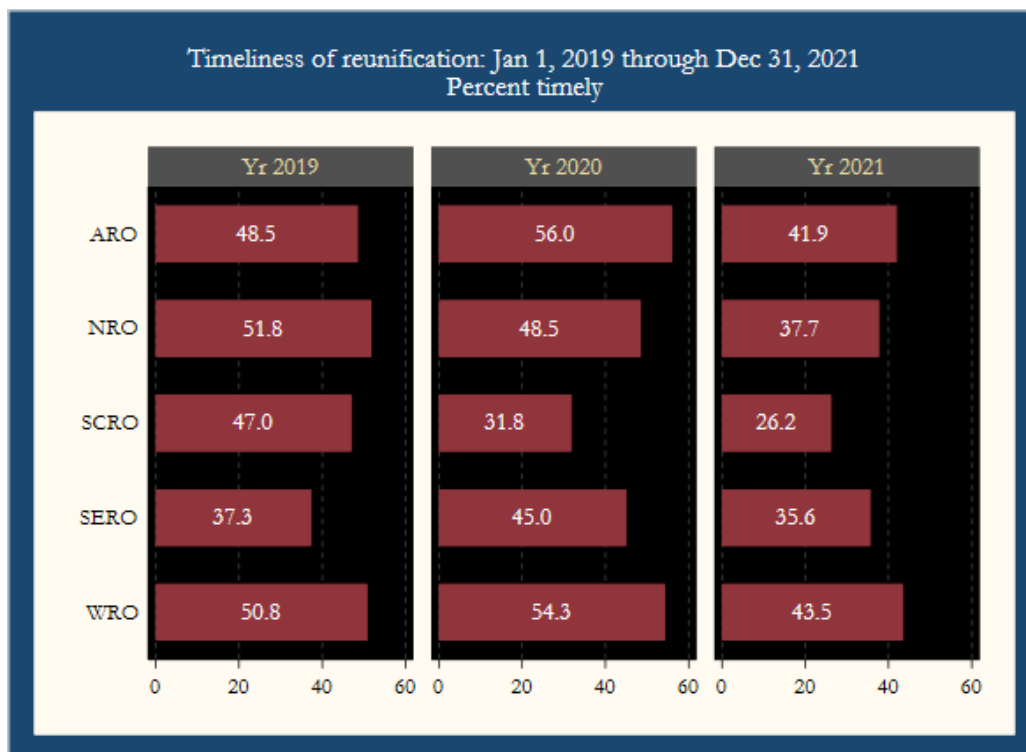
Safety and risk assessment and safety monitoring is an area that has improved in 2021 with an aggregate score of 47% for the three PIP sites. This is an 11% increase from the year prior. This progress is directly related to the monitoring of children's safety and the relationship of increased caseworker visits with children, item 14, which also experienced significant improvements. For the Anchorage and Fairbanks PIP sites, cases that were needing improvement in this item were due to a lack of ongoing safety assessments as children were seen less often in the cases identified as needing improvement. For the Juneau PIP site, the issues relating to safety management varied with safety plans not being utilized when situations warranted a method to ensure safety, inaccurate safety assessments being conducted, inappropriate screening decisions, and cases being closed with insufficient safety assessments prior to closure. All three PIP sites had issues with insufficient safety assessments prior to closing a case and there was no evidence in the cases reviewed that any of the sites were utilizing the case closure checklist. Similarly, the Trial Home Visit tool that was implemented the year prior did not appear to be utilized.

The inaccurate safety assessments in the Juneau PIP site contributed to several cases experiencing repeat maltreatment. The Anchorage PIP site also experienced some repeat maltreatment although less prevalent of an issue. Statewide data indicates that repeat maltreatment is significantly higher in the AK Native/American Indian population than that of non-AK Native/American Indian. This has remained true the last five years, but the difference found in 2021 rose to over 10% where AK Native/American Indian children were at 17% repeat maltreatment in comparison to 7.2% for non-AK Native/American Indian. Repeat maltreatment continues to be an area needing attention as the national average is 9.5%. Re-entry rates are also higher for

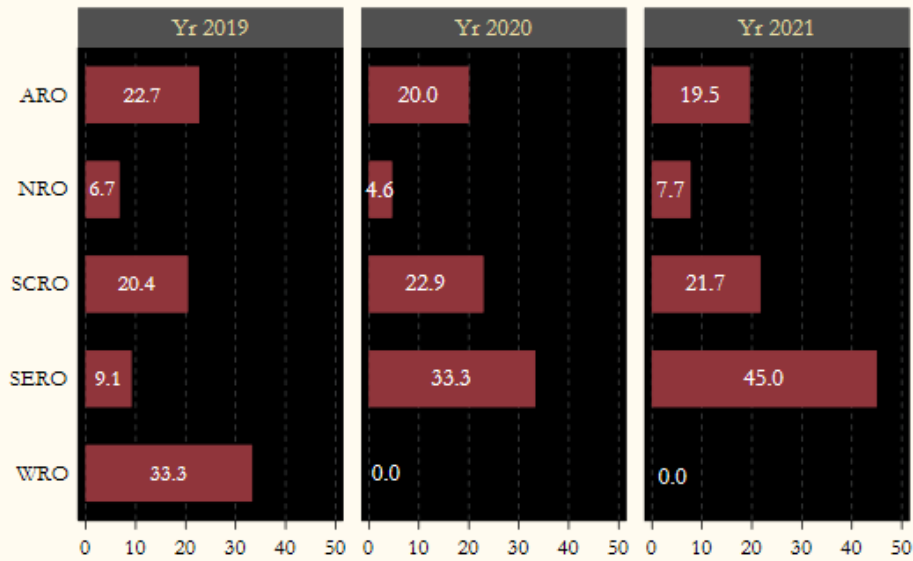
the AK Native/American Indian population in 2021 in comparison to 2020 where the difference between these two populations was less than 1%. It is important to note, that in 2020 many rural communities were closed to outside travelers and thus access to investigate maltreatment was not possible. This contributed to delays in completing investigations and delays in safety management activities. More communities opened in 2021 to allow for investigations to be completed and may have contributed to a spike in repeat maltreatment and reentry rates in the AK Native population.

Alaska implemented several strategies in the PIP to focus on areas of safety. The Strengthening I & A Program focusing on management of assignment and protocol of the investigation process is underway and has expanded to other field offices. The workgroup for this program meets monthly to review the program and that it demonstrates more timely initiations and closures. 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. Supervisors are utilizing this tool 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. Further assessment is needed to ensure the tool is being utilized. 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.

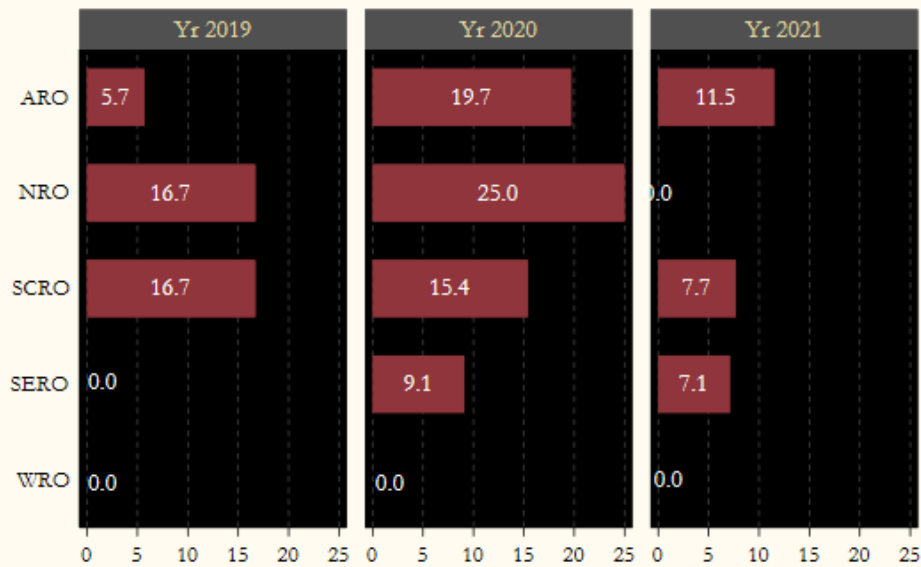
Permanency Outcome 1 and 2:



Timeliness of adoption: Jan 1, 2019 through Dec 31, 2021
Percent timely



Timeliness of guardianship: Jan 1, 2019 through Dec 31, 2021
Percent timely



The last two years have shown stable improvements in permanency outcome 1 and most of permanency outcome 2. The CFSR PIP sites have been operating well above the PIP goal for 2021 in all permanency 1 items. Stability of placement aggregate data indicates 80% of placements reviewed were stable. This is a large improvement from that of 62% in 2020. Review of cases revealed that children were appropriately matched with their placements and placements were committed to the care of the children. AFCARS data also indicates that Alaska is improving in this area and trending close to the national average of 4.44%. Appropriateness of permanency goals and establishment of goals timely also experienced dramatic improvements in 2021 with aggregate data at 80% which is 23% above the PIP goal. This increase is connected to case plan compliance data as timely creation of case plans results in timely identification of permanency goals. Statewide Essential Services data indicates that compliance of case plans for children and parents has remained stable for 2020 and 2021 with children's case plan compliance at 80% and 78% the last two years and parents at 66% for both years. The limitations of Essential Services case plan compliance data is that the data does not indicate concerted efforts to involve the family in case plan development and only indicates if a case plan was completed timely.

The achievement of reunification, adoption, guardianship, and other planned permanent living arrangement experienced a decrease in the aggregate data from 2020 to 2021 but remained above the PIP goal. The Fairbanks PIP site is struggling the most in this area with a 60% drop from the previous year. A review of the Fairbanks cases found that there was a need to increase concerted efforts by the court and the field office to finalize children's permanency goals. In some cases, children's length in out of home care exceeded the allotted timeframe for the permanency goal and in other cases delays in court contributed to delays in achieving adoption. Statewide data also indicates that Northern Region is struggling to achieve permanency especially in the area of guardianship and adoption. The statewide data indicates that Western Region is also struggling with achieving permanency timely in the areas of adoption and guardianship. It is important to note that Western Region has the least number of children in foster care and the least number of children with the goal of adoption and guardianship, thus the small numbers create large spikes in the data. For both regions, reunification is less of an issue.

Permanency Outcome 2 remained near the baseline averages aside from the area of relationship of child in care with parents. The two PIP sites struggling the most in this area are Anchorage and Juneau. The review of cases revealed that most of the cases needing improvement lacked sufficient effort to include both parents in ongoing appointments and activities pertaining to the child's well-being and foster parents were not notified about parameters around the inclusion of parents.

Placement with siblings has remained stable for the three PIP sites with efforts found to keep sibling groups together whenever possible. The Anchorage PIP site was the only site below 100% in sibling placement and the review of cases identified that there were large sibling groups needing a placement able to accommodate the number of children in the family and there was a need for ongoing reassessment of the placement situation. Preserving important connections has improved to 84% in comparison to 80% (2020 CFSR data). The percentage remains below the baseline score of 88%. The review of cases found that the Anchorage PIP site experienced a 4% decrease from the year prior. For multiple Anchorage cases where a need for improvement was identified, there was not sufficient evidence that the agency made efforts to support and encourage the existing relationship between the child in care and his/her siblings that were not in out of home care. In other cases, needing improvement, more efforts were needed in maintaining connection to extended family members who were important parts of the child's life before coming into care.

Placement with relatives continues to be strong for Alaska with 93% of cases receiving a strength in this area. Alaska has fully implemented the supervisory certification of relative search, also required through HB 151.

This requires supervisors 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 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 evaluation is planned to occur in the future, but the exact date is unknown. The CIP committee has decided not to continue this to other judicial districts.

