



OFFICE OF
CHILDREN'S
SERVICES

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

Alaska’s Fourth Annual Progress and Services Report to the 2020-2024 CFSP 1

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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

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

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



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Prioritize identified essential child protection services

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

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

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

Meaningful Collaboration

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

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. Last 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. This year OCS looks forward to hearing from Alaska's administration on which ideas or recommendations from the Council will become priorities for OCS. Additionally last year, OCS 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. Those forums have now moved regionally and focus on specific needs and topics for foster parents serving children and families in those areas.

In continued efforts for retention of OCS staff, leadership held hosted an in person Leadership Summit that included Regional Managers, Staff Managers, Supervisors, Mentors, representatives from the Staff Advisory Board, Admin Officers, Admin Assistants, and state program staff. This was a time set to refocus on workforce wellness, presenting the Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being with the alignment of OCS' retention and recruitment plan, training on adaptive change and CQI model, targeted focus on safety, permanency, and wellbeing round tables. A significant highlight to the Leadership Summit was the cross programmatic information sharing and collaboration and efforts to prepare for Round 4 of the CFSR.

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)

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 despite some delays over the last federal year... Scaling out Administrative Reviews into other judicial districts is still planned based upon the positive feedback from the Fairbanks court parties; however, the full evaluation has continued to experience delays 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. The permanency subcommittee has met quarterly over the last year and is examining data and the children and youth in foster care across regions to understand further the occurrences in which children are experiencing lengthy delays in permanency. Strategies have not yet been developed as the subcommittee is still analyzing data.

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. Though this group continues to meet regularly, the focus continues to change between increasing quantity of family contact or quality of current family contact. A presentation was provided by Rock Matsu on the work they are doing with Butler Institute. This focus is on providing training and information to those groups or individuals providing supervised family contact. That program, however, is not increasing the quantity of family contact being provided around the state.

Another CIP subcommittee is focused on education regarding the CINA court process. The CINA 101 training that was historically held only in person was converted into a on demand platform The training can

be taken at any time with several options of audio only, video or read through text. This option allows new practitioners to access the training prior to the annual in person training. An in person CINA curriculum training was conducted in March 2023 in the community in Nome in collaborative planning efforts with Nome Eskimo Community and Kewarek Tribes. Attending were several regional village ICWA workers and staff, GAL's, OCS staff, Attorney's, and a Magistrate.

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 service 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.

Last year the Governor of Alaska created the Governor's Parent/Foster Parent Collaborative Council. This council included 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 was 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 had subcommittees that are focused on mental health, permanency, reunification, disparity, case worker support, youth, and foster parents. In November 2022, the Council submitted the final recommendations to the Governor's office. OCS has yet to hear the Governor's decision on what recommendations the administration would like OCS to focus on.

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

Recognizing the need to foster engagement and feedback of parents with lived experience, OCS contracted to research and propose several options for Alaska to consider for a lived experience parent board. Alaska anticipates receiving the proposals in early FY 25 to begin implementation.

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 similar for 2022. Various Orca reports such as the Essential Services Score Card, Child Discharge Report, and Tribal State Compact Report used by the statewide leadership and managers to assess the agency's progress. AFCARs is also available to evaluate the state's outcome progress as it relates to the national average. The Court Improvement Program has recently shared their court filing data which has been included in this report.

Safety Outcome 1 and 2

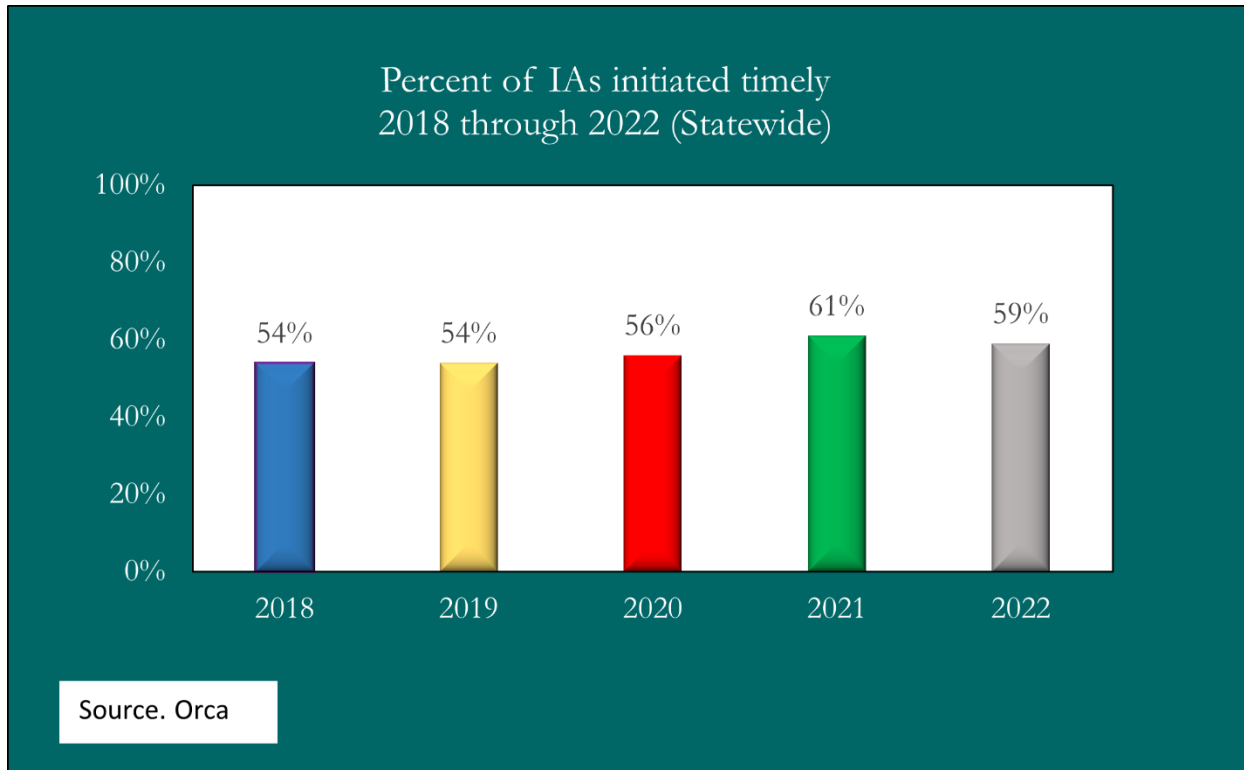
Alaska has seen a 13% decrease in timely initiations of investigations for both statewide data and CFSR All Site PIP data which resulted in 59% for both in 2022 as opposed to 72% in 2021. Anchorage experienced the most dramatic decline in this area with a 19% drop from 2021 to 2022. Priority 3 timeframes continue to be the report types that are most often initiated late. Staffing issues maybe contributing to delays in initiation of high-risk reports (priority 3). When there are not enough staff to investigate concerns, reports may need to be triaged to address safety first (priority 1&2) and high risk later (priority 3). Delays in attempts to contact alleged victims close to or beyond the end of the required timeframe occurred most frequently in priority 3 reports and when difficulties arose in locating the children, the timeframe would expire. Retention efforts continue to be at the forefront of the agency's efforts. Bonuses were provided to staff in frontline positions and an additional pay range was added so that staff could move up to Protective Services Specialist 3 positions. Additional supports for staff include secondary trauma training, FAN training, chaplain visits, therapy dog visits, employee safety training, and the creation of a new position the Wellness and Resiliency Officer.

Contrary to the past year, the Juneau PIP site improved in initiation rates while the Fairbanks PIP site experienced a slight decrease. The Juneau PIP site had a more stable workforce than the prior year which may have aided in their improvement. Orca data similarly captured a decline of initiation rates statewide as the overall percentage of investigations initiated time was also 59%.

2022 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews and PIP Goal Percent of applicable cases rated strength.

Item 1: Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment

Site	Sample size	2021	2022
Anchorage	39	79%	60%
Juneau	18	36%	40%
Fairbanks	18	90%	75%
All Sites	75	72%	59%
PIP Goal			77%

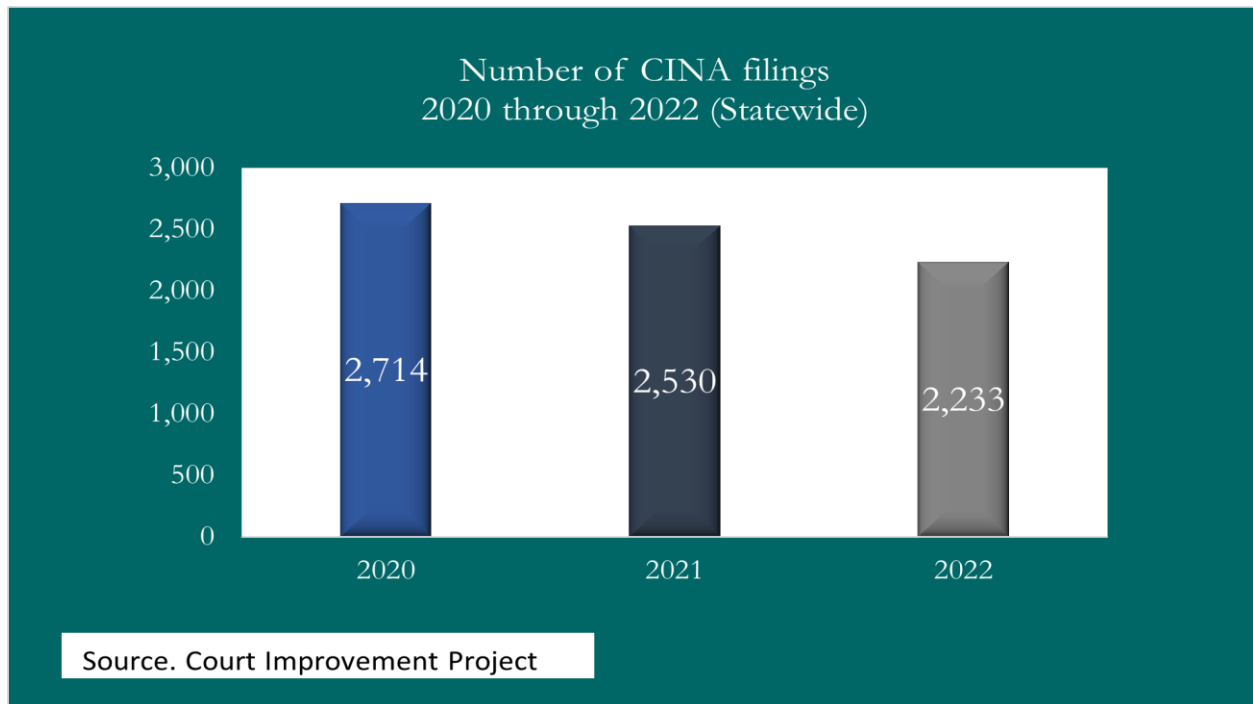


Services to prevent removal or reentry into foster care have improved in 2022, with 86% of cases reviewed for CFSR having achieved a strength. This is largely due to improvements in the Juneau and Fairbanks PIP sites. Early provision of safety related services was identified as contributing to the 100% for Fairbanks. The year prior, there was a struggle in accessing services. Similarly, the increase in the Juneau PIP site was identified as the early provision of safety related services with the addition of appropriate removals when safety could not be managed with services. Anchorage experienced a slight drop in this area but remained relatively stable. Overall, the cumulative score resulted at the PIP goal of 86%. CINA filings for custody have significantly dropped in the last three years and there may be a relationship with early prevention of safety related services. Service provision was difficult during the onset of the pandemic. Comparatively, Orca data indicates that substantiation rates of maltreatment has also experienced a steady decline from 2020 to 2022. This decrease is most significant in the Alaska Native/American Indian population. Although disparities remain continue to exist between Alaska Native/American Indian population and the non-native population, the difference between the two has decreased slightly for both maltreatment substantiations and reentry rates in 2022.