Well-Being Outcome 1, 2, and 3:

Caseworker Visits with Children						
Region	Year					Average
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Statewide	67%	69%	67%	68%	65%	67%
Northern	60%	62%	62%	63%	72%	64%
Southcentral	49%	68%	70%	76%	73%	67%
Anchorage	73%	80%	70%	69%	61%	71%
Western	71%	55%	47%	39%	43%	50%
Southeast	90%	86%	80%	77%	68%	79%

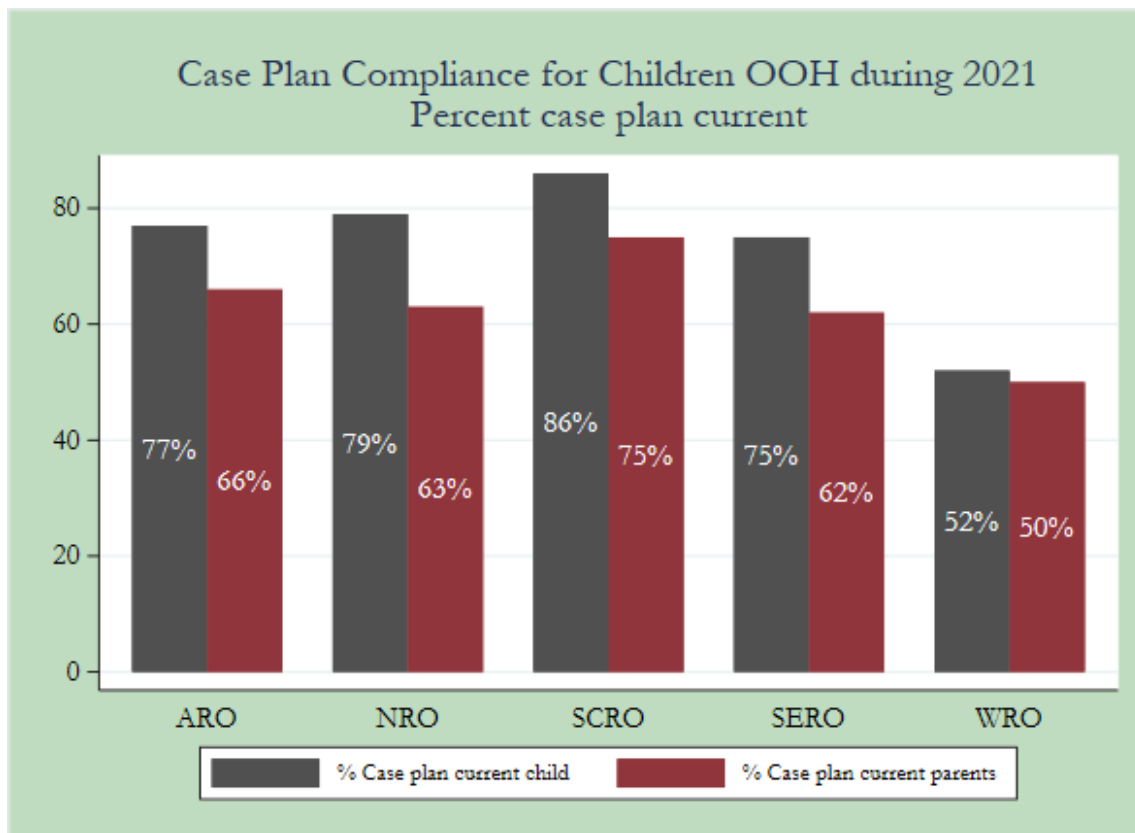
Caseworker Visits with Mothers						
Region	Year					Average
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Statewide	28%	28%	26%	24%	25%	26%
Northern	23%	23%	24%	29%	41%	29%
Southcentral	17%	27%	27%	24%	24%	24%
Anchorage	30%	35%	27%	23%	20%	27%
Western	31%	24%	20%	11%	17%	20%
Southeast	44%	41%	27%	19%	28%	30%

Caseworker Visits with Fathers						
Region	Year					Average
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Statewide	16%	16%	15%	14%	16%	15%
Northern	11%	12%	12%	17%	30%	17%
Southcentral	9%	15%	16%	17%	15%	14%
Anchorage	18%	20%	15%	13%	11%	15%
Western	23%	15%	13%	8%	12%	14%
Southeast	31%	28%	17%	11%	17%	19%

Wellbeing Outcome 1 has experienced good improvements in 2021. Needs and services for children, parents, and foster parents is close to reaching the PIP goal at 38% aggregate data. The Fairbanks PIP site experienced the most improvement scoring 13% higher in 2021 in comparison with 2020. Juneau remained stable the last two years and Anchorage experienced a slight decrease. The review of cases revealed that caseworkers were not providing sufficient contact with families to do comprehensive and ongoing assessments to ensure that appropriate services were provided and/or were appropriate and effective in addressing the identified needs. All three sites struggled with needs assessments for In Home cases and in the Juneau field office no In Home cases reviewed received a strength in this item. In cases where two parents were involved it was observed that one parent tended to receive more attention than the other and it was primarily fathers that were neglected. This is also evident with caseworker visits with fathers across the state. In totality caseworker visits with parents has improved greatly and the aggregate scores for 2021 are above the PIP goal at 34%. Statewide data indicates that the Northern Regions is taking the lead in 2021 with regards to caseworker visits with parents in comparison to the rest of the state.

As a response to feedback from 2020 CFSR reviews of Fairbanks, the Northern regional managers implemented accountability meetings for supervisors to conduct with their caseworkers and for regional managers to conduct with the supervisors. In the accountability meetings the caseworker visit data was reviewed and a plan to address any deficiencies was developed. The CFSR data for 2021 revealed that Fairbanks is leading the sites with caseworker visits with children at 56%. The Anchorage PIP site is operating at 41% compliance which is a slight increase from the year prior. The difference between CFSR data and Essential Services data in this area is that quality cannot be accounted for in the Essential Services data and therefore the data is based on if a caseworker visit was documented each month.

Involving the family in case planning has improved from 2020 to 2021 with aggregate scores reaching 58% which exceeds the PIP goal of 54%. All three PIP sites experienced improvements in case planning. The Anchorage PIP site improved in this area with a 28% increase when compared to the prior year. The review of Anchorage cases identified a need to engage fathers in the case planning process and children/youth who were developmentally appropriate. The Fairbanks PIP site experienced a 21% increase from the 2019 baseline. The review of Fairbanks identified that In-Home cases needed increased attention in involvement of case planning. The Juneau PIP site experienced a 12.5% increase in this area from the year prior. The review of cases found that more efforts to engage families was needed especial for those parents who have disengaged from the department. Essential Services data for the regions indicates a higher percentage of case plan compliance for children and parents. This data is limiting as it does not account for concerted efforts towards family engagement and only accounts for having a current case plan in the record. The Western region is struggling the most in this area. As mentioned in earlier sections, rural communities are often difficult to access especially during winter months as travel is required and often not available due to poor weather.



Alaska performs well in the assessment and provision of services to provide for the educational and physical health of children in foster care, there was a slight decrease of 5% in the area of physical health of child in 2021 in comparison with the year prior. 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 improved by 4% from the year prior but is still operating well below the baseline scores at 53% in comparison to 73% in 2019. All three PIP sites were operating similarly in this area with the review of cases identifying there was a need for mental health services for children who experienced exposure to trauma and/or engaging in un-safe behaviors.

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 for the Fairbanks judicial district is intended to provide support, engagement, and clarity in the court and case process with parents. With hearings scheduled to occur every six 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 additional federal funding, due to COVID, 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 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

ORCA continues to be modernized in accordance with CCWIS regulations. Since February 2022, ORCA data input on court hearings and admin reviews has increased significantly and OCS is now federally compliant with all administrative reviews; this was achieved via a monthly upload of flat file information provided by legal partners. OCS anticipates this manual upload to continue until a full bi-directional interface has been achieved.

OCS recently signed updated Memorandum of Agreements with all school districts so OCS can send weekly data to each individual school district. This data includes the child's name, date of birth, date of removal, placement information, legal status, OCS point of contact, GAL, and Alaska Native/American Indian status. In response, the districts will provide bi-yearly data back to OCS which will be uploaded to ORCA. That information includes school name, address, enrollment dates, current grade level, IEP dates, school district point of contract, attendance data, program participation, graduation status, and diploma data.

To streamline and ease the issues with documents in ORCA, all forms in the system are currently being converted from InfoPath to either a webpage or a PDF.

Regardless of the continued progress toward modernization, Alaska's federal partners noted in 2021 that the ORCA system is nearing end of life. In response to this, OCS has hired contractor BerryDunn to complete an analysis of the system to help determine next steps and support a capital fund request for a newer system.

One of the concerning data entry delays from 2017 assessments 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. In FFY21 there was a slight increase, which informed leadership that this might be a consequence of staff turnover, therefore a training refresher might be beneficial. 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.

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%
FFY21	6.6	2,206	1,646	74.6%

Source: RR00219

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

Previous 2017 Statewide Assessment and CFSR data indicated to the written case plan was an area needing improvement. Current data indicates that 77% of children in care, 67% of mothers, and 62% of fathers have a current case plan documented in ORCA. Essential Services meetings continue to occur regionally to discuss barriers, challenges, and successes in developing and updating case plans with children and families. A consistent barrier discussed is how to engage parents and youth who are not responsive to case planning requests and efforts by OCS staff. An additional barrier are vacancies in Family Services units across the state causing higher caseloads. Several IA units across the state are maintaining cases longer than normal due to capacity issues in Family Services units. Anecdotal reports are being provided that the OCS program providing parents with smart phones during COVID has enhanced capabilities to connect with parents virtually for case planning purposes. The above data does not represent the efforts and attempts made by OCS staff to engage parents and youth in case planning.

ITEM 21: PERIODIC REVIEWS

Data from the Admin Review Report in ORCA showed that Alaska is struggling with conducting Admin reviews in 2021. Administrative reviews were occurring timely for 89.25% of children in care during the AFCARS reporting period in 2021 which was only .75% off from meeting compliance. This was partly due to issues with receiving court orders that administrative reviews occurred within the Fairbanks courts. Communication with the court system in gathering Fairbanks's admin review orders has occurred since the identification of the issue and compliance is expected in future reporting. In addition to issues with receiving orders, there were increased struggles at the field level surrounding retention which also impacted reviews occurring timely as caseworkers would often change causing meetings to be canceled and rescheduled for a later time. Some field offices experienced complete vacancies of entire units. As mentioned in previous sections, other judicial courts are not wanting to pursue holding administrative reviews.

ITEM 22: PERMANENCY HEARING

Alaska received an overall rating of Strength for Item 22 based on information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews. Though Alaska received a strength rating for this item, OCS is working with the court system to develop an improved reporting method for when permanency hearings are scheduled and when permanency reports are due. Currently the court provides this report, but it is not updated with current case worker information, nor does it contain the ORCA family ID, therefore is difficult for OCS to utilize in tracking when permanency hearings are scheduled. The plan for future reporting is that the ORCA family ID would be utilized by the court system to improve tracking and usage by OCS.

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. ORCA report manager provides a report detailing children who have been in out of home care for 15 out of 22 months, current TPR status, and if compelling reasons have been documented. Supervisors can utilize this report to track cases and assist with monitoring case progress. Currently this report does not track if a TPR

petition has been filed. It is possible, in the future, that an updated CCWIS system could interface with the court system to inform ORCA on the status of a TPR petition.

Report Data	Children OOH 18 of 22 months	Both Parents TPR now	Had Compelling reasons	Lacked Compelling Reasons
4/30/2022	1,133	23.5%	32.7%	43.9%
5/28/2021	1,050	33.9%	30.4%	35.7%

Source: ORCA RR00002>working>compelling reasons.sql

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, 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. OCS received technical assistance from the Capacity Building Center to regions and specific program areas to further infuse the CQI framework in the agency. During FY 22 a Continuous Quality Improvement Manual was finalized and a Stakeholder Engagement Plan completed. The manual and stakeholder engagement plan outline all the processes in which OCS operates as a CQI agenda using different qualitative and quantitative sources to inform decision making. Stakeholder workgroups under a Governor Council Order were developed in FY 22 involving youth and parents with lived experience, OCS, GAL's, Legal parties, relative and non-relative foster care providers, Tribes, and other various community partners. OCS continues with a fully operational Quality Assurance unit responsible for the CFSR case reviews, administrative reviews, stakeholder surveys, special case and fatality reviews and annual reports.

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.

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.

During FY22 initial staff training continued to be delivered virtually. Adjustments were made to training based on feedback and evaluation to address gaps identified in the virtual platform. An example of an adjustment included an online training covering information about a core concept in the practice model that will be applied to the practice case the next day so more time could be dedicated to application of the tool or core concept versus lecture training. Feedback also indicates a degression on relationship building with peers that will be addressed in changes for the upcoming year to encourage connections.

A change in FY22 occurred transferring responsibility of the Transfer of Learning (TOL) week from the Child Welfare Academy to the Mentor Program. Two cases are assigned to staff upon completion of the initial training for a Transfer of Learning week in a group setting to discuss and plan for activities related to the case assignments. It was found since many trainers had never worked in the field there was a struggle for application and planning on the cases. The TOL week was reassigned to the Mentor Program with positive feedback and many staff reporting it is their favorite part of training. In addition to the TOL week the Mentor Program hosts additional monthly training calls in which new staff are required to attend at a minimum 4 out of 6 months. The training topic is determined after receiving information from Mentors on what new staff are struggling with on the practice model and an open group forum to ask questions on their cases. Topics were resiliency, provider investigations, case planning, use of MAP, when and how to use drug testing, use of report manager, essential services review, preparing for court, working with resistant parents, case planning for absent parents, and safety threats. Attendance reflects that most staff attended more than the minimum 4 sessions and discussions are occurring to open invitation for all staff to attend the monthly training.

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 22, OCS continued the use of data and leadership meetings to develop the content for the curricula for a sixth week of training utilizing a CQI framework. Regional based trainings were conducted by the Mentor Program and directly related to CQI needs identified particular to that region. During FY 22 the following regional trainings occurred for all staff: ARO was provided safety threat identification, and quality caseworker visits. SCRO Wasilla was provided initial assessment summaries and quality caseworker visits. WRO was provided quality caseworker visits, safety planning, and initial assessment summaries. SERO was provided quality caseworker visits and Safety planning. In addition to all staff, supervisors in Western and SERO were given a training regarding job fundamentals and federal standards.

Changes were made to Supervisors Training and will be fully implemented in FY 22. A core need identified of the Supervisors Training was that it was held only once a year leaving many supervisors a long period of time prior to attending training. To meet the need of connecting with supervisors and introduce coaching and mentoring a monthly training call, open to all supervisors, was scheduled in coordination with CWA and the Mentor Program. Topics were as follows:

- January- Leading Through Attachment
- February- Structured Supervision Tools
- March- Leading Through Trauma
- April- Roles and Responsibilities
- May- Resilience and Reflection

Although geared toward newer supervisors the monthly training call averages over 20 supervisors and include new and experienced staff demonstrating both a need for the training and engagement with supervisors statewide. Focus groups occurred to review the full curriculum of Supervisors Training in addition to Coaching Supervisors to Best Practice that will be implemented in the next fiscal year.

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.

The primary provider of Foster and Adoptive Parent Training is the Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF). Due to continue restrictions from COVID-19, and out of safety precautions, training for foster and adoptive parents continued in distance formats including online, audio, paper self-study, and video conferencing. Core Training is now equally available across the state in a live format, as well as continued in a self-study format. A web-based format is being updated and should be available to all Alaskans in September of 2022. The increase in participation found in the last report is holding. In FY22, ACRF held 104 distant delivery classes with a predicted total of 1880 participants. These numbers do not include self-study courses, online courses, or alternative hours recorded from other training sources.

Families moving toward adoption are strongly encouraged to complete the Adoption Learning Path through ACRF which includes Core Training for Resource Families, Adopting through OCS, and Building Families through Adoption. This Adoption Learning Path is required by the Heart Gallery of Alaska for families who inquire about children listed on the Heart Gallery and required for families who develop a family profile which is posted on the Heart Gallery of Alaska web page. The PARKA recruitment and training project through ACRF continues to develop and expand throughout the state with intentions to provide more access to families and increased preparation of families at the beginning of the journey. With the addition of post adoption support money, ACRF has also started additional support for families including Post Adoption Skills and Support (PASS), psychoeducational groups focusing on attachment, FASD, and adolescents, as well as a training institute series for mental health professionals to promote adoption competency in therapeutic services.

ACRF continues to offer a series of intensive training workshops called “webi-conferences” to assist with families meeting the training requirement and offered two-day formats in Keeping Cultural Connections, Promoting Permanency, and Teens, all of which featured panels or presenters with lived experience. The

Cultural Connections webi-conference featured at least one Alaska Native, Pacific Islander, African American, and American Indian presenters during every presentation. Alaska held its first Alaska Child Welfare Conference in November 2021 which was targeted for Resource Families, OCS Staff, Tribes, and child advocates. The conference featured several panels and presenters with lived experience. The final “webi-conference” of the year is a partnership with Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska to present an online conference focusing on “Cultural Approaches to Permanency.”

The PARKA recruitment and training project through ACRF continues to develop and expand throughout the state with intentions to provide more access to families and increased preparation of families at the beginning of the journey, while decreases participation in matching and disclosure.

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. Current information indicates that Alaska is still lacking in necessary services to meet the behavioral health needs of children and families. OCS is working to fill those gaps by reworking grants and federal funding sources to support Alaska’s service providers in meeting the needs of their communities.

OCS continues to partner with Division of Behavioral Health (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. Together OCS and Optum are working on identifying why service agencies are not offering the 1115 services they are approved to provide. Anecdotal information indicates that providers being able to bill for the service is not enough for them to build the service. OCS is further partnering with DBH and the Family Services Training Center (FSTC) so the FSTC can provide training and technical assistance on these services. They have provided multiple trainings including Innovations in Clinical Work with Youth and Families, Home Visiting Safety, Overcoming Stigma in Families with Challenges, Alaska Native Cultural Health and Wellness Strategies Facilitated Training, Early Essentials of Home Visiting, and many more.

OCS continues to promote 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 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 using 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 support. Multiple families have utilized this process. Anecdotal information is that some Tribal Elders are not comfortable submitting their information for financial transactions. OCS continues to offer support to families and Tribal members; at times this is done through the Request for Funds process for the purchase of beading materials or other cultural support items.

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. Several key stakeholders provide valuable input for the APSR including the Child Welfare Academy, the Alaska Center for Resource Families, Facing Foster Care in Alaska, Court Improvement Project, and more.

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 continue 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 has standardized licensing statutes, regulations, policies, and forms to ensure standards are applied equally to licensed foster homes and residential childcare institutions. On July 1, 2022, new Foster Care Licensing regulations, 7 AAC 67, will become effective. Alaska is reviewing policies, forms, and manuals to align with the new regulations.

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.

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. In FY22 there was a small decrease from 90% to 73%. OCS believes this is directly related to staff turnover and indicates a need for an annual, or more frequent, training on the process.

During this year OCS also recognized that the number of providers not flagged in ORCA or with the Department of Public Safety (DPS) needed to be addressed. A CCWIS report is now monitored by licensing managers for fingerprints not completed. An e-mail notification is then sent to the assigned PS Specialist and their supervisor with a deadline to have fingerprints completed. This is increasing the flagging of individuals timely so notification of safety issues can be received from DPS. When the project began there were around 600 individuals not flagged due to lack of fingerprints. That number has been reduced by more than half and staff continue to monitor for further compliance with fingerprint requirements.

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 calendar years 2021 and 2022, Alaska conducted face to face recruitment and retention events in conjunction with recruitment through media, emails, flyers, and other printed material. OCS has also been cohosting Statewide Foster Parent Forums with ACRF to hear directly from foster parents on ideas for what is needed to better retain them as they are a natural source for recruitment of new foster homes.

Information from case carrying staff indicated a need for more emergency homes to take placement of children with less than 24 hours' notice. Often this service was needed after hours and on the weekends. OCS licensing staff conducted specific recruitment and developed an orientation for Emergency Shelter Homes. So far three emergency shelter homes have been added through this process.

On 5/18/2022, Alaska had 2,952 children in out of home care, 613 of these children were placed with unlicensed relatives. Alaska had 547 child specific licensed foster homes, and 393 non-specific licensed foster home. Alaska had 374 vacant beds in non-specific licensed foster homes. During this time, Alaska conducted recruitment and developed orientation for Emergency Shelter Homes.

Specific recruitment is still needed for children and youth who have more intense behavioral needs or medical diagnosis, teens, and large sibling groups. The Department of Health and Social Services Commissioner's Office has joined in this effort and assisted by putting out a Request for Interest from individuals or agencies with ideas for opening residential programs that meet the high needs of some of the youth in care. OCS was specifically seeking service providers willing to provide crisis stabilization beds. This service was available during the beginning of the pandemic and was beneficial in getting youth stabilized prior to moving to an OCS licensed foster home.

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.

Alaska is a NEICE state so has a fully functioning system for the successful placement of children across state lines. OCS is also making efforts to create a function within ORCA for the Out-of-Town Request (OTR) process which is required for placement across regional lines. Previous efforts by the Regional Staff Managers to improve the OTR process were unsuccessful. Due to the various types and needs of an OTR it is difficult for tracking. Having this mechanism in ORCA will create a formal documented process.

Despite Alaska being a NEICE state there continue to be delays in completing ICPC requests from other states. Feedback indicates that this is due to staff turnover, need for staff training, and high caseloads for case carrying staff. Adoption ICPC home studies are referred to the OCS grantee who conducts home studies for in state adoptions. The terms of the grant allow the agency to complete the home study within 90 days of assignment, therefore these adoption ICPC home studies are rarely completed within the sixty-day timeframe.

ICPCs from Non-NEICE states	Percentage in 60 days	Percentage in 90 days	Percentage over 90 days
Adoption	15.4%	0%	84.6%
Licensing	35.3%	0%	64.7%
Parent	60%	0%	40%
Relative	22.2%	5.6%	72.2%

Source: OCS ORCA ICPC Home Study Completion Time Report (run date of 5/27/2022)

ICPCs from NEICE states	Percentage in 60 days	Percentage in 90 days	Percentage over 90 days
Adoption	40%	0%	60%
Licensing	50%	0%	50%
Parent	100%	0%	0%
Relative	22.2%	0%	77.8%

Source: OCS ORCA ICPC Home Study Completion Time Report (run date of 5/27/2022)

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.

2022 update: OCS continues to struggle with unprecedented staff turnover rates. In the most recent report from March 31, 2022, case carrying staff turnover continues to match last year at 57%. Non case carrying staff turnover continues to increase at 40.6%. The Southeast region saw the highest turnover rate at just under 74%. Coupled with a current vacancy rate of 25% in case carrying positions the workforce is strife with many challenges to provide essential services with a qualified and competent workforce. OCS leadership acknowledges many of the retention strategies assessed to theoretically have larger impact are longer term strategies that do not provide an immediate fix to the retention issue.

The OCS Retention leadership team met for an in person strategic planning session earlier this year. This session took the valuable information gathered from the 10 year plus forums, staff survey results, and staff exit surveys and created themes for strategies. These themes include workforce culture, monetary enhancement through expansion of the higher-level job classes, centralization of administrative tasks, centralized conflict free assessments, and expansion of the mentor programs. Workgroups were developed for each strategy and PDSAs were developed.

OCS has received Commissioner level support and actively worked with HR to submit a position description to add an additional longevity step to the Protective Services class for front line case carrying positions. The addition of the level III position after the second year of demonstrated competency will enhance monetary compensation of case carrying staff of a minimum of \$10,000 a year. Recently agreement was made that all rural positions could be “swept” and turned into PSS I/II/III flex positions. Each urban office was provided a number of PSS III positions that staff meeting certain criteria, could be flexed into.

A position description has been written and submitted for HR review to create a Mental Health Clinician position for staff Well Being and critical incident response. The planning for the wellness unit will include moving the Safety Program within the unit so a holistic comprehensive approach to the safety and wellbeing of staff both environmentally and psychologically can be employed. The Safety Program has been enhanced by adding a Program Coordinator, who was recently hired, to focus on the training of safety, law with liaison with enforcement and safety partners, and threat management of staff. The Safety Officer position will focus on the environmental safety of facilities of OCS offices and equipment and take over the continued operations planning in the event of emergency, natural disaster, cyberattack, and other things which have historically caused significant disruption.

OCS has worked closely with the Division of Public Health to benefit from a grant to receive education and training certification in Facilitated Attunement interactions in effort to enhance skills and employ reflective supervision. This strategy is focused on the identification of the importance of supervisory support and the strong correlation to retention and current job satisfaction. In addition to receiving the training and certification, OCS will work with the Erickson institute to develop a measurement plan to assess impact of the implementation. Two members of OCS leadership, with stable longevity were identified and will be certified in concert with training provided to upper leadership and supervisory staff in cohort trainings that began this spring.

Information was received that the efforts to centralize hiring were not successful. It was found that due to the number of applications and interviews it was too burdensome and created delays. Hiring has now moved regionally for Anchorage, Southcentral, and Northern. Southeast and Western were combined. OCS is partnering with job centers to advertise the PSS positions and conducting monthly presentations to out-of-state colleges. In addition, OCS is working closely with the UAA School of Social Work to reinstate the IV-E program to assist with educational costs in a Bachelor or Master’s degree program in Social Work to exchange for a two-year work commitment.

Data from the exit surveys and other forums has garnered support and assistance from the Commissioner's office. OCS remains hopeful this legislative session that additional assistance in the areas of staff retention may materialize.

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 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.

2022 Update: OCS in partnership with CWA continues to evaluate and make changes to SKILS. Evaluations were collated and evaluated. Feedback was provided that resulted in shifting the asynchronous timeline of SKILS, the utilization of real case examples, and the implementation of a third week to the initial training. The third week is considered a transfer of learning week in which the new PSS is assigned two cases. The cohort meets each morning to discuss their case and support the activities needed for that day. Supervisors now rotate and attend 161 to contribute to the learning and provide field examples. Recently completion of the evaluations by staff has decreased. CWA worked with OCS to develop a new introduction message highlighting the importance of completing the evaluation as it informs needed changes and the delivery of SKILS.

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 to the higher average caseload counts. The most recent quarterly HB 151 Workload report, 3/31/2022, showed an average caseload of 15 for PSS I/II staff. Southeast, due to vacancies was at the highest with the average caseload being 17.2. Both Southcentral (13.3) and Western (12.3) regions are reported to be at or below the recommended average of 13 cases. Caseload numbers are identified per family, not per child or intake.

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.

2022 Update: The SLC continues to actively engage in the workplan to develop and implement comprehensive supervision standards and expectations to include the use of data, essential services reports, and structured case supervision in IA and FS. The effects of COVID19, staff turnover, supervisors carrying cases, and SLC turnover, as caused major delays in the implementation of this strategy. A written workplan, a program instruction, and finalized guidelines has been valuable to continue the efforts despite turnover. Current supervisors were engaged in a focused discussion of the supervisory guidelines. Feedback was positive but there was acknowledgment of the increased amount of time it takes to use the guidelines. It was agreed that the guidelines assist supervisors in knowing the case and then eased subsequent staffings to focus on other areas.

The supervisory competency-based evaluation is fully implemented across the state. Feedback from managers indicates the evaluation is a positive tool in drafting written evaluations and assisting in dialogue with supervisors.

The mentor program expanded this year with the addition of another mentor. Feedback from staff and supervisors continues to be positive. Staff report their mentor is accessible. Feedback also indicates staff would like additional time with their mentor, which is now possible with the additional position.