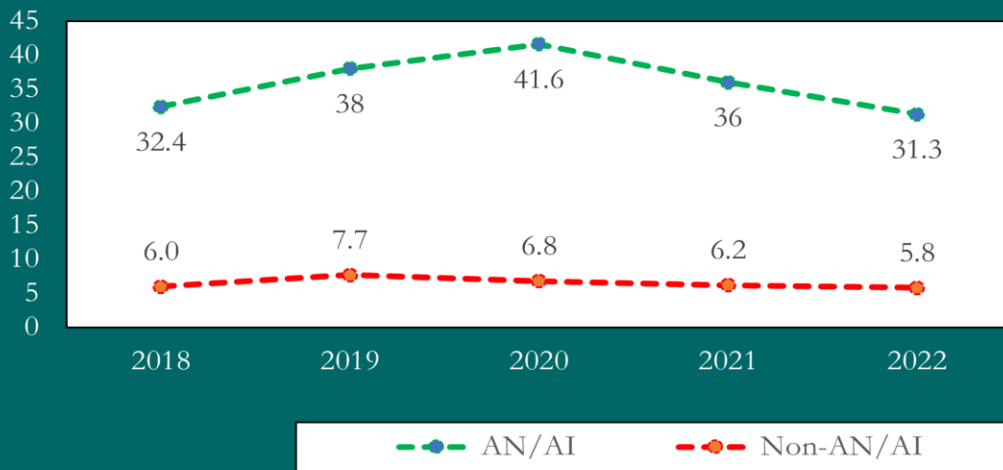
**2022 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews and PIP Goal
Percent of applicable cases rated strength.**

Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Child (ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry Into Foster Care

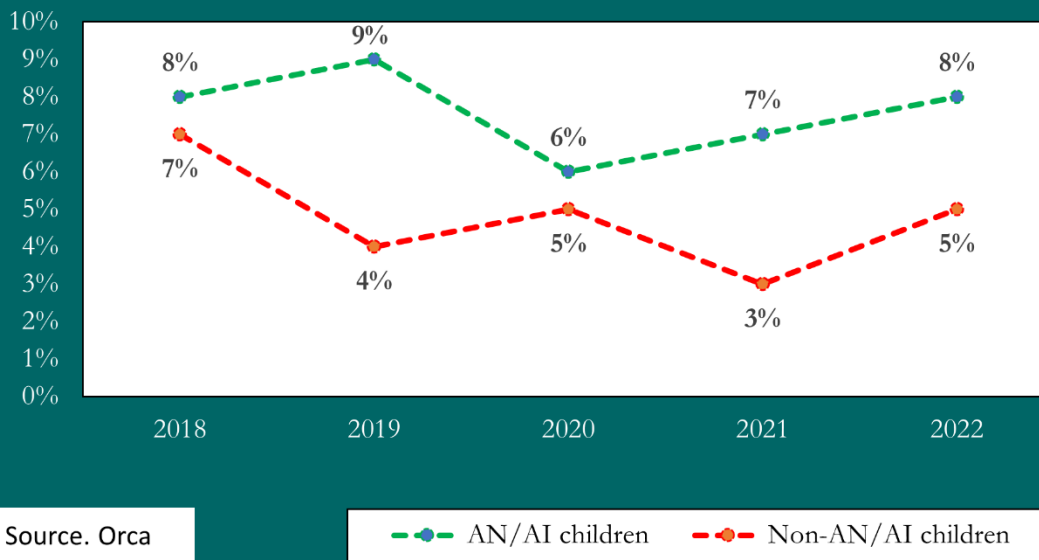
Site	Sample size	2021	2022
Anchorage	39	83%	80%
Juneau	18	64%	83%
Fairbanks	18	88%	100%
All Sites	75	79%	86%
PIP Goal			86%



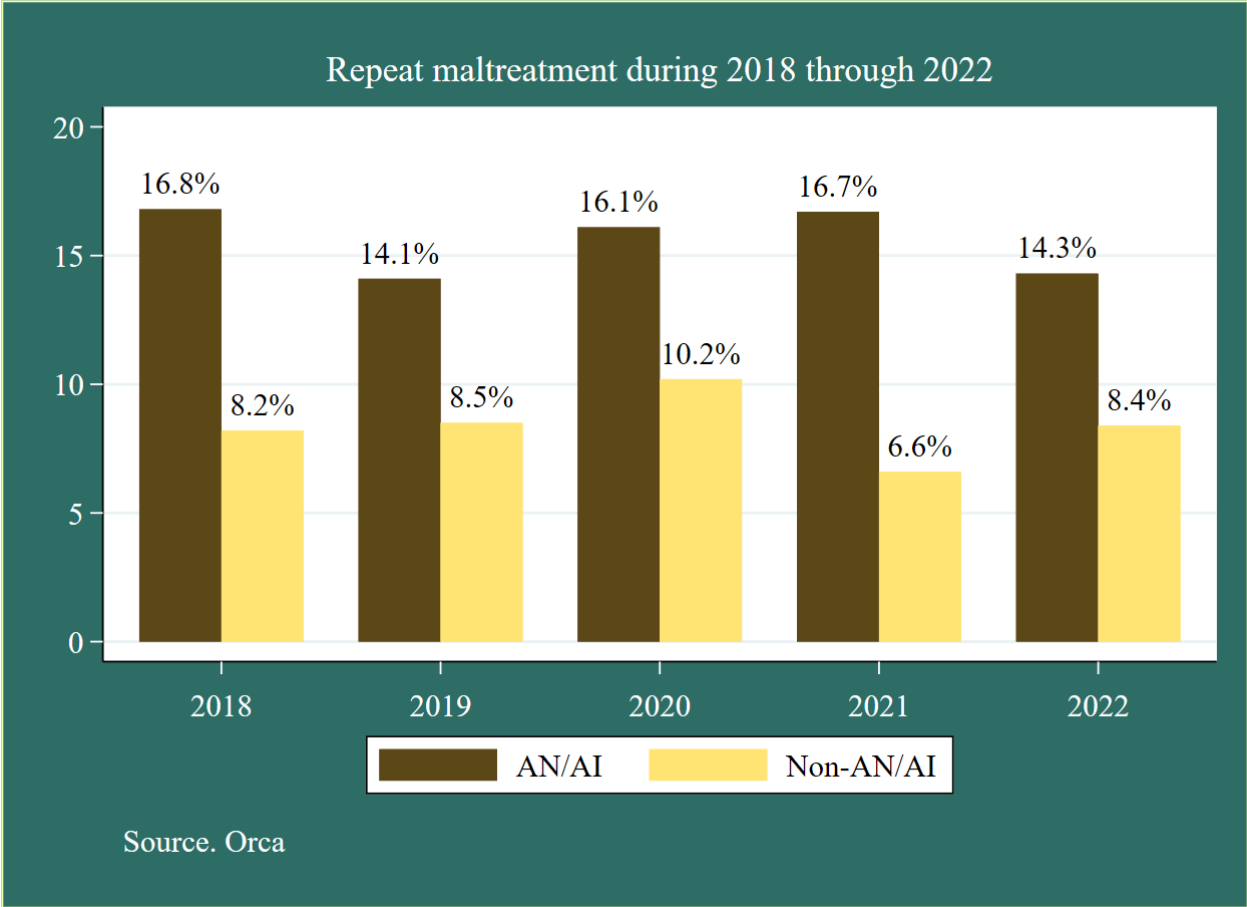
Maltreatment per 1000 of child population
2018 through 2022 (Statewide)



Percent Re-Entry into care: AN/AI versus Non-AN/AI children
2018 through 2022 (Statewide)



Source: Orca

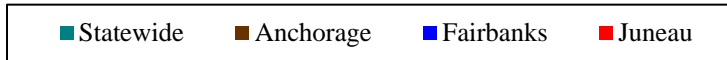
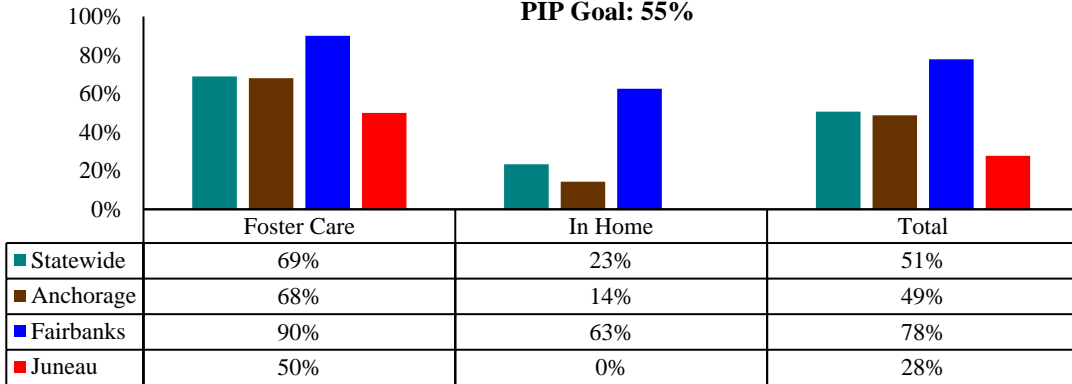


Safety and risk assessment, and safety monitoring, is an area that has continued to improve in 2022 with an aggregate score of 51% for the three PIP sites. The Fairbanks PIP site has seen the most dramatic improvement of 22%. A focus on In Home cases by the Fairbanks office seems to be aiding in the overall safety management of these case types. A new strategy to conducting in depth staffing of In Home cases at both the supervisory and managerial level was implemented by the Fairbanks office as a result of CFSR feedback provided concerning In Home cases in the previous review of 2021. For the 18 Fairbanks cases reviewed in 2022, there were a total of 63 supervisory staffing notes found in the record. These staffings were used to address barriers to monitoring safety for children who remain in the home. As a result, caseworker visits with children in the Fairbanks office also experienced dramatic improvement. Juneau appears to be struggling the most with risk and safety of In Home cases. Both Anchorage and Juneau may benefit from adopting the Fairbanks strategy. Initial and ongoing safety assessments appeared to be negatively impacting Anchorage cases. For initial safety assessments, a theme identified for Anchorage cases was a lack of contact with key collateral such as non-household parents. Additionally, a lack of assessment occurred when circumstances in the family changed such as the birth of a new child. As a result of this feedback in 2022, a reboot of the Strengthening I and A program was planned to occur in 2023 for the Anchorage PIP site. For the Juneau PIP site ongoing assessments due to low rates of caseworker visits for all In Home cases and most foster care cases contributed to the low scores. Implementation of appropriate safety plans and monitoring of safety plans also was identified as a contributing factor for Juneau.

CFSR- Item 3. Risk/safety assessment and management (FC vs IH by site) (Percent of applicable cases rated strength)

Measurement period 12

PIP Goal: 55%

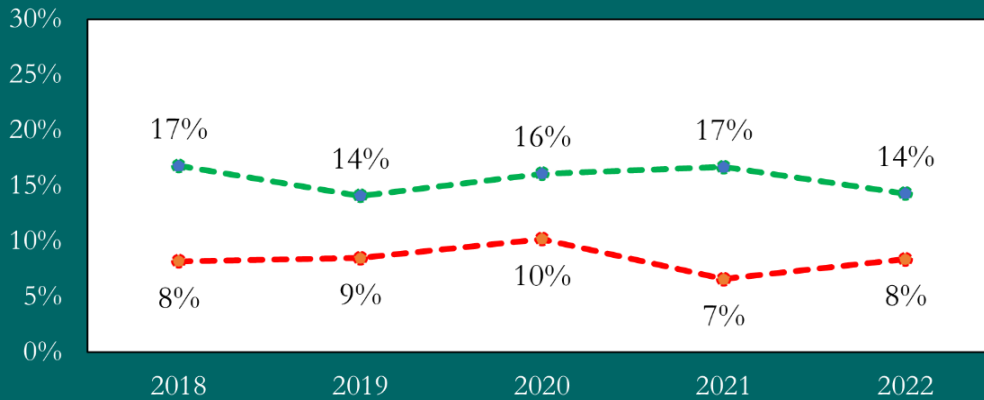


2022 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews and PIP Goal
Percent of applicable cases rated strength.

Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management

Site	Sample size	2021	2022
Anchorage	39	44%	49%
Juneau	18	44%	28%
Fairbanks	18	56%	78%
All Sites	75	47%	51%
PIP Goal			55%

Percent repeat maltreatment: AN/AI versus Non-AN/AI children
2018 through 2022 (Statewide)



Source. Orca

AN/AI children Non-AN/AI children

Repeat maltreatment rates have lowered for the Alaska Native/American Indian populations and have increased slightly for non-native populations. Repeat maltreatment did not appear to be a factor in most CFSR cases reviewed.

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 continued to expand 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. 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.

Permanency Outcome 1 and 2

There has been a decline for permanency outcome 1. There has been a significant drop in stability of children from 2021 of 80% to 2022 of 62%. Review of cases revealed that teenage children with significant mental health needs often experienced instability with their placements as foster parents were unable to provide for their level of care. Due to a growing number of children with needs that are difficult to locate appropriate placements for, the commissioner’s office is developing a Complex Care Unit. The unit is in the developmental stages. Additional foster parent support programs have been lifted and discussed in the item 12 section of this report.

**2022 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews and PIP Goal
Percent of applicable cases rated strength.**

Item 4: Stability of Foster Care Placement

Site	Sample size	2021	2022
Anchorage	39	72%	60%
Juneau	18	90%	70%
Fairbanks	18	90%	60%
All Sites	75	80%	62%
PIP Goal			74%

Appropriateness of permanency goals and establishment of goals timely also experienced a 31% drop from 2021. The Anchorage and Juneau PIP Site struggled the most in this area. Issues with establishing the permanency goals in a timely manner and not updating the permanency goals appropriately when the circumstances warranted a change. Additionally, not filing for termination of parental rights timely also impacted this item.