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 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

2022 Update: Last fiscal year OCS issued a program instruction requiring a supervisory staffing note be documented when a PSR would not be initiated within the timeframes. A statewide analysis was conducted of all IAs not initiated timely. Over half of the delayed IAs had a supervisory staffing note, which primarily noted COVID-19 as a reason for the delay in initiation. A second level review of the supervisory staffing note details, per region, was conducted by Regional Managers. Several themes emerged that prompted further instruction and coaching. One example is notes were not being entered or contained vague information such as staff sickness, performance issues, or other factors that should not be documented in an activity note. Coaching was provided to supervisors on appropriate documentation that expresses the supervisor's understanding of the reason the initiation is late and the plan to conduct the face-to-face contact with alleged victim(s). Another statewide sample was taken during FY22 and most cases experiencing a late initiation contained a supervisory staffing note. Primary reasons for late initiation included inability to locate the family, COVID symptom positive, law enforcement inclusion, and in some areas of the state the delay was due to the need to schedule a CAC interview. Data was distributed to Regional Managers to utilize in identification of strategies or training for staff. Northern region conducted a training for the protocols when unable to locate a family and steps to conduct a diligent search supporting agency efforts to locate a family.

Investigations and Assessments continues to roll out statewide. The IA pilot leadership team met with pilot site supervisors and managers to observe DATA meetings to assess fidelity to the implemented model. It was found that several sites had model drift that potentially contributed to some areas showing an increase in investigations over 45 days. In the Wasilla office, the requirement to document the activity prior to moving the cases to the next protocol column was not enforced. This led to several cases showing they were completed or close to completion without having the documentation entered. Bi-monthly meetings are now set for implementation "re-boot" activities in each pilot site. The leadership team is also randomly shadowing morning meetings to guide supervisors and re-direct when necessary. An issue with batching of assignments was identified in Anchorage causing some units to be over-batched contributing to higher caseloads. The Anchorage manager is now consulting with other pilot site managers on batching processes to make needed corrections.

The Quality Assurance unit conducted full case reviews on a pulled sample of IAs within the pilot units. This case review report was disseminated and reviewed by the IA pilot leadership team and the managers for the pilot sites. Each site had differing strengths, and areas needing to be addressed, involving information

collection and correct identification of safety threats. There was an overarching strength of the cases reviewed in that the correct intervention was taken by OCS in all the cases reviewed. Areas needing improvements were robust information collection, pertinent collateral interviews, and correctly identifying safety threats. Managers utilized the quality case reviews for staffing strategies for improvement with the supervisors.

Alaska has seen an increase in timely initiations of investigations with 72% in 2021 from 69% in 2020 CFSR data and 2019 baseline data of 71%. Anchorage experienced the most dramatic increase in this area with a 12% increase from 2020 to 2021.

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%.

2022 Update: Tribal grantees for the Tribal Title IV-E Prevention grant are now serving families through referrals from OCS. Families meeting criteria are identified at the closure of the investigation where no legal intervention is identified but the families are medium to high risk. A tracking log has been developed and additional OCS staff were identified to assist in the referral process. Regular meetings are scheduled with grantees to provide assistance. It is too early in to evaluate the success of this in-home-services program as Tribal grantees have just begun serving families.

OCS continues to evaluate capacity for an in-home-services program within the agency. With staff turnover, current vacancy rates, and the caseload standards set by HB 151, OCS does not have capacity for an internal in-home-services program.

Supervisory guidelines were implemented with all supervisory staff. On-going implementation strategies have occurred and will continue through training and evaluation. The SLC is developing a measurement plan which will include generating a baseline for consistency and quality of supervisory staffing notes. Ongoing trainings and scheduled forums with supervisors provide continued opportunity for feedback on the guidelines and adjusting where necessary. The THV staffing tools created are included within the guidelines. Feedback from Regional Staff Managers indicates that the tool is still viewed as helpful in discussing the appropriateness of beginning a THV as well as the ongoing safety assessment during THV.

Services to prevent removal or reentry into foster care have declined in 2021, with 79% of cases reviewed for CFSR achieved a strength in comparison to 2020 CFSR aggregate data of 85% of cases achieved a strength, with appropriate removals occurring when services could not address the safety concerns. The Juneau PIP was struggling the most in this area with only 64% of the applicable cases scoring a strength.

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%.

2022 Update: The new ORCA documentation process of supervisory certification of relative search has been fully implemented. An ORCA report has been created to inform managers and OCS leaders if the required supervisory certification is being completed. Early reports indicate that some supervisors are utilizing this documentation, but it is not consistent across the state. Supervisors and managers feel that this is an administrative task that is not assisting in the effort to maintain relative searches are consistently done for each child. Supervisors are reporting there are other natural places within case staffings that relative search is discussed, but then is not consistently documented. OCS consistently has high rates of relative placement. OCS is also tracking data on the number of relative search referrals made to Tribal Cosigners. This data also identifies if a relative placement was a result of this search. OCS meets consistently with Cosigners to problem solve areas of low referrals. Negotiations are set to occur in August of 2022 where data will be discussed. As reported in other strategies, the supervisory guidelines and PSM guidelines have been created and provided across the state. The guidelines and Program Instruction were included in the agendas of the PSM I collective workgroup for discussion on any needed changes. Feedback from the meeting supported alignment of the guidelines to the monthly essential services strategic meetings. Both methods of a supervisory guideline tool and the monthly statewide meeting of all PSM II's and PSM I's offer a strategic consistent use and expectation of the use of data to inform strategic planning in case practice. This has shown to be critical during this year as the staffing difficulties and vacancies have required focus and strategic planning on continued delivery of essential services. Managers in consultation with executive leadership are utilizing data and support tools to meet needs of children and families.

Efforts continue on these goals through different strategies and activities. Placement with siblings has remained stable for the three PIP sites with efforts found to keep sibling groups together whenever possible. The Anchorage PIP site was the only site below 100% in sibling placement and the review of cases identified that there were large sibling groups needing a placement able to accommodate the number of children in the family and there was a need for ongoing reassessment of the placement situation.

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 CFSR 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.

2022 Update: During this fiscal year, a bench and practitioner meeting was held that confirmed Fairbanks CINA judges were scheduling 6-month Case Review Hearings. Feedback during the meeting indicated that judges felt the additional hearings were beneficial and were optimistic they will impact permanency. Barriers were discussed that included the lack of time to schedule review hearings and needing to identify ways to free up calendars to schedule more days to hold review hearings. Initial committee meetings have occurred to discuss the next location for implementation, but a location has not yet been identified. The permanency questions are implemented within the supervisory staffing guide that is being utilized, statewide, by PSS IV staff. This supervisory staffing guide also contains the THV tools created as a strategy within the PIP. Feedback from supervisors continues to be positive regarding the THV safety guide assisting with the consistent assessment of safety during THV.

OCS is excited to engage with the Governor's Foster Parent and Parent Collaboration Council. This will provide feedback from those with lived experience of the child welfare system. OCS has members on the subcommittees, so leadership is hearing the conversations and experiences of others. Information from the council and subcommittee will be highly beneficial in developing Alaska's 2025-2029 CFSP. Appropriateness of permanency goals and establishment of goals timely also experienced dramatic improvements in 2021 with aggregate data at 80% which is 23% above the PIP goal. This increase is largely connected to case plan compliance data as timely creation of case plans results in timely identification of permanency goals.

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.

2022 Update: The POSC pilot program, Hello Baby, is fully implemented and functioning within Bartlett Regional Hospital in Juneau. Bartlett provides biannual reports to OCS in August and February each year. The most recent report for September 1, 2021, through January 31, 2022, indicates that 28 families were referred to Hello Baby and 24 Plans of Safe Care were created. Two families did decline participation and two families did not respond to efforts made to contact them. The primary substance Hello BABY infants were exposed to was nicotine (11 babies). Infants were also exposed to marijuana (9), methamphetamines/amphetamines (4), alcohol (3), heroin (2), and MAT (1).

As Juneau does have a small number of births, and a smaller number of substance exposed births, Hello BABY has been serving families that do not meet the criteria for a Plan of Safe Care. They have also been hosting multiple community outreach events to further knowledge of the program as well as increase the number of providers involved in the program.

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.

2022 Update: OCS continues to maintain a position focused on distributing screened out reports to Tribes. OCS continues, as well, to encourage Tribes to contact the families identified in these screened out reports. OCS has also identified additional positions that will form the Compact referral unit. This unit will be supervised by the Social Services Program Officer that is designated to bring more focus to Alaska's Prevention efforts. This includes involvement in the Compact for prevention. Tribally Co-signers and OCS agree that Prevention is not a scope of work that can be measured as the other scopes of work within the Compact are. Negotiations are set for August of 2022.

As noted above, the Plans of Safe Care pilot, Hello BABY is underway and currently serving families. The program has been anecdotally successful. DPH is currently working on an evaluation plan. There have been additional stakeholder meetings this year to discuss scaling out the pilot to other regions.

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.

2022 Update: Alaska continues to evaluate the potential for a Title IV-E prevention plan. There is a general lack of evidenced based practices in the state. OCS created a grant opportunity for Title IV-E Tribes to provide prevention services with their Tribal families in the way that OCS intended to run a State IV-E Prevention plan. Feedback from the Tribes about the requirement of evidenced based practices has not been positive. There is also a lack of agreement with the criteria for being a candidate for care. With the lack of evidenced based practices in the state, as well as the evaluation requirements of a prevention plan and services with the plan, Alaska's efforts in obtaining approval for the IV-E Prevention plan remain on hold. OCS is partnering with the Department of Public Health to elevate state providers of Parents as Teachers with the use of CBCAP funds.

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.

2022 Update: Alaska continues to utilize the PDSA process in the implementation of new programs and services. The Capacity Building Center for states is still available for individual technical assistance as needed by OCS. The CQI organizational structure is fully implemented within the agency with a statewide functioning CMLT.

A Continuous Quality Improvement Manual has been drafted and presented to CMLT members. Each member is responsible for reviewing this manual and providing feedback. This manual is intended to inform

both internal OCS staff and stakeholders on how OCS is a CQI agency. The plan is for the manual to be finalized and imbedded in practice by early FY 23.

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.

2022 Update: During this year, a draft CQI manual was developed. This was based on consultation with the Capacity Building Center, reviewing other state examples, and assessing current feedback loops and other mechanisms in which OCS already delivers and receives information. This draft was provided to CMLT members as well as the Capacity Building Center for feedback. CMLT plans to review a portion of the manual in each CMLT meeting as a standing agenda item.

The Stakeholder Engagement Implementation Plan was also developed during FY22 and provided to leadership, as well as Region X in the last PIP report.

Alaska's Governor announced his People's First Initiative in FY 22. Part of this initiative is a Governor's Parent and Foster Parent Collaborative Council comprised of individuals with lived experience in the child welfare system. OCS looks forward to using this information from those with lived experience to inform next year's APSR and the 2025-2029 CFSP.

Members of the council include: one current foster parent (non-relative), one current foster parent (relative), one adoptive family representative, one foster care service provider, one OCS representative, one DEED representative, one parent that did not experience successfully family reunification, one parent that did experience successful family reunification, two service providers or organizations providing services related to parenting skills and supportive services, and a GAL.

Duties of the council include: attending monthly board meetings; partner with the existing RFAB; make recommendations on components of support, treatment, or other services that would be most valued and utilized by resource families; make recommendations on effective recruitment and retention of resource families; make recommendations on policy and procedure that may impact a foster family's ability to provide safe, nurturing care; make recommendations on possible training opportunities for resource families and OCS Protection Specialists; provide feedback on the child welfare system's performance strengths and weaknesses; and provide recommendations on strategies to increase effective communication between foster parents, parents, and OCS.

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. The Center has provided group and individual technical assistance on program and process implementation. This support was provided to CMLT members working on their PDSA implementations.

Casey Family Programs has been a valuable partner in joint strategies with the CIP, the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact and the Alaska Impact Alliance. Casey Family Programs has provided technical support and research to assess Alaska's capacity to develop or expand on existing services for a "warm line" resource navigation hotline.

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. During the PIP, these meetings have moved to regional and are only for PIP sites. 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 permanency project ended in December 2021. Results were difficult to measure due to more children being added to the focus population. For example, as managers focused on children on THV longer than 180, despite closing multiple cases, new cases entered that population. Western saw multiple successes on specific cases in achieving permanency for children who had been languishing in care. The permanency project highlighted the need to focus on permanency far earlier in cases. The supervisory guidelines now contain permanency questions to assist in those permanency discussions between workers and supervisors. OCS state office adoption and guardianship unit continues to take on more centralized tasks, to assist regional permanency staff in focusing on cases earlier. Statewide subsidy negotiations now occur through this state office unit, as well as homestudy referrals for most regions. OCS intends to centralize the completion of full disclosures within this unit during FY 23 and 24.

In FY 21 and 22, 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 22 and FY 23, 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 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. Alaska will be conducting the case reviews in accordance with the measurement plan until December 2023.

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 needing improvement. The expectation is the field office leadership team develop strategies to address areas needing improvements. Utilizing the PDSA model, field offices with regional management develop or refine strategies for practice improvement areas noted in the case reviews. Strategies are reported and barriers presented for feedback at monthly Essential Services meetings. In FY 22, field office case review outcomes have continued to be reviewed at a statewide leadership level to discuss systemic issues that may be present and also areas in which regions may be supported. Many of the challenges presented were a direct result of vacancies and needing to triage efforts and re-allocate resources and staff to provide services to children and families.

During FY 22, 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. Additionally, the QA unit was requested to review a sample of licensed foster care providers who had received multiple investigations. A sample of providers meeting criteria of multiple screened in investigations were reviewed to inform quality of assessment on licensing investigations and any systemic themes. The review was conducted in FY 22 with the report anticipated to be finalized in FY 23.

Alaska has not yet assessed the capacity to conduct a State Review for the upcoming round of CSFR although ongoing discussions and preliminary planning has occurred. Alaska has reviewed the criteria regarding being a state led review and feel required criteria is already being met predicting Alaska will choose and apply to be a state led review. Alaska is currently undergoing the PIP until the measurement period ends in December 2023. Alaska participated in various webinars and round 4 discussions to learn more of the changes and requirements of round 4 to assess the state's 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 analysis 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 FY22, 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. This report is planned to continue on an annual basis. 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. In the development stages is the Governor's Council which is a forum for parents and youth to provide their perspective of their shared experiences. An annual report is expected to be developed from this council once it is fully functioning. Feedback to these organized collectives include PIP progress and strategies as well as essential services data to include safety and permanency measures.

In FY 22, OCS finalized guidelines and procedures to formalize the stakeholder feedback loop. The central point for dissemination and integration of sharing stakeholder feedback is the CMLT. 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. In FY 22, OCS state leadership conducting resource family forums to hear from licensed and unlicensed foster parents regarding challenges they have faced and ideas for improvement. Two sessions were held with executive management and regional managers. In FY 23 it is anticipated another large forum to be held and then conducted regionally to focus

on regional specific challenges and improvement ideas. Alaska anticipates further engagement activities to strengthen information sharing with CIP, Tribes, the Governor's Council, FFCA, and other parties to assist alignment in child welfare improvement.

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 FFY21 allocation of IV-B I funding was \$87,367.00, which provided a limited amount of funding on top of other Title IV-B, subpart 2 funds, for a family preservation grant. This grant was named Circles of Support and was located in the communities of Wasilla, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Nome, and Juneau. In SFY 2021, 187 families and 488 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 7 families who are adopting or have already adopted a child from another country. This is an increase of three families from last year. 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 are not 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

Alaska does not have a comprehensive plan to address child maltreatment deaths, however, OCS continues to provide a comprehensive report in effort to track child maltreatment deaths. The number of children who

died and had child protection history in Alaska decreased by fifteen deaths from 2020. This number (38) is still alarmingly high based on the total child population in Alaska taken from the 2020 Census. There is some concern, considering the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, that the total child deaths in 2021 was underreported to Intake from previous years. Children under twenty-four months of age account for the largest total of all deaths as does children of Alaska Native descent in 2021. Children in the Western and Northern regions that are more sparsely populated with the largest geographic coverage in the state accounted for half of all child deaths in 2021. Only fifteen of the thirty-eight deaths resulted in a screened in report of maltreatment which resulted in an investigation by OCS. OCS continues the trend of investigating fewer number of fatalities over previous years. As was the case last year, the reasons for the decline in the number of fatalities investigated is inconclusive from the data available. In several instances, the child that died was the only child in that household and therefore, OCS would not have cause or authority to investigate as no other children remained in the household.

Suicide still accounts for almost twenty percent of child fatalities in Alaska. Children appear to be committing Suicide at a younger age with the youngest child being only twelve years old. The children whose manner of death was identified as Undetermined or accidental included infants who died when their caregiver rolled over on them during sleep and because of Sudden Unexplained Death in Infancy. These deaths continue to be of overall concern with a similar trend over previous years.

The agency continues to utilize several strategies and programs to improve outcomes for families. Increased efforts in the area of prevention of maltreatment are supported by strategies including: the High-Risk Infant Protocol (HRI), the Mentor program to improve PSS skills on the job, Strengthening I&A to improve the effectiveness of Investigations & Assessments, and extended SKILS training for new and seasoned caseworkers. A new training has been added to the SKILS curriculum focused on information regarding suicide, resources and self-care for staff called Youth Mental Health First Aid. This training was incorporated into the training through efforts of a Department of Behavioral Health Block Grant and the Child Welfare Academy and was specifically selected based on the child death data from 2020. Data is continually collected on the effectiveness of various strategies, with the outcomes evaluated and future strategies implemented on an ongoing basis.

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 Southcentral 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 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 requested two award extensions since the vehicle delivery is substantially delayed. The pandemic delayed Alaska's ability to pivot from its original plan for contracted parent navigation services to the new plan to purchase the vehicle and family contact technology and supplies. Alaska was not able to obligate all the supplemental funds by September 30, 2022, another request for extension was submitted on June 16, 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 allowed for in-person contact in hub communities and outlying villages for monthly caseworker visits, family contact, licensing visits to foster homes, investigations, and assessments. Some villages did 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 FFY21 allocation of PSSF (IV-B II) was \$586,718. Alaska blends PSSF funds with other sources of funding to ensure the provision of the four categories of services. This is accomplished through funding grants to non-profit and Tribal organizations and/or agencies.

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

Family Support Services (FSS) grants are currently funded with Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) funds. Family Support Services grants fund primary prevention services in Alaska's three most heavily populated communities. The target population of this grant program is children ages 0-12 with special consideration given to children ages birth to three years. Other targeted populations are families experiencing disability of a family member and/or homelessness. All awardees provide regular outreach to transitional housing centers, school districts, pediatric offices, and domestic violence shelters to ensure community partners are aware of their program and know how to refer at risk families they are working with.

Grants are awarded to community-based providers with services that strengthen families by enhancing parental resilience, link families to concrete supports, enhance knowledge of parenting and child development and support the social and emotional development of young children. Core services of FSS grant providers include in-home support, parent education, facilitated linkages to community resources, transportation services, and service coordination. The programs promote participation in early childhood services, medical services, and educational and employment services. FSS works with families who need support with basic needs, skill acquisition, and crisis stabilization. All three of the current grantees utilize evidence-based curriculums, including Nurturing Families and Parents as Teachers, and have participated in

Strengthening Families training. In SFY 2021, 71 families and 103 children, 21 of which were reported as Alaska Native/American Indian, were served by family support services.

FAMILY PRESERVATION SERVICES

Family preservation grants titled Circles of Support are awarded by OCS to community-based family services providers. OCS blends PSSF, Title IV-B, and other sources of funding to support these grants. In SFY 2021, 187 families and 488 children, 260 of which were reported as Alaska Native/American Indian, were served by this program. These families were in the communities of Wasilla, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Nome, and Juneau. Circles of Support is designed to serve families and children who have been determined by OCS to be at risk of out-of-home placement as well as 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. Referrals to Circles of Support are made by OCS after identifying children to be at risk of out-of-home placement; a child protection case may or may not be opened. Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) is the Circles of Support grantee located in Alaska's most populated city of Anchorage. CITC is a Tribal organization providing culturally relevant services to referred clients of this community. All other awardees are required to articulate their agencies plan to educate and train staff with a lens of cultural humility and understanding. Additionally, another grantee employs staff with lived experience in the child welfare system to provide a peer navigator and lived experience element to their Circles of Support Program.

TIME LIMITED FAMILY REUNIFICATION

Due to the high number of children in out-of-home care, OCS continues to utilize PSSF funds to prioritize family reunification services. One such services is family contact; family contact facilitates permanency and contributes to the well-being of children/youth placed out-of-home. The definition of family contact is time that children/youth spend with their parent, guardian, Indian custodian, siblings, or extended family members in the least restrictive, least intrusive, environment possible. Parents (or other participating adults) can perform family activities as they normally would, and they take full responsibility for the safety and well-being of their children during family contact. Family Contact Services also include parent coaching/support and limited transportation services for children.

In FY21, OCS transitioned from a Family Reunification grant to a Family Contact Services (FCS) grant. This FCS grant was offered in the Anchorage, Southcentral, and Northern regions which are the three most populated regions of Alaska. Currently, four Family Contact Services grantees support families in their reunification efforts by facilitating supervised family contact. Half of the grantees are Tribal organizations offering culturally consistent/competent family contact opportunities for our indigenous population. In FY22 the four grantees were offered an award increase of 25% to expand their programs; three grantees were able to take on the expansion and all four are expected to continue with the increased funding and expanded program in the next fiscal year.

In SFY 2021, 194 families were served by the Family Contact Services grant. Additionally, OCS uses PSSF funding to facilitate contracts and Memorandum's of Agreement with other agencies that can provide additional Family Contact Services. An additional 25 families were served by one such contract in the community of Anchorage.

As the number of children in out-of-home placement has continued to increase, the demand for family contact services remains high. OCS does not have sufficient staffing resources to provide the frequency of family contact we desire. Therefore, funding that supports these grant services is crucial to maintain and continue the provision of the time limited family reunification service of family contact.

ADOPTION SUPPORT AND PROMOTION

OCS utilizes title IV-E adoption program savings to fund Adoption Support and Promotion services that are delivered through OCS's Post Adoption and Guardianship Support grant. This grant is awarded to the Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF) who provide support, information, and training to all of Alaska's resource families to include foster, adoptive, relative caretakers, and guardianship families. The grant was established to facilitate the seamless delivery of pre and post adoption/guardianship services and support for adoptive and guardianship families. The provision of supportive services such as family preparation services, information and referral services, crisis intervention, and case management all support improved outcomes for children and families by way of placement stability and linkages to supports and services that enhance parenting capacity. The population served through this grant includes all families in Alaska who have adopted or been granted guardianship of children through both public and private adoptions. Services are available statewide and ACRF has a robust system in place consisting of a comprehensive website, a telephonic hotline staffed with social services professionals, online educational videos, self-study courses, articles, as well as virtual and telephonic education courses and support services. As an example, ACRF provides a series of classes called "The Adoption Learning Path" that prepares families to adopt special needs children from foster care. When a family completes the series of classes, ACRF and the family create a "family profile," that is shared with the Office of Children's Services. Matching children with special needs with families who understand and can meet those needs, has been instrumental in facilitating permanency for children with special needs.

OCS further supports ACRF via a Resource Family Training Grant. Money from this grant facilitates the provision of intensive education, family matching, and post-adoption support to a limited number of families per year. This is the PARKA program that works to match hard to place, legally free children in foster care with trained, adoptive families who can meet their needs.

FUNDING PERCENTAGES

In the previous year, OCS planned to spend PSSF funding in all four PSSF service categories at a percentage of 20% or higher. The Adoption Promotion and Support Services category served through OCS's Post Adoption Guardianship Support grant was fully funded and even experienced an award increase of 100% with the use of title IV-E adoption savings. With this reallocation and increase of supportive funding, OCS was able to fund the category of Family Preservation Services at a higher rate than the planned 40%. This was especially important as the State of Alaska budget for FY22 experienced a funding cut to these services. PSSF funds supported the service categories of community-based family support and family reunification, at a percentage of 24% each which was slightly higher rate than the planned 20%.

In SFY 23, OCS plans to spend the PSSF funds at the following rate:

- Family Support: 20% - OCS will blend PSSF Title IV-B funding with CBCAP, general funds and other funding sources to provide service in this category.
- Family Preservation: 20% - OCS will continue to fund the Circles of Support grant with these federal dollars and utilize general funds to ensure robust programs throughout Alaska.
- Time limited Family Reunification: 40% - OCS will fund our Family Contact Services grant which provides supervised family visitation to children in out of home care for our evidence-based effort to increase positive outcomes through family reunification.
- Adoption Support and Promotion: 20% - OCS will blend PSSF funding with other funding sources to continue supporting Adoption Support through grant funded programs.

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 6.2% of the general population of children in Alaska but makes up 27.3% of the substantiated protective services reports. Further, 6.7% 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 continues a true partnership and government-to-government relationship with Tribes and Tribal Organizations to truly transform child welfare. Both OCS and Tribal Cosigners are invested in the success of the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact. Prevention work has been added to the Compact as a service to be funded, but not as a scope of work. The state is encouraging Tribes to work with families prior to OCS involvement.

4 CY 2021 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	6.2%	27.3%	6.7%
Ages 0-5	Non-Native	26.0%	13.1%	0.8%
Ages 6-10	Native	5.9%	19.4%	5.0%
Ages 6-10	Non-Native	22.8%	8.6%	0.6%
Ages 11-15	Native	5.6%	14.4%	3.9%
Ages 11-15	Non-Native	22.9%	10.5%	0.7%
Ages 16-17	Native	2.0%	4.1%	3.1%
Ages 16-17	Non-Native	8.6%	2.5%	0.4%

Sources: ORCA RR0002, Run dates: 1/1/21-12/31/21 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 partially fund the Circles of Support Grant described above.

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

OCS was awarded Kinship Navigator funds for FY2021-2023. In addition to this award, OCS partnered with the Division of Senior and Disability Services (DSDS) to maximize the use of existing funds available to support relative caregivers in caring for children. The purpose of the National Family Caregiver Support (NFCS) grant is to provide information to caregivers about available services, assistance to caregivers in gaining access to services, individual counseling, support groups, caregiver training, respite care and supplemental services on a time limited basis. NFCS grant money is blended with Kinship Navigator funding

to expand services for all kin who are caring for children; DSDS awarded NFCS grant money to Volunteers of America (VOA).