**2022 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews and PIP Goal
Percent of applicable cases rated strength.**

Item 5: Permanency Goal for Child

Site	Sample size	2021	2022
Anchorage	39	75%	44%
Juneau	18	100%	50%
Fairbanks	18	70%	60%
All Sites	75	80%	49%
PIP Goal			57%

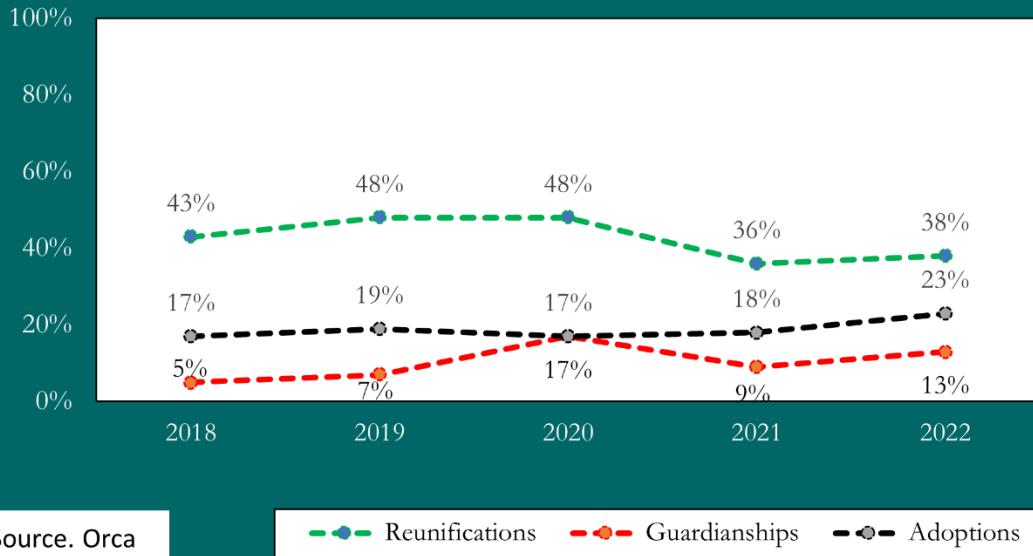
The achievement of reunification, adoption, guardianship, and other planned permanent living arrangement continues to experience a decrease in the aggregate data the last two years. The Fairbanks PIP site has seen an improvement while Anchorage and Juneau have experienced a significant decline. A review of the Anchorage cases found that there were lapses in services to families in order to achieve permanency. Other barriers to achieving permanency were due to issues gaining consent for adoption/guardianship and delays with terminating parental rights. In some cases, children experienced placement disruptions in homes that had been identified as permanent. In the contrary, statewide Orca data indicates slight improvements of achieving permanency in a timely manner for reunification, adoption, and guardianship.

**2022 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews and PIP Goal
Percent of applicable cases rated strength.**

Item 6: Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

Site	Sample size	2021	2022
Anchorage	39	64%	40%
Juneau	18	70%	40%
Fairbanks	18	30%	50%
All Sites	75	58%	42%
PIP Goal			55%

Percent of reunifications, guardianships and adoptions timely
2018 through 2022 (Statewide)



Permanency Outcome 2 remained mostly stable with slight improvements in placement with siblings, preserving connections, and relationship of child in care with parent. Placement with siblings has remained stable for the three PIP sites with efforts found to keep sibling groups together whenever possible. The Anchorage and Juneau PIP sites were both at 100% strength in sibling placement. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care has remained relatively stable for the cumulative score. The review of cases found that the Juneau PIP site experienced a 15% decrease from the year prior. In most cases, efforts were made to ensure there were ample opportunities for family contact with parents and siblings not placed together. Special consideration for nursing mothers and efforts to engage parents in family contact through consistent communication was noted.

**2022 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews and PIP Goal
Percent of applicable cases rated strength.**

Item 7: Placement With Siblings

Site	Sample size	2021	2022
Anchorage	39	75%	100%
Juneau	18	100%	100%
Fairbanks	18	100%	83%
All Sites	75	87%	97%
PIP Goal			N/A

**2022 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews and PIP Goal
Percent of applicable cases rated strength.**

Item 8: Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care

Site	Sample size	2021	2022
Anchorage	39	72%	71%
Juneau	18	75%	60%
Fairbanks	18	75%	88%
All Sites	75	73%	72%
PIP Goal			N/A

Preserving important connections remained relatively stable with improvements noted for the Fairbanks and Anchorage PIP site. Children’s connections were maintained by placing children with a relative and/or in their home communities, ensuring ongoing contact with extended family members, continuing at their current school, and maintaining peer connections. In ICWA cases, Tribes were provided with timely notice and were included in case activities. In multiple cases it was observed that children were participating in ongoing cultural activities including activities provided by the Tribe to non-native placements.

**2022 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews and PIP Goal
Percent of applicable cases rated strength.**

Item 9: Preserving Connections

Site	Sample size	2021	2022
Anchorage	39	76%	96%
Juneau	18	100%	90%
Fairbanks	18	88%	100%
All Sites	75	84%	96%
PIP Goal			N/A

Placement with relatives remained somewhat stable with both the Juneau and Fairbanks PIP sites achieving a 100%. 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.

**2022 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews and PIP Goal
Percent of applicable cases rated strength.**

Item 10: Relative Placement

Site	Sample size	2021	2022
Anchorage	39	88%	83%
Juneau	18	100%	100%
Fairbanks	18	100%	100%
All Sites	75	93%	91%
PIP Goal			N/A

**2022 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews and PIP Goal
Percent of applicable cases rated strength.**

Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care With Parents

Site	Sample size	2021	2022
Anchorage	39	59%	71%
Juneau	18	63%	75%
Fairbanks	18	83%	100%
All Sites	75	64%	78%
PIP Goal			N/A

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 to pause on expanding this to other judicial districts at this time.

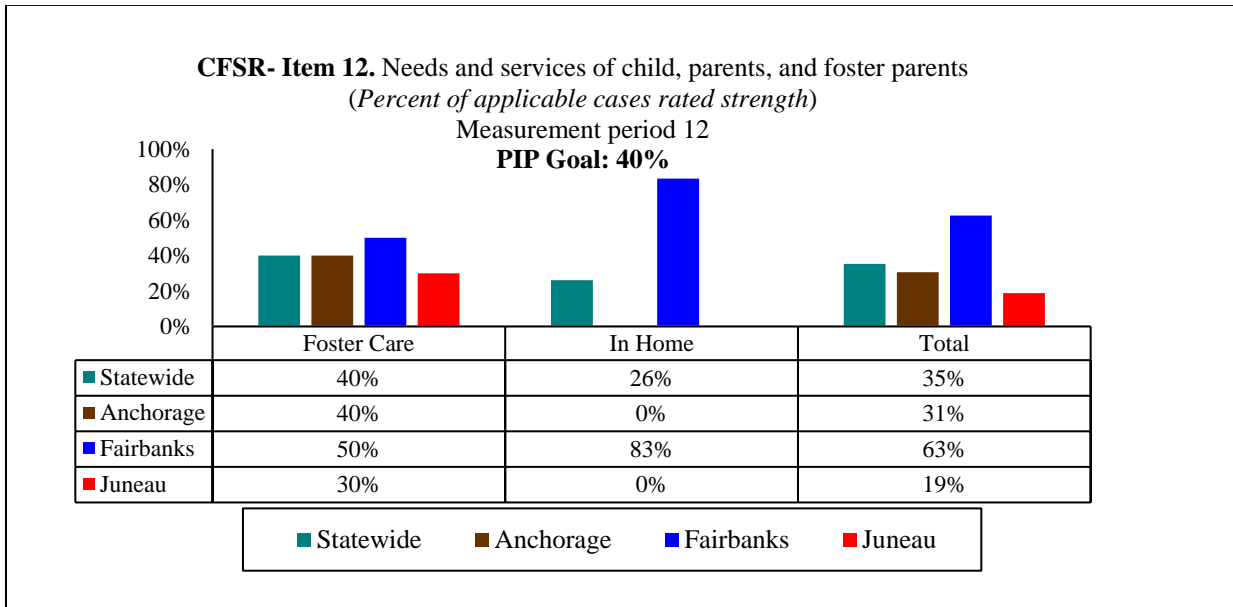
Well-Being Outcome 1, 2, and 3

Wellbeing Outcome 1 has experienced a slight decrease in 2022. Needs and services for children, parents, and foster parents is not far from reaching the PIP goal at 35% aggregate data. The Fairbanks PIP site experienced a significant improvement scoring 19% higher in 2022 in comparison with 2021. Juneau and Anchorage struggled in this area, scoring 19% and 31%. The review of Anchorage cases revealed cases needed improvement for reasons including: parents were not seen on a regular basis, attempts were not ongoing or concerted, parents were not seen face to face but interviewed by phone, service providers were not contacted to verify service participation, parents were not referred for professional assessments when substance abuse or domestic violence was suspected, and a secondary worker was not requested when a parent’s location was known but not local. For Juneau, the review revealed cases needed improvement mainly associated with needs for foster parents. Reasons included the following: training for a foster parent to address the child’s special needs and history of trauma; insufficient information provided to foster parents regarding the full scope of the child’s needs and the lack of staff support during a child’s placement change. In-home cases are again an area of concern with regards to assessing of needs and service provision to children, and parents, both for Anchorage and Juneau. Juneau also has the lowest score for assessment of services for foster care cases.

**2022 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews, Baseline 2019, and PIP Goal
Percent of applicable cases rated strength.**

Item 12: Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents

Site	Sample size	2021	2022
Anchorage	39	36%	31%
Juneau	18	38%	19%
Fairbanks	18	44%	63%
All Sites	75	38%	35%
PIP Goal			40%



Involving the family in case planning has improved from 2021 to 2022 with aggregate scores reaching 69% which exceeds the PIP goal of 54%. All three PIP sites experienced improvements in case planning. The Fairbanks PIP site reach a 100% strength in involving families in the case planning process. This is a 29% increase from 2021 (71%). In many cases reviewed there were clear efforts to engage with parents who were reluctant or not willing to participate in case planning. This included more frequent contact, discussing a parent’s challenges, team decision meetings, and/or making modifications to goals/activities. Orca 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.

**2022 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews, Baseline 2019, and PIP Goal
Percent of applicable cases rated strength.**

Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning

Site	Sample size	2021	2022
Anchorage	39	56%	61%
Juneau	18	50%	56%
Fairbanks	18	71%	100%
All Sites	75	58%	69%
PIP Goal			54%

Percent of children with current case plan

Region	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average: 2018-2022
Anchorage	76%	82%	84%	77%	84%	80%
Northern	46%	66%	77%	79%	84%	71%
Southcentral	61%	77%	82%	86%	82%	79%
Southeast	70%	72%	79%	75%	83%	77%
Western	25%	40%	67%	52%	54%	49%
Statewide	60%	74%	80%	78%	80%	75%

Source. Orca

Percent of parents with current case plan

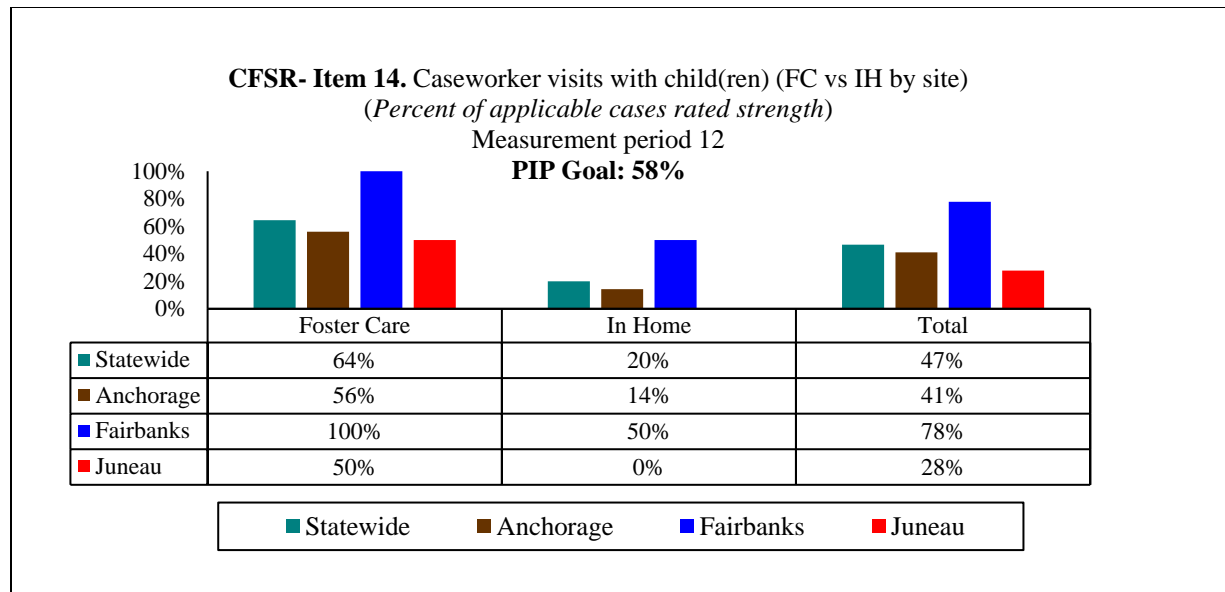
Region	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average: 2018-2022
Anchorage	58%	68%	74%	66%	67%	66%
Northern	25%	38%	56%	63%	62%	51%
Southcentral	37%	52%	69%	75%	70%	62%
Southeast	58%	52%	59%	62%	53%	58%
Western	19%	24%	49%	50%	44%	39%
Statewide	44%	54%	66%	66%	64%	60%

Source. Orca

Several strategies are identified to focus engagement of parents in the case planning process, needs assessment, and caseworker visitation. 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.

Fairbanks seems to be leading in progress in caseworker visits which impacts several other outcomes. The field office continues to hold 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 2022 revealed that Fairbanks is leading the sites with caseworker visits with children at 78%. The Anchorage PIP site is operating at 41% compliance which is no change from the year prior. Juneau has experienced further

struggles decreasing to 28% with no In Home cases meeting caseworker visit standards. As mentioned in previous items, Fairbanks focus on In Home cases has resulted in successfully meeting standards in this area and many others. CFSR data and Orca data indicate that Fairbanks which is in the Northern region is leading the state in compliance to caseworker minimum standards for children and parents. 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.



2022 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews, Baseline 2019, and PIP Goal
 Percent of applicable cases rated strength.