VOA Alaska's kinship care services are free and confidential for all families. The only requirement is raising a grandchild, younger sibling, niece, nephew, cousin, or any other extended family members under the age of 18. Caregivers do not have to be involved with foster care or have legal custody of the child. VOA's Kinship Family Program offers Kinship Connection Groups that are monthly support groups for family members, monthly educational workshops with topics such as legal resources, working with child welfare, child development mental health, case management services, and a variety of monthly activities including book clubs, movie nights, respite nights and more. VOA also promotes the use of services via other community provides such as Help Me Grow and Alaska's 2-1-1 which is a one-stop resource for connecting a wide variety of services in Alaska's communities.

Highlights from the FY21 Kinship Program:

- In August, the Kinship Program partnered with local businesses and provided school supplies to 35 children of enrolled kinship caregivers.
- During the holiday season, the Kinship Program was able to provide gifts for 60 children in kinship care.
- In January, the Kinship Program organized a paint by numbers night, providing the supplies and painting activity to families to log onto a virtual platform and paint together.
- In March and April, after COVID vaccinations became accessible, the Kinship Program introduced group respite care movie nights with private showings at a local theater.
- In May and June, the weather improved, and the Kinship Program organized group respite care to take place at the local Reindeer farm.
- The program implemented both book club and Bingo nights to bring kinship care providers together to help reduce feelings of isolation experienced by kinship families. These activities were highly successful and have been requested to continue due to popular demand of the program participants.
- In November of 2020, 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. Between its opening in November and June 30th, 2021, they had provided 4,541 meals to families.

The Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF) also 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 kinship caregivers.

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 \$38,116.00 in title IV-B, subpart 2 funding for FFY 2020 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 8, 2021:

- **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 **68%**; this is a decrease from FFY 2020 (71%).

- **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: **74%** of the monthly visits by OCS caseworkers to children in foster care occurred in the child's residence, which is a slight decrease from FFY 2020 (75%).

FFY 2021 Data

Region	Item 1: Total Children	Data Item 2: Total Monthly Visits	Data Item 3: Total Months in Care	Data Item 4: 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	1,441	8,253	12,584	6,298	65%	76%
Northern	734	4,527	6,194	2,873	73%	63%
Southcentral	1,079	6,828	8,906	5,566	76%	81%
Southeast	290	1,882	2,574	1,408	73%	74%
Western	323	1,172	2,585	746	45%	63%
Statewide	3,869	22,682	32,867	16,911	69%	74%

*** Source: RR00124 Run dates: 10/1/2020-9/30/2021

OCS received notice from the Children's Bureau in February of 2022 that based on Alaska's failure to meet the FFY 2021 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%. 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.

In response to the COVID19 pandemic virtual case worker visits were temporarily approved through a program instruction. OCS staff were provided direction on how to document these caseworker visits. An additional program instruction provided necessary information for staff regarding the confidentiality of varying virtual meeting platforms. The flexibilities in conducting visits virtually ended when Alaska's Governor ended the disaster emergency declaration in February 2021. OCS leadership has continued to allow virtual caseworker visits to occur for situations involving COVID19 such as villages closing to travelers or families with active COVID19 symptoms.

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.

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 2021, Alaska had a savings of \$2,827,465.

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 can 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.

Family First Transition Grant funds will be utilized to support and expand the availability of evidence-based parenting education models for the families of Alaska. The State of Alaska Department of Public Health manages an existing Parents As Teachers grant, which ensures the grantees are model Affiliates and following the curriculum to fidelity. Parent’s As Teachers is a well-supported evidence-based model on the Title IV-E clearinghouse. OCS will utilize the Family First Transition grant funds to expand Alaska’s Parents as Teachers program to more organizations, agencies, and communities in Alaska. Additionally, Alaska will establish a Parents as Teachers trainer for easier access and technical assistance for Parents as Teachers model affiliates.

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

OCS's Independent Living Team administers the Chafee Program; the supervisor of the Independent Living Team is a member of the state office Service Array Unit. The supervisor manages seven, Regional Independent Living Specialists (RILS) who provide Chafee services directly to youth. The supervisor manages grants and contracts awarded to providers of Chafee Services and coordinates and collaborates with community partners who deliver services to IL-eligible youth. These services focus on mentorship, youth retreats, and housing support.

Anchorage, Southcentral, and Fairbanks regions have two RILS while the Southeast RIL also covers Western. Anchorage, Southcentral and Fairbanks have more community resources available for foster youth and alumni, yet the IL Program makes every effort to provide equitable distribution of services and funding to youth statewide. During this reporting year, the RILS position from the Western region was reallocated to the Northern region and Western region's caseload was reallocated to Southeast. The rationale for this decision was caseloads for Northern RILS have been growing without plateau; caseloads are comparable to the Southcentral region including similarities in having caseloads that span across both urban and rural service delivery areas. The Southeast region has remained stable with lower IL case numbers allowing for the inclusion of Western's IL cases into Southeast's caseload without compromising service delivery. During this past year, the IL program has struggled to maintain staffing for the Southeast RILS position. For much of the year the position was vacant requiring quick strategic shifts to continue to provide IL services to youth from both the Western and Southeast regions. All RILS were assigned to serve youth from those areas, and they connected with youth and regional agency staff to continue to seamlessly provide services to those IL youth. A No Wrong Door practice was adopted in which youth and staff alike could access any of the IL staff at any time and in any region and rely on the global expertise of all the RILS. The Southeast position has recently been filled and the new employee is receiving training and has been establishing his Southeast caseload. The RILS' carrying Western IL cases participate in a warm handoff process of Western cases to the new Southeast RILS to ensure there are no gaps in services or program delivery during the transition process. The table below reflects IL caseloads during this reporting year.

Region	# of staff	# of IL Eligible Youth	# of NYTD services delivered
Northern	2	200	627
Anchorage	2	345	1587
South Central	2	236	982
Southeast	1	145	119
Western	Served by unit as a whole	54	109

The Independent Living (IL) Program supports eligible youth in transitioning into adulthood. "Eligible youth" is defined as youth aged 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, Governor Dunleavy extended the moratorium on youth exiting foster care due to age (AS.47.(05.065(c)(1)(B))). This

allowed youth who would have aged out of foster care to remain in foster care longer and for foster families to continue to receive financial support.

The IL Program offers regularly scheduled life skills activities, classes, and training opportunities for youth and alumni. This year, all Life Skills classes have been delivered biweekly and virtually in partnership with Facing Foster Care in Alaska (FFCA), FFCA's Youth Leadership Board, the Office of Youth Empowerment, and the Education and Training Voucher Program. Providing classes virtually has facilitated participation of youth statewide. Virtual platforms have facilitated community partner engagement as guest speakers delivering NYTD (National Youth in Transition Database) skill development opportunities. With enhanced statewide virtual program delivery, OCS has delivered over 100 Life Skills classes with consistent youth engagement with an average of 30 youth per Life Skills class and up to 40 youth in 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.

The IL program utilizes NYTD to survey youth and assess their education levels, employment status, housing, completion of high school, attendance in advanced education classes, if they have had children, whether they have been incarcerated and if they have engaged in substance abuse treatment. The information gathered from NYTD survey's is used to steer programmatic activities by highlighting needed changes to service delivery and clearly identifying areas needing more programmatic focus. In this past year, the IL program shifted the duties of collecting NYTD surveys to the Child Welfare Academy and the Office of Youth Empowerment; this was done via a contract. The Office of Youth Empowerment (OYE) is staffed by former foster youth who have lived experience and are alumni of the IL program. The OYE facilitated online access to NYTD surveys which increased efficiency and accessibility to survey participants. The OYE also conducted the outreach to survey participants via various means, connecting on a peer-to-peer level to complete the surveys and achieve compliance.

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 the following partners: 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 meetings with partner agencies such as Covenant House, Volunteers of America, National 4-H, 4-H Bethel, and Kawerak Native Tribe. Rich partnerships also continue with Facing Foster Care in Alaska (FFCA), with specific reliance on the FFCA Youth Leadership Board. The Youth Leadership Board has been a pivotal partner for the IL program as we navigated the pandemic; they managed resource distribution, public awareness campaigns, retreats, Life Skills class planning, program development and outreach to engage marginalized youth. Additionally, our partnership with Alaska Housing Finance Corporation also grew over the past year to include monthly meetings with the Fostering Youth Independence and the Making a Home voucher program manager. This partnership was incredibly important in supporting youth not only in exiting foster care but also helping them navigate achieving independence during the pandemic. Reliance on our partnership with 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 also grew. This network of partnerships enhances service delivery for youth and provides opportunities to learn about independently accessing services after exiting from custody.

The Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act created a need for enhanced and expedited program planning efforts. To mitigate administrative delays in service delivery, OCS made immediate efforts to create internal funding structures and distribution plans by way of contracts and grants. OCS has created a process to provide grants directly to youth. Some of the direct to youth grants were distributed through the seven OCS Regional Independent Living Specialists. These specialists reached out to youth by many different means, awarding 220 youth grants for financial assistance for rent, insurance, transportation, debt relief, education, training, and more. A large majority of these awards were for transportation and housing.

Alaska also issued cash grants directly to youth; these monies were distributed by FFCA and managed by the FFCA's Youth Leadership Board. FFCA was also contracted to conduct a public awareness campaign to widely spread information about resource availability. FFCA was able to award 203 grants to eligible youth ages 14-27. Youth were able to stay financially afloat during the pandemic with the help of the grants they received that supported their basic needs, housing, transportation, education, and employment. Further, through the increased partnership with the IL program, FFCA and the Office of Youth Empowerment completed microlearning videos for youth. These videos were designed, created, and performed by foster youth peers and the FFCA Youth Leadership Board. There are now 15 videos in the IL Microlearning Library ranging in topics on housing, car maintenance, financial literacy, employment, and more. In addition to the direct to youth grants, OCS collaborated with the University of Alaska's Child Welfare Academy to create 15 Life Skills Micro-Learning videos. The Micro-Learning videos can be accessed by youth statewide and cover a wide array of life skills topics.

OCS also partnered with Kawerak Tribal Association to support educational and life skills programming via an ePortfolio project. The Berkley Center for Teaching and Learning documents that ePortfolio has been used to facilitate, document, and archive student learning. It is a learning tool for students to clarify their educational goals, integrate and solidify learning through reflection, and highlight achievement. By having students reflect on what they learned, how they learned it, and how much they learned, they start to take control of their own learning. As students are assembling their portfolios, they make connections between their experiences and their identities. Sometimes the very act of posting multiple items and writing narratives about themselves gives youth a space to reflect on their experiences, in ways they have not had the time or space for in the past. The ePortfolio project supported participation of 15 youth from the Bering Strait Region in a 6-month project to learn about themselves, their Tribal heritage, and developing skills to plan for their futures.

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 provides feedback for agency agendas, legislation, policy development, 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, 78 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 23 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. In addition to organizing and delivering retreats, FFCA mailed out over 100 boxes to youth across the state that included helpful resources, activities to stay connected with family and peers during isolation, items to practice safe measures during COVID, and personal hygiene items. This past year the FFCA Youth Leadership Board and OCS Leadership were able to meet again and discuss programmatic strategy for delivering additional state

resources to eligible youth, status of agency changes in response to legislation, and establish partnership priorities moving forward. The following table reflects the retreats that were held during this reporting year.

Retreat dates	# of attendees	Services delivered
October 2021	36	A Virtual Retreat FFCA Youth Leadership Board facilitated retreat on healthy relationships, coping skills, and a youth cafe where youth had the ability to share their experience of being in foster care, and community resources.
December 2021	42	A Virtual Retreat FFCA Youth Leadership Board facilitated retreat on job readiness skills, Education and Training Voucher, ICWA new rulings through the Supreme Court System, and community resources.
May 2022	23	Career Conference for youth that are planning to attend vocational or training programs or other career opportunities other than college. Youth had the opportunity to learn about programs we have across Alaska such as Northern Industrial Training, Alaska Job Corps, Alaska Career College, Trend Setters, and Military.

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. In the past fiscal year, 21 youth were referred to the mentoring program. Of those 21, 11 are currently in the enrollment process and 6 have been matched with an adult mentor. BBBS also struggled to maintain staffing and in February 2022, their Sync Program Coordinator left the agency. A new Sync Program Coordinator started on April 20, 2022 and is in process of taking over the role and enrolling and making new Sync matches. The Sync Program Coordinator position continually communicates with Independent Living staff, along with attending virtual Independent Living classes. Coordinator has also continued to build a marketing presence for both youth and volunteer recruitment. Due to COVID-19, BBBS continues to complete all interviews with youth and volunteers through video conference. However, matches do currently have the option to have their first meeting in-person if they choose. The Program Coordinator organizes monthly match activities virtually and in-person, provides tickets to local attractions, including the Wildlife Conservation Center, the Reindeer Farm and the recent performance of the King and I at the Anchorage Center for the Performing Arts. The youth who are referred to and engage with Sync come from diverse backgrounds with 72% of currently matched youth being youth of color and 44% identify as a part of the LGBTQI+ population. The Match Support Specialist connects with these youth on a regular basis to check in on how their match is going, but also to develop a rapport with the youth to support them in all aspects of their life. It is crucial that youth have a supportive environment to share their thoughts and SYNC does this through Match Support. They also provide training opportunities for mentors to ensure they feel equipped to support their youth. Prior to a match, all mentors participate in a Trauma Informed Care training as well as a pre-match mentoring course. While BBBS is proud of the diversity of Sync youth, they recognize there are more youth in underserved and marginalized communities that would benefit from mentorship.