Item 15: Caseworker Visits With Parents

Site	Sample size	2021	2022
Anchorage	39	32%	15%
Juneau	18	38%	0%
Fairbanks	18	33%	53%
All Sites	75	34%	20%
PIP Goal			28%

Caseworker Visits with Children

Region	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average: 2018-2022
Anchorage	80%	70%	69%	61%	62%	69%
Northern	62%	62%	63%	72%	71%	67%
Southcentral	68%	70%	76%	73%	70%	73%
Southeast	86%	80%	77%	68%	64%	76%
Western	55%	47%	39%	43%	56%	49%
Statewide	69%	67%	68%	65%	65%	68%

Source. Orca

Caseworker Visits with Mothers

Region	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average: 2018-2022
Anchorage	35%	27%	23%	20%	19%	25%
Northern	23%	24%	29%	41%	32%	31%
Southcentral	27%	27%	24%	24%	24%	26%
Southeast	41%	27%	19%	28%	22%	27%
Western	24%	20%	11%	17%	15%	17%
Statewide	28%	26%	24%	25%	23%	26%

Source. Orca

Caseworker Visits with Fathers

Region	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average: 2018-2022
Anchorage	20%	15%	13%	11%	10%	14%
Northern	12%	12%	17%	30%	20%	19%
Southcentral	15%	16%	17%	15%	18%	17%
Southeast	28%	17%	11%	17%	13%	16%
Western	15%	13%	8%	12%	10%	11%
Statewide	16%	15%	14%	16%	14%	16%

Source. Orca

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.

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 6% in the area of physical health of child in 2022 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 15% from the year prior. 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. The agency as a whole has increased its focus on mental health with live virtual trainings held by the Medical Mental Health Unit, called Lets Talk About Mental Health, are held regularly. Topics include Trauma Informed Care/Prevention, Psychotropic Medication/Immunizations, Levels of Care, Disability Waivers, Supporting our Foster Homes with High Needs Youth.

**2022 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews, Baseline 2019, and PIP Goal
Percent of applicable cases rated strength.**

Item 16: Educational Needs of the Child

Site	Sample size	2021	2022
Anchorage	39	87%	83%
Juneau	18	90%	100%
Fairbanks	18	89%	100%
All Sites	75	88%	90%
PIP Goal			N/A

**2022 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews, Baseline 2019, and PIP Goal
Percent of applicable cases rated strength.**

Item 17: Physical Health of the Child

Site	Sample size	2021	2022
Anchorage	39	81%	76%
Juneau	18	79%	71%
Fairbanks	18	86%	83%
All Sites	75	82%	76%
PIP Goal			N/A

**2022 Alaska Child & Family Services Reviews, Baseline 2019, and PIP Goal
Percent of applicable cases rated strength.**

Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child

Site	Sample size	2021	2022
Anchorage	39	50%	68%
Juneau	18	57%	57%
Fairbanks	18	55%	73%
All Sites	75	53%	68%
PIP Goal			N/A

Systemic Factor A.

ITEM 19: STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

The Online Resource of the Children of Alaska (ORCA) is OCS' Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS). The ORCA team follows an agile methodology with monthly sprints and releases; and in the past Fiscal Year, 270 updates were made to the system for either remedies to system bugs or the implementation of new functionality. Since the last reporting period, highlighted functionality changes to the system, include:

- continued migration of templates from InfoPath to PFD;

- addition of fields for AFCARS compliance;
- creation of a new Out of Home Inquiry tracking page;
- creation of a new Foster Care Rate Setting page;
- financial updates for the Department split;
- creation of a new tracking page for 'hard to place' and 'complex care' children;
- and updates to pages and functionality to better meet the needs of our tribal partners.

Although ORCA is considered a 'transitional CCWIS', in 2021 ACF stated that the ORCA system was not meeting the needed CCWIS requirements due to lack of progress on modernization. In response to this, in 2022, the OCS hired contractor BerryDunn to assist in completing a full feasibility analysis. Completed deliverables of this analysis include the Initial Project Planning, Needs Assessment, Requirements Development and Alternatives-Analysis. Based on the outcome of the Alternatives Analysis, the OCS requested that three alternatives be considered in the Cost-Benefit Analysis; the alternatives selected are: (1) continue to update current system (2) purchase a Commercial Off the Shelf product (3) purchase a transfer system. Upon completion of the Cost-Benefit Analysis, in July, BerryDunn will assist OCS in constructing an RFP. A capital funding request will be presented in spring 2024 to the legislators.

In addition to the assessment of the current system, OCS is in the process of forming a Data Governance team (of which will work directly with the CMLT) and has presented the overall structure for this team to ACF. A formal plan will include the structure of the Governance team, the duties and goals and details on the Division's Bi-Annual Review.

OCS has also submitted a draft of new data quality priorities to ACF which will help drive the work completed by the ORCA team in the upcoming year. Priorities identified are: (1) Reduction in Data Duplication and Re-Entry (2) Visibility of Missing and Required Data (3) Establish a Data Governance Structure and Plan (4) Standardization of Backend Code.

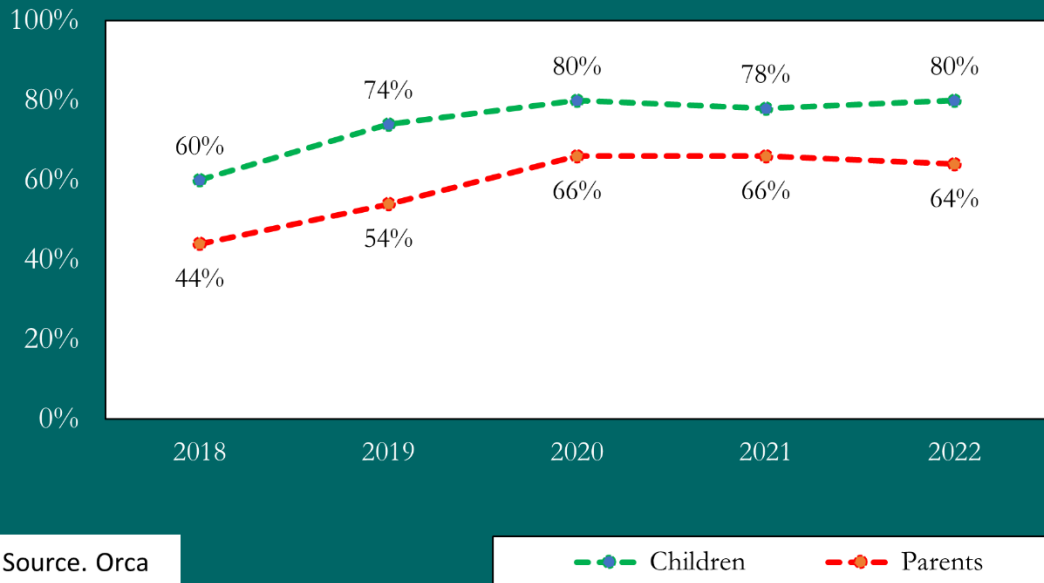
Yearly surveys are sent to all internal and external stakeholders to gather feedback and new ideas for ORCA and Report Manager. According the 2023 survey, over 80% of all users were 'Very Satisfied' or 'Satisfied' with the assistance they receive from the ORCA team, however the overall feedback on training and training materials was lower than expected and therefore the ORCA Help Desk staff will be placing a priority on increasing trainings and updating materials.

Systemic Factor B: Case Review System

ITEM 20: WRITTEN CASE PLAN

Current data indicates that 80% of children in care, 64% of parents have a current case plan documented in ORCA. The statewide data indicates a slight increase for current case plans for children and a slight decrease for parents from the year prior. When the data is broken down by region, most of the state appears to be operating similarly for case plan development for children aside from the Western Region. The Bethel field office has been struggling with recruitment and LOAs were put into place in 2022 to allow for creative work schedules. Although this did help, the family services unit continues to be staffed at only 50%. Aside from staffing issues, major barriers in Western Alaska includes geographic and weather issues. The region itself is the size of Utah and this single region covers 65 villages. 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. The below data does not represent the efforts and attempts made by OCS staff to engage parents and youth in case planning.

Percent of children and parents with current case plans
2018 through 2022 (Statewide)



Percent of children with current case plan

Region	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average: 2018-2022
Anchorage	76%	82%	84%	77%	84%	80%
Northern	46%	66%	77%	79%	84%	71%
Southcentral	61%	77%	82%	86%	82%	79%
Southeast	70%	72%	79%	75%	83%	77%
Western	25%	40%	67%	52%	54%	49%
Statewide	60%	74%	80%	78%	80%	75%

Percent of parents with current case plan

Region	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average: 2018-2022
Anchorage	58%	68%	74%	66%	67%	66%
Northern	25%	38%	56%	63%	62%	51%
Southcentral	37%	52%	69%	75%	70%	62%
Southeast	58%	52%	59%	62%	53%	58%
Western	19%	24%	49%	50%	44%	39%
Statewide	44%	54%	66%	66%	64%	60%

ITEM 21: PERIODIC REVIEWS

Data from the Admin Review Report in ORCA showed that Alaska has improved with conducting Admin reviews in 2022. Administrative reviews were occurring timely for 90.02% of children in care during the AFCARS reporting period in April 2022 and November 2022, meeting compliance. AFCARS reporting for the 22B admission showed that the Fairbanks courts are conducting reviews at a rate of 82.97% 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 continued since the identification of the issue. Discussions of other judicial courts pursuing holding administrative reviews has continued.

ITEM 22: PERMANENCY HEARING

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 OCS Data Programing Manager manually adds missing information to the court report and distributes the information to regional managers and supervisors on a monthly basis. An interface between OCS and the courts to automate this is underway and should be operative by the end of 2023.

ITEM 23: TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

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. Alaska continues to see caseworker turnover as having a significant impact on the department’s ability to pursue termination of parental rights. Turnover impacts active efforts with parents, filing for TPR, and documenting compelling reasons not to terminate.

At this time, Alaska’s ORCA system does not track if a TPR petition has been filed. Therefore, of the 53.2% of children that parental rights have not been terminated, and compelling reasons have not been documented, OCS cannot confirm that there is, or is not, a pending termination petition and/or trial.

Report Data	Children OOH 15 of 22 months	Both Parents TPR now	Had Compelling reasons	No Compelling Reasons Documented
4/30/2021	2,093	22.8%	25.4%	51.8%
4/30/2022	2,136	22.2%	27.3%	50.6%
4/30/2023	2,093	21.1%	25.7%	53.2%

Source: ORCA RR00002>working>compelling reasons.sql

ITEM 24: NOTICE OF HEARINGS AND REVIEWS TO CAREGIVERS

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. In FY 24 CINA rule 3 amended hearing notice requirements in subsection (a). Provides that actual notice to a foster parent or out-of-home care provider satisfies the hearing notice requirement. The CINA rule amendment has not yet been evaluated for implementation or compliance since its effective date.

Systemic Factor C.

ITEM 25: QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

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.

In FY 24, during the OCS Leadership Summit a training occurred for the entire leadership team on the CQI model, PDSA and Adaptive vs. Technical Changes. CQI is regularly discussed and elements of training are infused in the Change Management Leadership Team meetings to continue ongoing growth of CQI education in OCS.

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

ITEM 26: INITIAL STAFF TRAINING

During FY23 initial staff training continued to be delivered virtually. Discussions have been occurring and evaluation planning is scheduled to occur in early FY 24 to further information new staff training needs. Feedback throughout FY23 has anecdotally indicated staff are struggling with practice model training and application. This is theorized as OCS has gone to competency based hiring it has decreased the number of incoming staff with higher education. For many, feedback has been that on-the-job training would have been more beneficial. Alaska is open to adjusting training again to meet the needs of incoming staff and will conduct a rigorous evaluation and consider more field based training.

In FY23 Transfer of Learning (TOL) week is still facilitated by 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

In FY 23, 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 2 the following regional trainings occurred for all staff and were provided a workshop style offerings: Fairbanks field office received training on petition writing, case plan and goal setting, safety plans and safety threats, Western region received intensive practice model training by the mentor program to address some fidelity of the practice and the presence of new staff due to turn over, Juneau field office received workshop style training modeled after the schedule in Fairbanks and focused on impending danger, safety plans and quality caseworker visits.

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 and fully implemented in FY 22. Monthly training calls continue to occur and are still well attended by Supervisors.

ITEM 28: FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT TRAINING

The primary provider of Foster and Adoptive Parent Training is the Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF). In FY23, training via distance formats continued to expand and training opportunities for both foster and adoptive families were offered across the state through online, audio, paper self-study, video conferencing, and onsite opportunities. Core training is available across the state in a live Zoom format quarterly, as well as in a self-study format. Starting May 2023, it is also available in a web-based format. During FY23, ACRF held 102 distant delivery classes with a predicted total of 1,772 participants. These numbers do not include self-study courses, online courses, or alternative hours recorded from other training sources.

In FY23, the State of Alaska moved from an hours-based training requirement to an Individual Training Plan for each family that would focus on training to meet the special needs of the children in the home. Licensing and ACRF worked together to develop the forms, the process, and the referrals to move this forward, as well as worked on developing training to educate families on the changes in the regulations. Training Cluster Packets have been developed to address these topics and ACRF staff works with each family to help them complete their ITP. In addition, 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. Topics presented this year included Educational Considerations for Youth, Honoring the Birth Parent Connection, and Providing the Bridge for Transitions, all of which featured panels or presenters with lived experience.

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 adoption journey, while decreases participation in matching and disclosure.

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.

ACRF has offered several PASS Groups this past year (Post Adoption Skills and Support) which are psychoeducational groups led by a mental health professional, and has offered groups on Adoptive Dads, Parenting Youth with an FASD, Parenting Adolescents, and Parenting through TBRI Principles. ACRF has also partnered with the University of Alaska Center for Human Development to provide several training institutes for mental health professionals focused on promoting adoption competency in therapeutic services and supporting foster and adoptive families who are parenting a youth with neurobehavioral differences, including FASD. The ACRF Adoption Supports program is currently developing a Mental Health Tool Kit to train and assist families in accessing the mental health system.

Systemic Factor E: Service Array

ITEM 29: ARRAY OF SERVICES

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.

During this year, OCS further partnered with the Department of Public Health (DPH) to increase funding available for DPH grantees that provide the Parents as Teachers Program (PAT). This funding is also aimed to increase the number of PAT affiliates in Alaska, as many agencies provide PAT but are not affiliates.

ITEM 30: INDIVIDUALIZING SERVICES

Alaska continues update and utilize 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 DFCS. 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. 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.

OCS collaborates with other state agencies such as DBH, DPH, DHCS, SDS, and community services agencies to continue to assess funding sources available for families to access services across the state. Alaska continues efforts towards the provision of 1115 Waiver services that allow families to access behavioral health services through Medicaid funding.

Systemic Factor F: Agency Responsiveness to the Community

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

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 divisions across the former Department of Health and Social Services now separated into either the Department of Health and the Department of Family and Community Services. These include the 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

ITEM 33: STANDARDS APPLIED EQUALLY

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, became effective. Alaska is continuing to review policies, forms, and manuals to align with the new regulations.

ITEM 34: REQUIREMENTS FOR CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

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%. In FY23, the response rates continued to decrease to 66.7%. OCS believes the lack of response is directly related to staff turnover and indicates a need for 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 SACWIS 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. In FY 23, Foster Care Licensing supervisors continue to monitor the SACWIS report for fingerprints not completed. The number of individuals not flagged due to missing fingerprints continues to drop to around 200. The individuals not flagged due to missing fingerprints are unlicensed relatives and their household members.

ITEM 35: DILIGENT RECRUITMENT OF FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE HOMES

In 2022-2023, the Office of Children's Services continued to conduct foster and adoptive home diligent recruitment and retention events via regional teams located throughout the state. Many of the recruitment and retention events and activities include community outreach such as recruitment tables, social media advertising, flyers, recognition celebrations, foster care tangibles and other printed materials.

In addition, to the Regional Recruitment and Retention teams, OCS also partnered with community agencies to develop a Statewide Recruitment and Retention Workgroup. Key initiatives for the Statewide workgroup emphasizes items such as: Development of a respite program for foster families, foster parent surveys, foster

family peer mentorship, as well as a focus to implement an agency culture shift in the values, beliefs, and attitudes when it comes to recruiting and retaining foster and adoptive families.

Also during the 2022-2023 calendar year, OCS transitioned to hosting regional vs. statewide foster parent forums. The foster parent forums are facilitated by the Alaska Center for Resource Families and OCS Child Protective Services/Licensing Management in each region (ARO, NRO, SCRO, SERO and WRO). Foster families are able to join the forums via Zoom or telephonic and share their foster care experiences, receive training, ask questions, and connect with other foster parents in their region.

In May 2023, Alaska had 2,775 children in out of home care, 1,108 of these children were placed with unlicensed relatives. Alaska had 537 child specific licensed foster homes, and 652 non-specific licensed foster home. Alaska had 362 vacant beds in non-specific licensed foster homes.

OCS continues to be challenged with identifying placement options for children and youth who have more intense behavioral needs or complex medical diagnoses. Other placement needs include foster families who are capable of caring for large sibling groups, teens, and short-term emergency situations. In an effort to better identify placement options for youth as well as support foster families who have placement of state's custody youth, OCS began the develop of a Placement Support Unit. The Placement Support Unit will be comprised of regional staff located throughout the state who will be trained in identifying potential foster care placement options, as well be available to assist, support and advocate for current licensed foster parents. It is projected the Placement Support Unit will be operative in 2023.

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

Alaska is a NEICE state so has a fully functioning system for the successful placement of children across state lines. There are currently 42 states actively using NEICE as of 5/1/2023. 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.

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.

ICPC Incoming Cases By Home Study Type	Number of ICPC Requests	Percentage with report sent within 60 days	Percentage in 90 days	Percentage over 90 days
Adoption	8	0%	0%	100%
Licensing	28	28.6%	14.3%	57.1%
Parent	8	37.5%	25%	37.5%
Relative	21	19%	23.8%	57.2%

Source: OCS ORCA ICPC Home Study Completion Time Report (run date of 5/1/2023)

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.

2023 Update: In FY 2023, despite strategies employed during the PIP, OCS still experienced retention and recruitment barriers and challenges much like all other child welfare agencies across the nation. OCS experienced successes in actively deploying longevity bonuses and elevating several front line positions to the PSS III flex or standalone position to offer more incentive to longevity and additional pay. OCS examined strategies and actively engaged in nationwide called and forums to solicit additional ideas or

information to consider. During the course of FY 23, OCS adopted strategies under the Surgeon Generals Framework. See attachment F. OCS Workforce Workplan USSG Framework.

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.

2023 Update: OCS continues to struggle with staffing and vacancy rates in FY 23 contributing to noncompliance with caseload standards. No positive changes to caseload averages were experienced. Efforts addressed in 1A have been the focus and priority over the course of the year. OCS lifted more creative staffing in FY 23 to address field office vacancies by shifting more positions in hub locations to travel to more of the rural field offices. An example of this is two staff positions were re-located to the Wasilla office but travel out to the Dillingham office every other week to serve the surrounding areas face to face on an alternating schedule.

Front line staff have shifted to competency-based hiring proving some variety in staff with previous experience and education. Feedback from training has indicated another shift in how new staff are being trained needs to be evaluated as some incoming field staff have no formal education and the transfer of learning in the classroom has been challenging. CWA and OCS is collaborating in an extensive evaluation of the training program and researching other changes training facilities have implemented to address a diversified onboarding process.

One positive success is OCS staff being sponsored to enroll in the Child Welfare Certificate at UAA. OCS has funded two cohorts in the certificate program and has just awarded a third cohort which includes 15 staff. In the latest cohort the majority of OCS who applied were Social Services Associates who were initially the target population to provide further education in supporting advancement into a PSS position.

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.

2023 Update: Positive feedback continues to be provided regarding the supervisory staffing guides. OCS recently held a Leadership Summit in April 2023. Positive anecdotal feedback was provided directly from PSS IV staff. There are times they feel the entire guide cannot be used during one supervision, but being able to utilize specific sections has been identified as useful.

The licensing managers have been creating their own supervisory staffing guides that include what data reports will be run in ORCA. There is a staffing guide for CCLS II supervision time with CCLS I staff, a guide for CCLS III supervision with CCLS II staff, and a structured guide for the SSPO to utilize in supervisions with the CCLS IIIs.

Competency based evaluations are fully implemented and used consistently. The state of Alaska recently changed the evaluation practice for each state department and division. The new process now exists within ASPIRE. All OCS supervisors attended multiple trainings, webinars, and FAQ sessions to implement the new evaluation system. Every OCS employee had a new evaluation due in March of 2023 with another evaluation created after that with goal setting.

The mentor program is comprised of one PSS IV supervisor and six mentor positions. The mentors have begun providing multiple parts of new employee trainings and orientation. Information continues to be received regarding the high value of the mentor program. Mentors can continue working with staff for the first year of employee. This can be shortened or extended as needed.

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.

2023 Update: Strengthening I&A in FY 23 went through fidelity checks in several of the implemented sites. In field offices where it was identified there was a drift from the model or new supervisory staff efforts were made to “re-launch” and provide training. A full training and modeling of the structure occurred in the Anchorage Office, initial launches occurred in the Homer and Bristol Bay regions concluded all sites launched in SCRO and planning has started to re-launch and re-train the SERO region. The remaining field office sites that have not yet implemented the model are located in SERO being delayed due to lack of staffing.

A monthly meeting was held during FY 23 reviewing timeliness of initiation data for each of the field office sites. Each region reported on reasons for possible trends, increases or decreases in timeliness and current strategies to address. For May of 2023, data reflected:

ANCHORAGE

Anchorage FEBRUARY	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	22	17	5	77%
P2	32	20	12	63%
P3	61	30	31	49%

Anchorage MARCH	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	43	37	6	86%
P2	35	30	5	86%
P3	115	79	36	69%

Anchorage APRIL	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	30	24	6	80%
P2	21	19	2	90%
P3	68	44	24	65%

Anchorage Run date: 5/1/23	Count 46-90 Days	Count 91-120 Days
Open IAs:	86	14

NORTHERN

Delta Junction FEBRUARY	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
P2	1	0	1	0%
P3	4	1	3	

Delta Junction MARCH	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	3	3	0	100%
P2	2	1	1	50%
P3	2	2	0	100%

Delta Junction APRIL	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	3	3	0	100%
P2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
P3	6	4	2	

Delta Junction	Count 46-90 Days	Count 91-120 Days
Open IAs:	1	0

Fairbanks FEBRUARY	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	11	11	0	100%
P2	6	4	2	67%
P3	35	26	9	74%

Fairbanks MARCH	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	7	7	0	100%
P2	17	15	2	88%
P3	37	27	10	73%

Fairbanks APRIL	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	8	7	1	88%
P2	13	9	4	69%
P3	27	20	7	74%

Fairbanks Run date: 5/1/23	Count 46-90 Days	Count 91-120 Days
Open IAs:	25	0

Interior Rural FEBRUARY	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	1	1	0	100%
P2	4	0	4	0%
P3	16	4	12	

Interior Rural MARCH	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	7	4	3	57%
P2	4	3	1	75%
P3	16	6	10	6

Interior Rural APRIL	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	1	1	0	100%
P2	4	4	0	100%
%	10	4	6	40

Interior Rural Run date: 5/1/23	Count 46-90 Days	Count 91-120 Days
Open IAs:	8	1

Kotzebue FEBRUARY	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	4	1	3	25%
P2	2	0	2	0%
P3	15	6	9	40%

Kotzebue MARCH	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	2	0	2	0%
P2	3	2	1	67%
P3	11	3	8	27%

Kotzebue APRIL	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	1	0	1	0%
P2	4	0	4	0%
P3	14	3	9	21%

Kotzebue Run date: 5/1/23	Count 46-90 Days	Count 91-120 Days
Open IAs:	3	0

Nome FEBRUARY	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	4	3	1	75%
P2	3	0	3	0%
P3	18	2	16	11%

Nome MARCH	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	2	1	1	50%
P2	7	4	3	57%
P3	12	5	7	42%

Nome APRIL	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	1	0	1	0%
P2	4	0	4	0%
P3	6	0	6	0%

Nome Run date: 5/1/23	Count 46-90 Days	Count 91-120 Days
Open IAs:	15	11

Utqiagvik FEBRUARY	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	0	0	0	0
P2	1	0	1	0%
P3	1	0	1	0%

Utqiagvik MARCH	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	2	1	1	50%
P2	1	0	1	0%
P3	7	4	3	

Utqiagvik APRIL	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	4	4	0	100%
P2	4	2	2	50%
P3	8	4	4	50%

Utqiagvik Run date: 5/1/23	Count 46-90 Days	Count 91-120 Days
Open IAs:	4	0

SOUTHCENTRAL

Kenai FEBRUARY	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	1	1	0	100%
P2	1	1	0	100%
P3	6	4	2	67%

Kenai MARCH	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	5	4	1	80%
P2	7	5	2	71%
P3	14	13	1	93%

Kenai APRIL	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	1	1	0	100%
P2	5	4	1	80%
P3	8	3	5	38%

Kenai Run date: 5/1/23	Count 46-90 Days	Count 91-120 Days
Open IAs:	17	3

Wasilla FEBRUARY	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	18	17	1	94%
P2	19	16	3	84%
P3	57	38	19	67%

Wasilla MARCH	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	7	6	1	86%
P2	14	13	1	93%
P3	49	39	10	80%

Wasilla APRIL	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	6	6	0	100%
P2	17	14	3	82%
P3	33	24	9	73%

Wasilla Run date: 5/1/23	Count 46-90 Days	Count 91-120 Days
Open IAs:	23	2

Dillingham FEBRUARY	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	0	0	0	0
P2	0	0	0	0
P3	1	0	1	0%

Dillingham MARCH	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	0	0	0	0
P2	0	0	0	0
P3	2	0	2	0%

Dillingham APRIL	Total Count	Total Initiated Timely	Total Not Initiated Timely	% Initiated Timely
P1	1	0	1	0%
P2	2	0	2	0%
P3	9	4	5	44%

Dillingham Run date: 5/1/23	Count 46-90 Days	Count 91-120 Days
Open IAs:	12	5

*Open Investigation and Assessment Data Obtained from: Open Initial Assessments RR00159 run date 05/01/23

*Priority Completion Data Obtained from Report: Completed Initial Assessments Between Dates run date 05/01/23
Reporting Period 02/01/23-02/28/23; 03/01/23-03/31/23; 04/01/23-04/30/23

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.

2023 Update: Tribal grantees for the Tribal Title IV-E Prevention grant continue serving families through referrals from OCS. There continues to be feedback that this grant is not working to meet the needs. Tribes are also providing prevention services to Tribal families through the Tribal Child Welfare Compact. It is possible this grant will be ending and reworked in the next fiscal year.

OCS will continue 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 still does not have capacity for an internal in-home-services program.