In 2012, OCS and the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to facilitate the Making A Home program. AHFC agreed to provide rental assistance to OCS referred youth who are aging out of foster care. Through this Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)

program, the IL program has reliably filled all 15 vouchers every year and has continued to support youth in their own homes this year. In 2019, AHFC received 21 Foster Youth to Independence Initiative (FYI) vouchers, which target a similar population as the Making A Home program. This has deepened the partnership between AHFC and OCS. In the past year OCS has been able to increase the amount of FYI vouchers to 25 and through our partnership with 4-H we have been able to provide voucher availability statewide. 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. Currently, 25 FYI vouchers and 30 Making A Home vouchers are available. As of April 30, 2022, 14 youth in the FYI program have leases, three youth continue to shop for housing and eligibility for three other youth is being determined. Since its inception, the partnership between AHFC and OCS has resulted in 76 referrals. In the Making a Home program 19 youth have leased housing with seven shopping for housing and five in the process of eligibility determination. In calendar year 2021, OCS provided 27 referrals, and in 2022, AHFC has received eight referrals.

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

Through a business agreement with the University of Alaska's, Child Welfare Academy (CWA), the IL program continues to support CWA's management of ETV programming for former foster youth up to age 23. Currently and over the past five years, Alaska has successfully disseminated all ETV funds to applicants. Youth engaged in the ETV program receive more direct, on-campus support and have a caring adult to assist with struggles that often accompany attending college and securing resources for education.

School Year	Total ETVs Awarded	Number of New ETVs
Final Number: 2020-2021 School Year* (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021)	50	16
2021-2022 School Year* (July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022)	47	24

*In some cases this might be an estimated number since the APSR is due on June 30 and this is being drafted prior to that date.

To ensure the total amount of educational assistance does not exceed the total cost of attendance, University of Alaska campuses monitor student enrollment, the number of credits involved, and estimates the cost of attendance. The ETV Coordinator can view financial aid awards, including any grants, loans, and scholarships beyond ETV. The ETV Coordinator determines a student's 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 does not show a financial need, they will return the funds. For students at non-UA Campuses, the ETV 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 ETV 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 ETV 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 ETV Coordinator, and funds are returned.

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 immediately felt by our college and residential school students as

campuses were closed; in some instances, students received 48-hour notice to vacate their campus-based homes. Swift action by IL program staff secured exceptions for many youths enabling them to maintain their campus housing through the shutdown. In other cases, the IL program was able to assist youth in quickly transitioning to relative or foster care placements and ensuring each youth had the ability to continue to connect with their teachers and attend 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. Considering the pandemic, the IL and ETV programs worked to quickly restructure this event and connected youth to distance and remote learning opportunities available to them for the 21-22 academic year.

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 or training center to cover the cost of tuition, fees, books, room, and board.

Most noteworthy is that in the past year, the ETV Program was fully staffed by those with lived experience in child welfare and who were graduates of the ETV program. They provided valuable insight in determining and supporting the needs of incoming and current students.

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
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
2021-2022	47	47 (24 New)	22 (9 new)	13	8

CHAFEE TRAINING

The RILS continue to provide training to OCS staff in their regions and recruit youth and alumni to participate in the training events. Orientation for new OCS employees includes training on the needs of IL youth and the resources available to youth. The IL Program works with our grantee, the Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF), to incorporate independent living components into their training curriculum for care providers. The RILS partner with FFCA to recruit youth panels who assist in training foster parents on the needs of IL youth they are caring for. 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 regional Tribal/State groups 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 needing adult guardianships. Additionally, the IL program partnered with ACRF to develop and conduct a training specific to cultural approaches to permanency. Throughout the year IL staff have also provided materials and instruction to various partner groups about the IL program in general and adult guardianship specifically,

including permanency conferences and the Suicide Prevention Coalition. IL program staff also attended trainings related to Racial Equity provided by the Administration for Children and Families, Collaborative Implementation provided by ACRF and Supporting Youth with Disabilities Transitioning out of Foster Care provided by The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

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

In efforts to collaborate and partner with all federally recognized Tribes within Alaska, the IL supervisor hosts quarterly teleconference meetings with Tribal partners. These meetings are to ensure the needs of youth in Tribal custody are met via the equitable issuance of Chafee and ETV benefits, the development of culturally competent programs, and timely service delivery. The consistency of these meetings has built stronger connections and increased attendance between the IL program and Alaska's Tribes. Information about the Chafee program and quarterly teleconferences are provided to all 229 federally recognized Tribes in Alaska, including all required forms to access Chafee services, resources, and funding. Quarterly attendance varies, with six of our closest Tribes consistently participating and an average of 7 Tribes participating per meeting. Tribes that participate have reported a stronger connection with the RILS and increased understanding of available services 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. In this past year, the IL program has offered technical assistance to both the Sitka Tribe and Kenaitze Indian Tribe as they work to develop their IV-E plan.

This past year has also included a partnership with the Kawerak Inc. Kawerak launched a six-month, ePortfolio project for IL eligible youth from the Bering Strait Region, utilizing the Healing the Canoe curriculum. The RILS partnered with Kawerak to facilitate youth referrals and financial support that was made possible through the Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act. The IL program and Kawerak provided youth with equipment and services to support online access and program participation for those in remote and rural locations. Through this partnership 15 youth from the Bering Strait Region were supported to participate in a 6-month project to learn about themselves, their Tribal heritage, and developing skills to plan for their futures.

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.

The voices of Tribal partners are vital to the work, and feedback is received through ongoing collaborative work. OCS continues to seek input from all 229 Tribes. Alaska surveyed Tribal partners in 2020 and published those results in 2021. OCS is currently gearing up to send out another survey in FY 2023. OCS transitioned to conducting our Tribal Partner Survey on a bi-annual basis due to low response rates.

ONGOING COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION WITH TRIBES

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 Guiding Principles states “Tribes and OCS have a respectful government-to-government relationship.” With 65% 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.

In January 2022, OCS shifted from Central Hiring to Regional Hiring in hopes of fulfilling OCS vacancies efficiently. Tribal Participation on OCS Hiring Panels for PSS 1/2s and Leadership continues. Tribes ensure OCS is hiring staff who are committed to embracing the spirit and values of ICWA.

OCS continued to 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 collaboratively 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. In FY 2022, OCS staff were reminded of this opportunity through the *Let's Talk ICWA* series and have access to a micro-learning video 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.

During FY 2022 the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact held negotiations for August 24th – 27th, 2021 and April 12th – 14th, 2022. The focus of our work together in Compacting shifted from only Scopes of Work to Prevention. A new funding formula was agreed upon, additional funds were secured by the current administration (FY 23 budget is now \$3.1 mil), and Compacted Tribes have additional resources to work with families prior to OCS legal intervention. The State is continuing to support the development of a plan for expanding Tribal Title IV-E Agreements for Tribes. The State committed to the development of a Tribal Compact Unit to support compacted Tribes to be implemented in FY 23.

For FY 22, both the State and Tribes welcomed the support of Casey Family Programs to help move implementation forward and assist in developing tools to help implement a service delivery process for each Scope of Work in the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact.

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 11 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. OCS will continue 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.

The Tribes/Tribal Organizations continue to operate the Tribal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Grant. Eight Tribes/Tribal Organizations partner 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 enhance prevention efforts around the state. 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. The State and Tribe continue collaborative efforts to redesign this program to best serve Tribal children.

In FY2022, July 1, 2021 – June 2, 2022, Co-Signers of the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact and the State continued to implement the five Scopes of Work negotiated in FY21. Those are, Initial Diligent Relative Search, Ongoing Placement Search, Family Contact, Licensing Assist, and Safety Evaluation of Relative Homes. Co-Signers focused on providing services for the Scopes of Work they have the capacity and infrastructure to support. Co-Signers phased in other Scopes as their capacity, infrastructure, and supports allow.

Between July 1, 2021 – May 5, 2022, there were 398 unduplicated referrals for Initial Diligent and Ongoing Placement Searches accepted, and assigned, to Co-Signers. There were 43 Family Contact referrals accepted and assigned to 8 Co-Signers. Licensing Assist had 87 referrals that were accepted and assigned to 5 Co-Signers. There were 24 Safety Evaluations cases referred and assigned to 10 Co-Signers.

MONITORING COMPLIANCE WITH ICWA

In March 2022, the 2021 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, 54% of AN/AI children were with extended family in 2021. There has also been a slight decrease in AN/AI children placed in out-of-preference placements from 35% in 2014 to 32% in 2021. The number of reunifications has increased from 48% in 2014 to 54% in 2021 and the number of adoptions or guardianships to ICWA preference placements have also increased from 92 in 2014 to 155 in 2021. The number of Tribal children with an intervening Tribe has also increased from 46% in 2016 to 63% in 2021.

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 June 13, 2022, 53% of all AN/AI children in out-of-home placement were placed in first preference placement with extended family. Another 13% 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” had been a way to monitor compliance with ICWA, a new process has been adopted in hopes of identifying and resolving these matters sooner, thus further shifting from a compliance-driven approach to a values-driven approach. The new process titled “ICWA Due Diligence and Collaboration Process” went into effect in January 2022.

Through collaboration between OCS Regional ICWA Specialists and Tribal partners, ICWA II training has been being virtually delivered since May 2020 and continued to be offered every other month during FY 22 to both OCS staff and Tribal Child Welfare staff. ICWA II training will shift to quarterly now that we have caught up training existing staff. Since February 2021, the ICWA Specialist team has also been providing monthly training opportunities to staff on various ICWA topics, which continues to be a big success.

Each OCS Region has its own Regional Tribal State Collaborative comprised of Regional Leadership and Tribal partners. Western Region has struggled to keep a regular standing collaborative, but the new Regional Management beginning in June 2021, a new process was developed for WRO Leadership to meet with the AVCP Compacted Tribes and the Non-Compacted Tribes monthly. Each Region strives to meet regularly and to work collaboratively on regional issues related to meet the needs of Alaska Native families and children.

DISCUSSIONS WITH TRIBAL PARTNERS SPECIFIC TO CFCIP

The OCS Independent Living Program supervisor facilitates quarterly teleconferences to provide Tribes with information about the 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. By utilizing the network of ICWA workers and maintaining consistent scheduling and contact information attendance at these teleconferences has increased to an average of 7 Tribal participants per meeting with at least one new participant each time. 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. In early June 2022 OCS' IL supervisor provided training related to Chafee eligibility and access for Alaska's Tribes attending the IVB APSR training provided by the Children's Bureau.

IL and ETV program eligibility requirements for Tribal youth are identical to youth in state's custody and requires a court order documenting the date custody was assumed. In this past year, the IL program has offered technical assistance to both the Sitka Tribe and Kenaitze Tribe as they work to develop their IV-E plan. This past year included ongoing partnership with Kawerak who launched a six-month, ePortfolio project for IL eligible youth from the Bering Strait Region; the Healing the Canoe curriculum was used to support youth learning about themselves, their Tribal heritage, and developing skills to plan for their futures. The IL program and Kawerak collaborate to ensure the provision of equipment and services to support online access and program participation for youth in remote and rural locations. 15 youth participated in the ePortfolio program.

SHARING 2023 APSR WITH TRIBES

OCS will be disseminating the submitted 2023 APSR 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. Tribes provide valuable feedback for the APSR during TSAT, TSCG, and Compacting meetings. This feedback is integrated into the Tribal Collaboration section of the APSR as well as other sections. OCS has on-going communication with Tribes that inform the agency about experiences of Tribal families in the child welfare system.

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 state laws or regulations related to the prevention of child abuse and neglect that impact the state's eligibility for the CAPTA state grant. Requirements for mandated reporters who are reporting sexual abuse changed to require a report be made to both the Office of Children's Services and local law enforcement.

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: a Cultural Responsiveness training provided to child advocates statewide; a Zoom training on Physical Abuse Identification and Investigation that was made available to law enforcement, child protection, Tribal partners and others community providers; the 2021 Alaska Child Maltreatment Conference which included numerous trainings on a variety of child abuse and prevention topics and was attended by hundreds of multidisciplinary child protection team members from across the state (made available online through Whova) Childfirst® Alaska Forensic Interviewing; maintenance and updating of web-based training on child abuse and neglect, including mandatory reporter training; and a continuing outreach campaign to educate mandatory reporters regarding changes to the Alaska child abuse reporting statute that went into effect last year. In addition, OCS grantees were provided individualized technical assistance as requested as well as program development guidance. Below is a list of specific projects and activities funded by CAPTA during this reporting period:

Childfirst® Alaska Coordination: The University of Alaska Child Welfare Academy (CWA) continued assistance with coordination of trainings statewide. This year the CWA worked with the Zero Abuse Project to maintain a process and a virtual platform for offering forensic interview training in Alaska. The CWA assisted with revisions to the virtual training, and added closed-captioning to the training videos, making them ADA-compliant. One, 5-day Childfirst® Forensic Interviewer Training was made available statewide via a virtual platform and was provided from June 28-30, 2021; another from October 25-29, 2021; and a third was planned for April 25-29, 2022, but was postponed until July 11-16, 2022 due to scheduling issues with the trainers. In addition, a 3-day Understanding the Forensic Interview Training was provided from June 28-30, 2021. CWA coordinated quarterly meetings of the Alaska Childfirst® Leadership Team, using Teams or Zoom, 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 continued consultation and training planning was conducted with

the developing CAC Program in Sitka (Sitka Tribe). Minor consultation and support were also provided to other CAC programs statewide in collaboration with the Alaska Children's Alliance.