Services to prevent removal or reentry into foster care have improved in 2022, with 86% of cases reviewed for CFSR having achieved a strength. This is largely due to improvements in the Juneau and Fairbanks PIP sites. Early provision of safety related services was identified as contributing to the 100% for Fairbanks. The year prior, there was a struggle in accessing services. Similarly, the increase in the Juneau PIP site was identified as the early provision of safety related services with the addition of appropriate removals when safety could not be managed with services. Anchorage experienced a slight drop in this area but remained relatively stable. Overall, the cumulative score resulted at the PIP goal of 86%.

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.

2023 Update: The new ORCA documentation process of supervisory certification of relative search has been fully implemented. Reports indicate that some supervisors are utilizing this documentation, but it is not consistent across the state. Supervisors and managers continue to feel that this is an administrative burden when there are other ways to confirm that relatives are listed in ORCA. There is a current Legislative Audit underway for the HB 151 requirements. It is likely Alaska will receive audit findings regarding the use of the Supervisory Certification or Relative Search activity note type.

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 2023 where data will be discussed.

Permanency Outcome 2 remained stable with slight improvements in placement with siblings, preserving connections, and relationship of child in care with parent. Placement with siblings has remained stable for the three PIP sites with efforts found to keep sibling groups together whenever possible. The Anchorage and Juneau PIP sites were both at 100% strength in sibling placement. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care has remained relatively stable for the cumulative score.

Work continues in Alaska on family contact. The pilot in Matsu continues to work on supervision qualify for family contact. A CIP subcommittee is working to focus more on improving the quantity of family contact. OCS has now built a Compact Referral Unit that is believed will increase the amount of referrals completed to Tribes for scopes of work, including family contact.

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.

2023 Update: Administrative reviews/hearing were consistently conducted in the Fairbanks Field Office during FY 23. OCS still has not yet received evaluation data to support increased parental engagement or quality. As reported previously, NCJFCJ is now working with the Fairbanks District and will be completing a comprehensive evaluation. The decision was made to combine evaluation efforts so besides case party feedback and reports during CIP from the Fairbanks judicial representative it is difficult ascertain parental engagement impact. However, due to the positive verbal feedback from court parties a meeting is set in early FY 24 to identify the next judicial site to implement 6-month reviews.

During FY 23 a contract was offered to research and provide proposals to OCS leadership on development of a parental lived experience board. It is the intent of OCS to start development of a lived experience board to heighten stakeholder feedback and elicit more strategies for parental engagement.

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.

2023 Update: The POSC pilot program, Hello Baby, is fully implemented and has just completed its second year of 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, 2022, through January 31, 2023, indicates that 34 families were referred to Hello Baby and 30 Plans of Safe Care were created. The primary substance Hello BABY infants were exposed to was marijuana (8 babies). Infants were also exposed to nicotine (7), methamphetamines/amphetamines (2), alcohol (1), heroin (4), and MAT (4).

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. They work closely with the community Parents as Teachers program as well as Infant Learning and pediatric clinics to ensure services are in place.

In the past year, POSC efforts in Alaska have gained traction. The community in the Matanuska Susitna Valley, ROCK MAT-SU, have begun building a coordinated network of services for families with infants born substance exposed. They plan to have a Hello BABY program coordinator hired by the end of the calendar year to begin this prevention effort. Additionally, Fairbanks Memorial Hospital has begun conducting POSC work within their hospital. Bimonthly peer support meetings for the three communities doing this work have been implemented.

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.

2023 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 filled the positions on 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 2023.

The Bartlett POSC program, Hello BABY, continues to work with families in the Juneau area. Interest in expanding POSC in other communities has grown. Currently, Fairbanks Memorial Hospital has a designated staff member who has begun implementing POSC. In the Matanuska-Susitna Valley, the ROCK Mat-Su planning committee has begun developing a network of supportive community services with the goal of hiring a POSC/Hello BABY Coordinator by the end of the calendar year. OCS has hosted several supportive virtual meetings for the three communities currently engaging in POSC work. Bringing Bartlett Regional Hospital, Fairbanks Memorial Hospital and ROCK Mat-Su together provided opportunity to discuss programmatic development, challenges, and supportive solutions. These collaborative opportunities will continue moving forward.

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.

2023 Update: There have been no updates this year in regard to Alaska submitting a new draft of a Title IV-E prevention plan. Alaska has partnered with DPH to provide an RSA to increase the DPH grant for Parents as Teachers. This is assisting to increase the number of Parents as Teachers affiliate programs in Alaska. However Alaska still lacks in well-supported evidenced based practices.

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.

2023 Update: The CQI Manual and Stakeholder Engagement Guide was approved and adopted. The manual with all corresponding CQI documents are located in statewide forms for access to all staff. CQI is regularly discussed during the Change Management Leadership Team Meetings.

During FY 23, a training was held for all Southcentral Region supervisor and management staff on the PDSA model. The training was conducted in effort to support the region in development of a regional strategic plan. The training was recommended to other regions and offered as an option to enhance CQI in improvement efforts.

OCS held a statewide Leadership Meeting convening in Anchorage. During the convening a session was dedicated to training on CQI, the PDSA model and Adaptive vs. Technical Change. OCS continues to reinforce root cause analysis, thoughtful implementation and evaluation of program changes or initiatives.

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), once 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 successful 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.

2023 Update: The CQI Manual and Stakeholder Engagement Plan were approved and adopted in FY 23.

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan is located centrally in Statewide Forms. The monthly Change Management Leadership Team has a dedicated agenda item specifically to provide updates on any of the OCS participants on external stakeholder groups.

As reported earlier in the APSR OCS is making efforts to lift a Lived Experience Parent Advisory Board. OCS to further strengthen feedback from individuals with lived experience in development of strategies, programming, and initiatives. Creation of the advisory board is theorized to enhance engagement and the experience of parents involved with the system.

IMPLEMENTATION AND PROGRAM SUPPORTS

Casey Family Programs has been a valuable partner with the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact during this year. Their support of the Compact has been incredibly valuable to the Tribes and the State.

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 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 23 OCS received the funding for positions to centralized subsidy negotiations, full disclosures, and medical record compilations. The positions were incrementally created and recruited for, and the Coordinator was elevated to a Program Officer to oversee the program. With the positions coming online OCS fully expects to have the centralized unit operating and implemented during FY 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 needed 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 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.

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. Alaska will also be participating as cross state reviewers in the Missouri CFSR to gain more experience and consult with another state in preparation for Round 4.

Analysis and Dissemination of Quality Data

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

Within the Quality Assurance Unit, the Research Analyst analyzes all surveys and case record review reports. This allows specific training to the items and related narrative that provides consistency in analysis and data consumption. The Quality Assurance Unit also produces critical incident reports that are disseminated to state and regional leadership for debriefing and understanding.

In 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.

In FY 23, reporting and annual surveys were consistent to what was developed in FY 22. There were no major changes to quality data dissemination over the course of the last year.

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. I 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 23, OCS moved from conducting state leadership resource family forums to hear from licensed and unlicensed foster parents regarding challenges they have faced and ideas for improvement to regionally based forums. Region based forums foster relationships with resource families in the area and local management while addressing regional specific needs and 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 FFY22 allocation of IV-B I funding was \$73,425.00, 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 2022, 185 families and 457 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 2 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 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. During 2022 and 2023, the agency also partnered with community service providers such as BeWeL cultural services program through the University of Alaska Fairbanks aimed at reducing youth suicide and the Division of Public Health to study the trends of suicide among agency-affiliated youth. 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 three award extensions since the vehicle delivery was 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. In the late Summer of 2022, the division received the vehicle and was able to utilize this funding source to cover 100% of the cost. This program expired in September of 2022 with a balance of \$38,775.

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 \$602,990. 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 2022, 87 families and 215 children, 33 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 2022, 185 families and 457 children, 254 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 SFY 2022, 139 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 29 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 pre-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 6.1% of the general population of children in Alaska but makes up 28.6% of the substantiated protective services reports. Further, 6.4% 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.

CY 2022 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	6.1%	28.6%	6.4%
Ages 0-5	Non-Native	25.4%	13.4%	0.7%
Ages 6-10	Native	5.9%	18.3%	4.2%
Ages 6-10	Non-Native	22.8%	9.6%	0.6%
Ages 11-15	Native	5.7%	13.8%	3.3%
Ages 11-15	Non-Native	23.3%	9.5%	0.6%
Ages 16-17	Native	2.1%	4.2%	2.6%
Ages 16-17	Non-Native	8.7%	2.7%	0.4%

Sources: ORCA RR0002>working>substantiated maltreatment.sql, Run dates: 1/1/22-12/31/22 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 utilized this to partially fund the Circles of Support Grant. These funds were fully spent and expired on 9/30/2022.

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, game nights, paint night, respite nights, reindeer farm tours, 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 FY22 Kinship Program:

- In August, the Kinship program collaborated with the Food Bank of Alaska, SNAP, and Big Brothers Big Sisters Alaska to host an in-person back to school event. 60 backpacks filled with donated school supplies were provided to children being raised by relative caregivers. Food, cleaning supplies and personal hygiene items were also available for families participating in the event.
- In September, the Kinship Program hosted a Kinship Family Day event to celebrate families and facilitate connection between families.
- The Kinship Program conducted outreach by participating in three local school parent teacher conferences with an informational booth. Each opportunity resulted in successful connection with caregivers raising relative children.
- In November, the Kinship Program participated in the Alaska Center of Resource Families Foster and Adoptive Family Connection Café. This event focusing on community and social connections, included resources and supportive services such as the VOA Kinship program.
- During the holiday season, the Kinship Program was able to provide gifts for 55 children in kinship care. Additionally, the program delivered food and supplies to several families experiencing transportation issues.
- In partnership with the Food Bank of Alaska, the Kinship Program provided 4,541 meals to families enrolled in the program. The Kinship Program worked closely with Alaska Housing Finance Corp for family rental assistance, Safe Kids Kenai Peninsula for car seats for children, and Lutheran Social Services for utility and financial assistance.
- In April, the Kinship Network Facilitator became trained to facilitate the Strengthening Families Curriculum to kinship families.
- The Kinship Program partnered with the University of Alaska Anchorage School of Social Work to receive a program evaluation. UAA assisted in creating a client satisfaction survey for the program which has been implemented.

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 \$37,902.00 in title IV-B, subpart 2 funding for FFY 2023 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 December 8, 2022:

- **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 2022 OCS DATA: the total number of visits made by OCS caseworkers on a monthly basis to children in foster care was **65%**; this is a decrease from FFY 2021 (68%).

- **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 2022 OCS DATA: **71%** 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 2021 (74%).

FFY 2022 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	1,358	7,195	11,631	5,272	61%	73%
Northern	690	4,214	5,829	2,362	72%	56%
Southcentral	1,003	6,411	8,892	5,189	72%	80%
Southeast	256	1,274	2,068	870	61%	68%
Western	374	1,721	3,222	1,173	53%	68%
Statewide	3,681	20,815	31,642	14,866	65%	71%

*** Source: RR00124 Run date 12/8/2022

OCS received notice from the Children’s Bureau in February of 2023 that based on Alaska’s failure to meet the FFY 2022 monthly caseworker visit performance standard, the FFP rate for the Title IV-B, subpart 2, Child Welfare Services program funding for FFY 2023 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.

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 2022, Alaska had a savings of \$3,290,147.00.

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

These were one-time funds that expire in September of 2025. OCS has utilized the funding for different programs in the past. A portion of these funds is not allocated to an RSA over to the Department of Public Health to support a current grant they have for Parents as Teachers (PAT). With this funding we hope to increase the number of PAT providers across the state, as well as increase the number of providers choosing to become affiliates of PAT. OCS, DPH, and other entities have met to collaborate on how to create a PAT State Office in Alaska. Alaska had one in the past that was not successful as they were a grantee. These efforts continue as Alaska looks to see if there are other interested entities in becoming Alaska’s PAT State Office.

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

OCS’s Independent Living (IL) Unit, staffed with one Program Coordinator and seven Regional Independent Living Specialists (RILS) administer the Alaska Statewide Chafee Program. The Independent Living Unit is administratively located under the state office Service Array Unit. Independent Living Unit provides Chafee services and resources directly to eligible youth across the state. In addition to staff and budget supervision, the Independent Living Program Manager administers grants and contracts awarded to community partners to provide extended and comprehensive Chafee Services. These partnerships focus distributing essential NYTD services; mentorship, youth retreats, and housing support.

Anchorage, Southcentral, and Fairbanks regions have two RILS and the Southeast region is staffed with one RIL that also covers Western. Anchorage, Southcentral and Fairbanks have more community resources available for foster youth and alumni, however the IL Program makes every effort to provide equitable distribution of services and funding to youth statewide. 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 providing services to those IL youth. The IL Unit continued the No Wrong Door practice to staff the Western and Southeast regions ensuring both youth and staff alike could access any of the IL staff at any time. The Southeast position has recently been filled and the new employee is receiving training and has been establishing her Southeast caseload. As the Southeast RILS establishes her expertise the statewide RILS will initiate a warm handoff to transfer the cases to new Southeast RILS to ensure there are no gaps in services or program delivery during the transition process.

The table below reflects IL caseloads through May 22, 2023 of this reporting year.

Region	# of staff	# of IL Eligible Youth	# of NYTD services delivered
Northern	2	213	731
Anchorage	2	331	1889
South Central	2	254	1252
Southeast	1	95	201
Western	Covered by Southeast	40	136

The 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 resources to support youth exiting foster care. The Governor provided one million additional dollars for youth ages 18-21, allowing them to have additional time with support to maintain their stability and independence.

The IL Program offers regularly scheduled life skills activities, classes, and training opportunities for youth and alumni. During this reporting period IL’s Life Skills classes have continued to be 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 and has become a consistent source so information and support for youth across Alaska. 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. 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 growing 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 enhanced programmatic focus.

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 invited these partners to participate in monthly IL meetings, staff to staff opportunities to enhance programmatic connections. Covenant House, Volunteers of America, National 4-H, 4-H Bethel, and Kawerak Native Tribe have all participated. 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; 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 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. The process OCS created provide grants directly to youth was very successful and will remain part of the Independent Living Programs method for delivering resources. With this process the Regional Independent Living Specialists reach out to youth directly by many different means and award eligible youth grants for financial assistance for rent, insurance, transportation, debt relief, education, training, and more. A large majority of these awards in this past reporting period have been to support youth accessing transportation and maintaining housing.

Alaska also issues 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. 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. These videos are widely utilized from new OCS employee trainings to IL Life Skills online classes.

OCS continues into its second year partnering 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. With these activities students have an opportunity to 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. The very act of exploring and writing narratives about themselves gives youth a chance 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 that have returned to in person learning which focused on skills necessary to become a healthy adult. During those retreats, 102 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 39 youth to employment and training institutions, military recruiters, and Job Corps. 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 2022	35	The theme “Back to Reality,” led by the Statewide Youth Leadership Board focused on Healthy Relationships & Age-appropriate Social Skills, gaining and retaining employment, banking Child in Need of Aid cases (judges panel), the Education and Training Voucher, Youth Rights and Responsibilities, and opportunities to engage with a Mentor.
December 2022	28	The December Statewide Retreat focused on Youth Rights, Resources and Responsibilities. Youth viewed Microlearning videos and engaged in activities to think through getting a driver’s license, writing a resume, opening a bank account, managing money, extending foster care, and accessing IL Services. Youth learned of opportunities to share their personal experiences and to engage with a Mentor.
May 2023	39	Career Conference for youth that are planning on attending vocational or training programs or other career opportunities other than college. Youth had the opportunity to learn and tour programs to include Northern Industrial Training, Alaska Job Corps, The Beauty School, Military, and hear from the Job Center and Mentoring Program.

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, 29 youth were referred to the mentoring program. Of those 29, 11 are currently in the enrollment process and 5 new youth have been matched with an adult mentor. BBBS experienced staff turnover and in December 2022, their Sync Program Coordinator left the agency. In the interim, the supervisor of this position, the Assistant Director of Programs, was able to continue interviewing youth during the transition period but was limited in capacity for matching. The new Sync Program Coordinator started on April 17, 2023, and is in process of taking over the position, and enrolling and making new Sync matches. There are currently 4 youth pending matches with adult mentors. The Sync Program Coordinator continually communicates with Independent Living staff, attending monthly IL meetings, and attending virtual Independent Living classes. The coordinator has also

continued to build a marketing presence for both youth and volunteer recruitment on social media and at in-person recruiting events. The Program Coordinator has presented to youth each quarter at the Facing Foster Care in Alaska retreat, which generated interest and excitement about the program and led to more than 10 youth-led referrals into the program. With feedback from the youth, the Program Coordinator organizes monthly match activities virtually and in-person. Some of the activities offered included cookie decorating at a holiday hangout, a virtual Nailed-It style baking challenge, and a hike to Thunderbird Falls. In addition, youth can select a special activity for their first outing and the Program Coordinator provides gift cards or tickets for them to use for the outing. Recently youth have selected activities that are personalized to their unique interests, including having high tea or playing games at Dave & Buster's to get their friendship started in a fun and meaningful way. The youth who are referred to and engage with Sync come from diverse backgrounds. Of the currently matched youth, 75% of youth are youth of color and 40% identify as a part of the LGBTQI+ population. We currently have one youth who is parenting. The Sync program team works hard to support these youth in their matches through consistent match support. The Match Support Specialist connects with 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, which may include talking about their education goals, healthy relationships, future plans, personal safety, and avoidance of drugs, alcohol, or other substances. It is crucial that youth have an open and supportive environment to share their thoughts and Sync does this through Match Support. Although the minimum commitment to be in the Sync program is 12 months, the average match length of a Sync match is 22.6 months, highlighting the quality of the match friendships. 24 Sync youth were supported by the Match Support Specialist during the year. The program provides monthly support contact with the youth, the volunteer, and the foster parent, equating to over 600 individual support calls during the year. BBBS also provides training opportunities for mentors to ensure they feel equipped to support their youth. Prior to being matched, all mentors participate in a Trauma Informed Care training as well as a pre-match mentoring course. Sync has a library of over 60 different topics that mentors have access to through their online portal. 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.

The OCS Independent Living Program and the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) continue to successfully partner through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to facilitate the Making A Home (MAH) program. The MOU has been in effect for over 10 years. Through this partnership AHFC agrees to provide

rental assistance to OCS referred youth who are aging out of foster care. Through Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) programs, the IL program continues to reliably filled housing vouchers across the state every year and is a program that continues to grow. In 2019, AHFC received 21 Foster Youth to Independence Initiative (FYI) vouchers, which target a similar population as the Making A Home program. As with the MAH 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.

As of May 2023 there are 22 FYI vouchers are available to youth, and 30 vouchers are available under the Making A Home Program.

- FYI – 12 youth are leased and five in the process of eligibility. Since its inception, the partnership between AHFC and OCS has resulted in 94 referrals.
- MAH – 15 youth are leased with 2 shopping and 4 in the process of eligibility. In calendar year 2022, OCS provided 18 referrals, and in 2023, AHFC has received 6 referrals.
- Security deposit assistance program launched in October 2022 to help eliminate barriers at move in. This program was previously only available for MAH program but now includes FYI Youth. AHFC pays the security deposit at move in and at move out the funds go directly to the youth.
- Youths can participate in AHFC’s Jumpstart program. Jumpstart offers up to \$3,000 in financial incentives to support their efforts to increase self-sufficiency. The young adult creates their own goals, and a budget then collaborates with a Jumpstart case manager to guide them through resources to assist in meeting goals. Incentives include rewards for work, education or training, tuition assistance and a savings match program. The youth must be leased to participate.
<https://www.ahfc.us/tenants/jumpstart>

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

The IL program continues to observe a close business agreement with the University of Alaska’s, Child Welfare Academy (CWA), to administer ETV programming to former foster youth up to age 23. Notably, over the past five years, Alaska has been able to expend all funds to ETV applicants to date. Youth engaged in the ETV program receive more direct, on-campus support and have a caring adult to assist with the struggles of attending college and securing resources for their education. Also of note, Alaska’s ETV Program is fully staffed by those with Lived Expertise in child welfare and graduates of the ETV program, offering a unique lens to determining the needs of incoming and current students.

School Year	Total ETVs Awarded	Number of New ETVs
Final Number: 2021-2022 School Year* (July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022)	35	13
2022-2023 School Year* (July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023)	42	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.

Since the submission of the 2020-2024 CFSP, the ETV program has had to make significant changes to program delivery. The end of the 2020 academic year aligned with pandemic-related emergency mandates and shutdown orders. This emergency was first felt by our college and residential school students and continued for the next year. By working closely together, ETV and the IL program staff were able to secure

exceptions for youth to maintain their campus housing through the shutdown or quickly make the transition to relatives or foster care placements within 24 hours, ensuring each youth had the ability to connect with their teachers and classes remotely.

The ETV program continues to provide an annual Education Conference for eligible current and former foster youth that are interested in exploring post-secondary education opportunities. In this reporting period the program worked to restructure this event because of construction challenges at the University of Alaska Anchorage dormitories which are unavailable this year. Instead of hosting one large Education Conference, the ETV Program Coordinator will work with Independent Living Regional Specialist and will host smaller regional conferences across the state. The regional conferences will be held in Anchorage, Matsu Valley, Fairbanks, Juneau, and Bethel and will include visits to those University of Alaska regional campuses.

CWA and the OCS IL Program Coordinator continue to observe a strong partnership with Alaska Pacific University which provides ten Promise Tuition Grants. If youth meet qualifications, funds are sent to the qualified post-secondary education and training center to cover the cost of tuition, fees, books, room, and board. In this past reporting period opportunities for ETV Eligible youth to access Tuition Waivers across post-secondary education institutions have expanded. In addition to Presidential Foster Youth Tuition Waivers, and OCS Tuition Assistance is offered across University of Alaska campuses statewide.

To ensure the total amount of educational assistance does not exceed to total cost of attendance, ETV Program staff monitor student enrollment, the number of credits involved and estimates the cost of attendance. The CWA ETV Coordinator can view financial aid awards, including any grants, loans, and scholarships beyond ETV. The CWA ETV Coordinator then determines their award up to the \$5000 limit and provides that information to the school’s Financial Aid Department. Financial aid has further layers of review and will hold ETV assistance until all other aid has been applied to a student’s account. If a student has been over awarded or doesn't show a financial need, they will return the funds. For students at non-UA Campuses, the CWA 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 CWA 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 CWA ETV Coordinator outlining eligibility. Financial Aid provides an additional layer of review. If a student withdraws or fails, has too much aid, or drops some credits, financial aid notifies the CWA ETV Coordinator, and funds are returned.

The 2022-2023 academic year was met with additional Financial Aid to support students beyond ETV and Tuition Waivers limited to Institutions. The State of Alaska Governor’s Budget included Post-Secondary Education funds to be expended at the discretion of the Office of Children’s Services Independent Living Program. The CWA ETV Coordinator worked closely with RILS to identify students unmet financial need beyond support from ETV and other scholarships to be awarded aid through the Governor’s Budget.

Post-Secondary Education and Vocational Participation

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

Academic Year	# Youth attending Post- Secondary (Under Age 23)	Number of Youth Who Received ETV Funds	Number of Youth Who Received Presidential Tuition Waiver	Number of Youth who Received an OCS Tuition Scholarship	College Graduates
2018-2019	53	53 (25 new)	28 (15 new)	13	10
2019-2020	52	52 (26 new)	30 (15 new)	22	6
2020-2021	50	50 (16 new)	32	10	6
2021-2022	47	47 (24 New)	22 (9 new)	13	8
2022-2023	42	42 (24 new)	25 (15 new)	5 (per 3/27)	2 (per 3/27)

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)

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. Utilizing the network of ICWA workers and maintaining consistent scheduling and contact information has proven to be critical for maintaining tribal participation. Over the past year an average of five tribal representatives from tribes across the state have attended these meetings. In FY 22 OCS Independent Living Program Coordinator repeatedly provided information about new state financial resources available to eligible youth, for both daily basic living, and for education and vocational needs. 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 enhanced support for Alaska's tribal IL youth OCS is continuing to partner with Kawerak Tribal Association to support educational and life skills development 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 showcase 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. In the past year 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. The program and youth were so successful OCS and Kawerak have renewed the partnership, a new cohort of 15 youth will begin in May 2023.

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; Tanana Chiefs, Mission Village and Tlingit & Haida tribes have also received comprehensive information related to OCS' Independent Living program, Chafee, and state resources available to eligible tribal youth. This past year celebrated the success of the ongoing partnership with Kawerak's ePortfolio project for IL eligible youth from the Bering Strait/Kawerak Region utilizing the Healing the Canoe curriculum and the first cohort graduating from the program. The IL program and Kawerak collaborated to ensure the provision of equipment and services to support online access and program participation for youth in remote and rural locations and efforts for this will continue into year 2023-2024.

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 (Compact). Further input was gathered from Tribes regarding prevention services delivered by the Tribes. For Fiscal year 2023 through the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact, Tribes began providing prevention services from low to high-risk families that come to the attention of the state. Collaboration with Tribes regarding prevention services is ongoing.

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 administer another survey in 2024. OCS transitioned to conducting our Tribal Partner Survey on a biennial 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. The Tribal State Advisory team is working on implementing a 5-year Strategic Plan, to evaluate the strategic plan that recently sunset, reset priorities and goals for a long-term plan. Each OCS Region has its own Regional Tribal State Collaborative comprised of Regional Leadership and Tribal partners. Each Region strives to meet regularly and to work collaboratively on regional issues related to meet the needs of Alaska Native families and children.

One of the Guiding Principles of the Office of Children services and the Tribal State Collaboration Group states, “Tribes and OCS have a respectful government-to-government relationship.” With 67% 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 FY2023, 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. At the annual Tribal State Convening, an elder who is a Cultural Support Provider, shared an informational presentation on the work she does with parents and families through this program. The presentation was also shared at the Regional Tribal State meetings.

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.

Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact negotiations for FY2024 was held April 17th and 18th, 2023. Co-Signers continue to provide Prevention services along with the previously negotiated Scopes of Work.: Family Contact, Safety Evaluations, Licensing Assist, Initial Diligent Relative Search, Ongoing Placement Search. The Compact continues to be funded at 5 million dollars.

During FY2023 the State expanded its technical assistance and support to Tribal co-signers of the Compact by creating a Compact referral unit. The primary function of the unit is to identify family cases that can be referred for Compact services to a Co-Signer. The unit will provide technical assistance, training, and support to OCS staff and Co-Signers around the referral process. Casey Family Programs continues to help with supporting the Compact, the focus for fiscal year 2023 was the development data tracking and a process to assess fidelity of the service delivery structures set in place and progress toward Scope of Work.

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 continues to offer Tribal Title IV-E Maintenance Agreement to allow Tribes to access 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. Although this was the final year of the grant, Tribes will continue to provide these 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 through the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact.