CAPTA funds were also utilized to provide technical assistance and coordination support for continued work on updating of the Alaska Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Guidelines (due to be published in the Fall of 2022) that is a best practices resource document for Alaska's MDTs created by the Alaska Children's Justice Act Task Force in collaboration with the Alaska Office of Children's Services, the Alaska Department of Public Safety, the Alaska Children's Alliance, numerous other agencies statewide and community partners.

CAPTA funds were used to maintain and update the Mandated Reporter training in 2022. 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 every year as edits are identified or as new information needs to be added. Work is underway to add updates to include more information on disparity, disproportionality, and cultural bias, as well as information on the vulnerability of LGBTQ+ children to child maltreatment.

CAPTA funds were also used to support the 2021 Alaska Child Maltreatment Conference. The theme was "Safe, Thriving, and being Connected." This conference sought to improve knowledge and skills used when providing child welfare services within Alaska. The target audience focused on four groups: OCS employees, resource families (foster, adoptive, and kinship care families), Tribal members (ICWA workers, Tribal social services, Tribal court personnel), and child advocates (GALs and CASAs). The conference was crafted to hear from the many different voices that contribute to child safety and to look at child welfare through different lenses. CWA is involved now with planning for the 2022 Alaska Child Maltreatment Conference to occur both virtually and in-person on November 15-18 in Anchorage. Major themes will include trafficking, neglect, and cross-system collaboration.

CAPTA funds supported work conducted by the Alaska Citizen's Review Panel this year to analyze issues related to recruitment and retention within the Alaska Office of Children's Services (OCS). Recently due to a variety of factors, OCS has experienced record high turnover and has also been challenged in its efforts to recruit quality candidates to fill essential frontline positions. The CRP's recommendations will be available soon in a report due to be published by June 30, 2022.

This year the Tribal First Prevention Program received technical assistance through Bothe Consulting which was funded by CAPTA. This program is a partnership between OCS and eight Tribe/Tribal Organization (TO) grantees to serve at-risk families in an in-home program. Technical assistance to support the Tribal Family First Prevention Program as well as one-on-one coaching for the new staff person to run this program independently were provided through the support of CAPTA funds.

Bothe Consulting provided subject matter expertise to the Alaska Impact Alliance (AIA) in the development of a statewide warmline/differential response model. Project activities included gathering OCS data, researching best practices, meeting with OCS staff to develop a concept, attendance at AIA and Action Group meetings, determination of target population, and program design. Tribal representation is necessary, so outreach to key stakeholders, including Tribes, is ongoing as part of this work.

OCS is utilizing CAPTA supplemental funds received from the American Rescue Plan to support the current efforts to address complex issues that often contribute to families becoming involved in the child welfare system as well as to foster the development of a continuum of comprehensive child and family support and prevention services. This includes the funding of the Alaska Impact Alliance and Bothe Consulting.

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 Plans of Safe Care (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 2020, The Office of Children's Services put out POSC contract opportunities in the Mat-Su and Juneau. Bartlett Hospital in Juneau was awarded the POSC contract opportunity. Bartlett began piloting POSC's in April 2021. Currently Bartlett Hospital is piloting POSC's via Hello B.A.B.Y (Building Alaskan Babies with You). On or around February/March 2021, another POSC contract opportunity was posted for the Mat-Su with no interest received. OCS is partnering with the Department of Public Health and Bartlett hospital to evaluate the effectiveness of Hello BABY.

The State of Alaska's, 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. Early 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 funding to maintain 4Ps Plus© and support expansion of 4Ps Plus© screening to 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's 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.
- Medically Assisted Treatment (MAT) by obstetrics providers, in addition to community methadone and buprenorphine programs, expands treatment options for mothers.
- Alaska's Infant Learning Program evaluates and coordinates services for infants with disabilities.
- The 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's Division of Behavioral Health funds APSP and SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment) efforts.
- The Alaska Perinatal Quality Collaborative was launched in January 2019 to promote high-quality maternal and newborn care across Alaska.
- Alaska's Public Health Centers in 22 communities perform SBIRT on pregnant women.
- Alaska Regional Hospital's 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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Section C. Updates to Targeted Plans within the 2020-2024 CFSP

1. FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT DILIGENT RECRUITMENT PLAN

OCS is working to identify creative ways to meet the needs of children in care. The Diligent Recruitment Plan is heavily influenced by information provided by RFAB, ACRF, and OCS staff. OCS hopes to inform the Recruitment plan by also hearing from current licensed foster parents during forums. Below are new goals added for the FY23 Statewide Plan for Recruitment and Retention of Resource Families:

- Alaska will host Statewide Foster Parent Forums to hear successes and concerns from resource families. These forums will transition from statewide to regional forums.
- Alaska will develop a Statewide Recruitment and Retention Committee with community partners and regional foster parents.

2. HEALTH CARE OVERSIGHT AND COORDINATION PLAN

OCS updated the Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan in FY22. The primary change was that what used to be referred to as the psychiatric nurse unit, is now the Medical Mental Health Unit. The members of that unit are Nurse Consultants, a mental health clinician, and an office assistant.

OCS continues to work 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% in FY21 and 48% in FY22.

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 aged 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 continued working 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

The updated statewide COOP is attached to the 2022 APSR.

This year OCS continued its management of COVID-19 concerns via enhancements to mitigation protocols and policies put in place during FY21. OCS maintained efforts to reduce risk of exposure and the spread of COVID-19 within work environments and throughout the workforce. Following recommendations of the CDC and guidance issued by Governor Dunleavy, OCS lifted or modified many COVID restrictions throughout this reporting year. On April 30, 2021, Governor Dunleavy ended the State of Alaska COVID-19 Disaster Declaration followed by the signing of House Bill 76, legislation that ensured the continuation of COVID-19 federal relief to impacted Alaskans and liability protections for Alaska businesses. OCS continues to allow full time telecommuting for some employees and hybrid telecommuting schedules for others and virtual meetings are now the norm. PPE and disinfecting products are still provided to all offices and systems for reporting workplace exposure remain in place. Given that COVID has now become a way of life and OCS personnel are clear on protocols and procedures, regular safety briefings regarding COVID are no longer necessary. However, information on COVID and other communicable diseases such as influenza continue to be provided by OCS's Safety Officer.

On January 3rd, 2022, disaster declarations were issued following severe winter storms, extreme winds, and cold temperatures. The following Boroughs were affected: Delta/Greely, Copper River, Fairbanks North Star Borough, Nenana, Denali Borough, and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. During the storms over 20,000 households lost power and water distribution. Severe wind gusts tore buildings apart, ripped roofs from buildings, blew large dangerous debris and flipped semis on highways. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough and the American Red Cross established shelters at the Menard Sports Center in Wasilla and the Mat-Su Senior Services Center in Palmer. OCS and the communities we serve were impacted during these storms. The Fairbanks Field Office was closed for nearly one week, a region wide "stay put" order was issued for the Matanuska-Susitna region and the Wasilla OCS Office was closed for two business days. OCS staff reached out to all caregivers who have placement of children in OCS custody to ensure their safety. Family visitation for children in custody was impacted by these office closures and unsafe conditions. The Governor's declaration activated the State Public Assistance and Individual Assistance program, which provides timely assistance to individuals or families to meet disaster-related necessary expenses and serious needs. Information on how to access disaster recovery funds was provided to OCS caregivers and employees and flyers were posted in public areas for other members of the community.

On February 24th, the Galena Fire Hall collapsed due to heavy snowfall and rain. Although unfortunate, this had no impact on OCS or those caring for children in OCS care. On May 7th, the Lowell Point Landslide occurred and blocked sole access between the City of Seward and Lowell Point. The cities of Seward and Kenai worked swiftly to clear the slide and address emergency needs. The work of OCS and the safety of those caring for children in OCS care were not impacted.

4. TRAINING PLAN

There were some changes to the training plan during FY22. The changes were in effort to infuse Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training into the existing new worker training (SKILS) in addition to incorporating Mental Health First Aid for Youth into the third session of SKILS. Both changes were made due to feedback and data from case reviews, staff and external stakeholder feedback and fatality data. Mental Health First Aid for Youth was identified as a training to deepen staff understanding and response to suicides. Alaska data on fatalities has shown a marked increase of suicides in FY 2020 and in younger children.

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: Two years ago, OCS 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.

Demographic Information on Personnel:

Job Class	Female	Male	Total	Average Annual Rate
PSM I	11	1	12	\$104,360.53
PSM II	5	0	5	\$108,093.44
PS Specialist I	43	16	59	\$51,943.37
PS Specialist II	97	47	144	\$65,117.13
PS Specialist III	15	4	19	\$75,183.31
PS Specialist IV	38	10	48	\$93,032.60
Total	209	78	287	\$70,163.78

Job Class	AK Native /American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Pacific Is/ Hawaiian	Two or more Races	White	Total
PSM I	0	1	0	1	0	0	10	12
PSM II	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	5

Job Class	AK Native /American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Pacific Is/ Hawaiian	Two or more Races	White	Total
PS Specialist I	5	1	4	7	2	6	34	59
PS Specialist II	10	2	14	11	1	4	102	144
PS Specialist III	5	1	0	0	0	0	13	19
PS Specialist IV	5	1	4	0	2	0	36	48
Total	25	6	22	19	5	11	199	287

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	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	9	1	12
PSM II	0	0		0	0	0	0	0		1		4		5
PS Specialist I	4	1	1		4	0	6	1	1	4	2	23	11	59
PS Specialist II	8	2	1	1	8	6	7	4	1	1	3	71	31	144
PS Specialist III	4	1		1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	2	19
PS Specialist IV	4	1		1	2	2	0	0	2	0	0	30	6	48
Total	20	5	3	3	14	8	14	5	4	6	5	148	51	287

Age Groups

Job Class	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 and over	Total
PSM I	0	7	5	0	0	12
PSM II	0	3	1	0	1	5
PS Specialist I	32	14	7	5	1	59
PS Specialist II	23	46	35	31	9	144

Job Class	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 and over	Total
PS Specialist III	2	3	7	6	1	19
PS Specialist IV	2	12	19	11	4	48
Total	59	85	74	53	16	287

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 3/31/2022 there were 2,304 open cases with 52 supervisors providing direct supervision to 168 caseworkers. OCS has 256 PSS I/II positions, but on 3/31/2022, only 168 of those positions were filled.

According to this point in time data:

- Supervisors support 4.9 caseworkers
- Supervisors provide oversight for 44.3 cases
- Caseload is 15 cases per caseworker
- Turnover at the PSS level is 57%

*Source: RU determined open CPS and PTPR 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
SFY17	Transfer to DJJ	1
SFY18	Transfer to DJJ	1
SFY 19	Transfer to DJJ	3
SFY 20	Transfer to DJJ	2
SFY 21	Transfer to DJJ	3

2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHERS

School Year	Total ETVs Awarded	Number of New ETVs
Final Number: 2020-2021 School Year (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021)	50	16
2021-2022 School Year* (July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022)	47	24

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

3. INTER-COUNTRY ADOPTIONS

During FFY 2021, no children were identified as having been adopted from other countries and entering OCS custody because 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, 2022, 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 68%. This is decrease from the previous year's data. The percent of children visited in their home was 74%, which exceeds the 50% federal standard.

*Source: RR00124 Federal Monthly Caseworker Visits Measure, FFY21

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 CFS-101, Part III, Alaska received \$589,718 in FFY 2020 funds from title IV-B, subpart 2 and spent those funds as follows:

- \$142,157 or 24% of its FFY 2020 award on family preservation services.
- \$142,158 or 24% of its FFY 2020 award on community-based family support services.
- \$305,403 or 52% of its FFY 2020 award on time-limited family reunification services.
- Alaska did not spend any of its FFY 2020 award on adoption promotion and support services.

Per the attached CFS-101, Part III, Alaska did not spend any of its FFY2020 award on administrative costs.

Alaska spent \$37,213 on Monthly Caseworker Visits.

In FFY 2020, OCS did not expend approximately 20% of the grant on each of the four PSSF service categories. Funds were spent disproportionately during FFY 2020, 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. Adoption promotion and support services in Alaska are funded through a grant to ACRF with state general funds.

C. Chafee Program

States are required to certify that no more than 30% 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 FFY2020, OCS expended 29% 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 2021 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 2022 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.

4. FY 2020 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 attached.

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 FY2022

Alaska CFS101 FY 2022 signed

Alaska CFS-101 FY2022 Excel

Alaska Attachment C ETV Chart FY 2022