MONITORING COMPLIANCE WITH ICWA

In January 2023, the 2022 Tribal State Data Indicators were published that shows several positive trends. In 2014, 42% of Alaska Native/American Indian children were placed with extended family. Now, 51% of AN/AI children were with extended family in 2022. The number of reunifications has increased from 48% in 2014 to 50% in 2022 and the number of adoptions or guardianships to ICWA preference placements have also increased from 92 in 2014 to 134 in 2022. The number of Tribal children with an intervening Tribe has also increased from 46% in 2016 to 65% in 2022.

Through Regional ICWA Specialists conducting out-of-preference placement meetings and Compact Co-Signers conducting relative searches, a lot of work continues 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. It has proven successful, most disagreements that are through this process are resolved at a regional level and do not need to be litigated or brought up the chain of command.

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 FY2022 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. The ICWA Specialist team partners with Alaska Center for Resource Families to educate Foster Families on ICWA and partnering with Tribes. The ICWA team also co-facilitates the BIA Basic ICWA training that is led by the Alaska Native Justice Center.

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. Utilizing the network of ICWA workers and maintaining consistent scheduling and contact information has proven to be critical for maintaining tribal participation. Over the past year an average of five tribal representatives from tribes across the state have attended these meetings.

In enhanced support for Alaska's tribal IL youth OCS is continuing to partner with Kawerak Tribal Association to support educational and life skills development 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 showcase achievement. In the past year 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. The program and youth were so successful OCS and Kawerak have renewed the partnership, a new cohort of 15 youth will begin in May 2023.

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; Tanana Chiefs, Mission Village and Tlingit & Haida tribes have also received comprehensive information related to OCS' Independent Living program, Chafee, and state resources available to eligible tribal youth. The IL program and Kawerak collaborated to ensure the provision of equipment and services to support online access and program participation for youth in remote and rural locations and efforts for this will continue into year 2023-2024.

SHARING 2023 APSR WITH TRIBES

OCS will be disseminating the submitted 2024 APSR to Tribal partners through the Tribal State Collaboration Group Tribal Caucus listserv. 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. Alaska's Mandatory Reporter Statute (47.17.290) was amended to require mandatory reporters to report allegations of sexual abuse to both OCS

and the nearest law enforcement agency (effective September 2020). However, no laws or regulations were changed which would affect Alaska's eligibility.

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

Childfirst® Alaska Coordination: The University of Alaska Child welfare Academy (CWA) continued to provide coordination for Alaska's Childfirst® training program at the direction of the Alaska Childfirst® Leadership Team, a multidisciplinary team of stakeholders that oversees the forensic interviewing training program. This year CAPTA funds continued to support these efforts through a contract between CWA and OCS. Activities included coordination and participation in quarterly Childfirst® Leadership Team meetings and participation in national meetings of the Zero Abuse Project. CWA also assisted with onboarding of new Childfirst® Alaska trainers, provided registration support for OCS staff who participated in the trainings, and coordinated 3 week-long face-to-face trainings: July 11-16, 2022; September 26-30, 2022; and April 24-28, 2023. The CWA also researched the possibility of offering a two-day refresher training in the future.

Training and Technical Assistance: Through a contract with the University of Alaska Child Welfare Academy (CWA) CAPTA funds supported a variety of technical assistance and training for OCS staff, partner agencies and grantees. In the fall of 2022, the CWA assisted the Alaska Children's Justice Act (CJA) task force with planning and coordination of a Statewide needs assessment which evaluated Alaska's systemic response to child abuse and neglect. This effort was in preparation for the Alaska CJA's 3-year review which the CWA also assisted in facilitating. The event was held in Girdwood, Alaska on October 25-26, 2022, with 18 task force members and 2 CWA facilitators in attendance. They assisted with facilitation of an Alaska Blanket Exercise during the event. The facilitators documented the proceedings throughout the two days. Last year the CWA assisted with the editing and update of *Guidelines for the Multidisciplinary Response to Child Abuse in Alaska* a document that was created through a collaboration between the Alaska CJA, OCS, the Alaska Children's Alliance, and other partners statewide. That document which was scheduled to be published in the Fall of 2022 was delayed due to unforeseen circumstances and is planned now for publication in August 2023. Hardcopies will be available to CACs, MDTs, and partner agencies upon request, while the guidelines will also be accessible on the OCS website. Also in coordination with the Alaska Children's Alliance, the CWA assisted with planning and preparations, as part of the 2022 Child Maltreatment Committee, for the 2022 Alaska Child Maltreatment Conference which was held in Anchorage on November 15-18, 2022. Major themes of the conference included: trafficking, neglect, and cross-systems collaboration. The CWA provided scholarships for 58 of the conference participants. In Coordination with the Alaska CJA, CWA staff assisted with registration, logistical, and technical support for a statewide online training regarding recent changes to Alaska's Sexual Assault Statutes (HB325). This training was attended by

more than 300 professionals from law enforcement, OCS, and CACs statewide. The CWA also participated and provided support for the Alaska Child Welfare Conference Development Committee.

Alaska Citizen’s Review Panel: CAPTA funds continue to be used to provide logistical support and coordination services for the Alaska Citizen’s review Panel through a contract with Denali Daniels and Associates. The panel’s work this year included five retention-related round table discussions in 2022-2023 that focused on organizational culture and worker wellness at OCS. They met with OCS Regional Managers, Staff Managers, Urban Supervisors and Rural Supervisors. They also reconnected with the frontline staff who had participated in the 2021-2022 CRP round tables. Those discussions were used to shape the recommendations developed for the 2022-2023 Annual Report, to be published on June 30, 2023, which will be shared with OCS leadership and staff as well as Alaska policymakers. Throughout the year, the Chair reviewed any individual complaints against OCS that were received by the Panel. The individuals that sent the complaints to the CRP were connected with resources such as information on the OCS grievance process, the Alaska State Ombudsman, etc. Those complaints were compiled, and the entire Panel reviewed them during the Annual Meeting to identify any possible systemic issues that could guide recommendations. **Reciprocal Engagement:** To increase awareness of the CRP and engage further with OCS staff, the Panel subscribed to the OCS staff newsletter and submitted articles for publication. Additionally, the Panel connected with the Child Welfare Academy at UAA to discuss future collaboration opportunities. **Public Outreach:** The CRP Chair shared preliminary findings from this year’s round table discussions as well as the findings and recommendations from last year’s work during a joint session of the House and Senate Health and Social Services Committees in February of 2023. The Panel worked with OCS to establish a CRP presence on the OCS website. With the intention of ensuring diversity in membership, the CRP continued to work on recruiting members who have lived experiences with the CPS system and members from unrepresented areas of Alaska. Panel members continued their efforts to engage with stakeholders in their individual communities. **Collaborative Relationship With OCS:** The Panel met monthly with OCS leadership, engaging in conversations around last year’s recommendations, implementation of programs and the current challenges facing OCS. They gathered information from OCS on the metrics used for organizational culture and worker wellness to assist with the development of this year’s round table discussions. **CRP Education & Development:** The Panel attended an educational CRP 101 presentation from the Capacity Building Center for States and connected with CRPs from other states through a dedicated Listserv. At the beginning of the year, they completed a robust review of their policies and procedures. During the Annual Meeting, the Panel met with Alaska State Ombudsman Kate Burkhart to learn more about the work of the Ombudsman’s office as it relates to the child welfare system.

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

In 2020, The Office of Children’s Services put out a Plans of Safe Care (POSC) contract opportunity awarded to Bartlett Hospital in Juneau. Bartlett began piloting POSC’s in April 2021. Currently (as of 2023) Bartlett Hospital has entered their third-year piloting POSC with their Hello B.A.B.Y (Building Alaskan Babies with You) program. During the second year of their program, they created 51 Plans of Safe Care providing families with wraparound supportive service coordination. Hello BABY connects families with parenting education, housing, WIC, pediatric providers, mental health services, treatment/MAT providers and peer supports.

Interest in expanding POSC in other communities has grown. Currently, Fairbanks Memorial Hospital has a designated staff member who has begun implementing POSC. In the Matanuska-Susitna Valley, the ROCK Mat-Su planning committee has begun developing a network of supportive community services with the goal of hiring a POSC/Hello BABY Coordinator by the end of the calendar year. OCS has hosted several supportive virtual meetings for the three communities currently engaging in POSC work. Bringing Bartlett Regional Hospital, Fairbanks Memorial Hospital and ROCK Mat-Su together provided opportunity to discuss programmatic development, challenges, and supportive solutions. These collaborative opportunities will continue moving forward.

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 has been heavily influenced by technical tasks and information provided by RFAB, ACRF, and OCS staff. In FY 23, OCS included community partners, foster parents, Tribal partners, ACRF, and RFAB in identifying adaptive changes in recruiting and retaining foster and adoptive parents. The Statewide Recruitment and Retention Committee contracted with Agnew Beck to assist the committee in moving forward with the adaptive changes. Below are new items the Statewide diligent recruitment plan are addressing:

- Build community among foster parents/resource families, caseworkers, birth parent/families, and others involved.
- Change the language used by OCS and partners away from the “foster to adopt,” message and replace with “foster to reunify”.
- Develop a foster parent/resource family respite program.
- Enhance training for OCS staff to improve working relationships with resource families.
- Provide mentorship/peer support for resource families.

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, a project assistant, 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, 48% in FY22, and 47% in FY23.

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.

The Health Care Oversight and Coordination plan is due for a full revision in the summer of 2024 with the updated Alaska CFSP.

3. DISASTER PLAN

The statewide COOP has been updated to accurately reflect the chain of command and duty positions. It is being routed for signature.

Safety Officer continues to monitor information on COVID and other communicable diseases such as influenza, tuberculosis, etc. continue to be provided by OCS's Safety Officer via internal incident reporting. In addition to communicable diseases, Safety is now responsible to ensure the employer reports of injuries are completed in accordance with OSHA and SOA regulations. Safety and Security has partnered with SOA Risk Management to ensure accurate and timely reporting of any adverse risk events impacting the OCS workforce.

Throughout the reporting year, the State of Alaska experienced multiple disasters throughout the operating regions. Examples of disasters which impacted the OCS operating environment include Typhoon Merbok, record snowfalls, fires resulting in the loss of community infrastructure and flooding. This year, with the addition of the safety officer, Safety and Security assumed the role of a disaster response coordinator for the agency. Upon notification of any statewide disasters, members of the safety unit coordinate with members of Licensing, CPS, members of the Statewide Executive Team (SET), and State of Alaska Department of Homeland Security (AKDHS), gathering all available information on the status of all OCS mission essential functions, such as damaged critical infrastructure, workforce status, status of foster families and placements, etc., impacted by the disaster. Safety and Security compiles the data and submits it to the OCS State Executive Team and Region 10 of the Children's Bureau for review. Additionally, Safety and Security staff worked closely with State of Alaska Department of Homeland Security Emergency Management personnel providing firsthand reporting of events from our community providers and workforce. These partnership and reports assisted in the deployment of state and federal assets to some of these impacted zones.

4. TRAINING PLAN

The only change in FY23 from the FY 22 changes of 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 was an additional level of DEI training on applications. DEI foundations is required for all OCS staff and DEI applications is required for all position who work with families at OCS to include front line PSS staff, Licensing Workers, Supervisors, Social Services Associates and Management.

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

OCS does not have a minimum number of continuing education requirements for staff, but trainings are provided throughout the year for ongoing staff development.

Demographic Information on Personnel as of 06/05/2023:

Job Class	Female	Male	Total	Average Annual Rate
PSM 1	5	3	8	\$106,236.00
PSM 2	5		5	\$111,334.08
PS Specialist 1	25	12	37	\$52,131.93
PS Specialist 2	76	33	109	\$65,151.11
PS Specialist 3	45	15	60	\$81,586.68
PS Specialist 4	33	14	47	\$93,669.92
Total	189	77	266	\$74,190.22

Job Class	AK NATIVE / AMER. IND.	ASIAN	BLACK	HISPANIC	PACIFIC IS. / HAWAIIAN	TWO OR MORE RACES	WHITE	Total
PSM 1				1			7	8
PSM 2						1	4	5
PS Specialist 1	1	2	1	3		3	27	37
PS Specialist 2	10	1	11	6	2	5	74	109
PS Specialist 3	6	2	3	5	1	1	42	60
PS Specialist 4	5	1	2				39	47
Total	22	6	17	15	3	10	193	266

Job Class	AK NATIVE / AMER. IND. Female	AK NATIVE / AMER. IND. Male	ASIAN Female	ASIAN Male	BLACK Female	BLACK Male	HISPANIC Female	HISPANIC Male	PACIFIC IS. / HAWAIIAN Female	PACIFIC IS. / HAWAIIAN Male	TWO OR MORE RACES Female	TWO OR MORE RACES Male	WHITE Female	WHITE Male	Total
PSM 1							1						4	3	8
PSM 2											1		4		5
PS Specialist 1	1		1	1	1		3				2	1	17	10	37
PS Specialist 2	10			1	7	4	3	3	2		1	4	53	21	109
PS Specialist 3	5	1	1	1	2	1	3	2	1			1	33	9	60
PS Specialist 4	4	1	1		1	1							27	12	47
Total	20	2	3	3	11	6	10	5	3	0	4	6	138	55	266

Age Groups

Job Class	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 and over	Total
PSM 1		3	3	2		8
PSM 2			5			5
PS Specialist 1	18	13	5	1		37
PS Specialist 2	16	38	23	18	14	109
PS Specialist 3	4	13	20	17	6	60
PS Specialist 4		11	21	11	4	47
Total	38	78	77	49	24	266

***This data is confidential per AS 39.25.080 and should only be used for the requested purpose by the appropriate staff.

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 5/16/2023 there were 2,739 open cases with 45 supervisor positions filled, providing direct supervision to 233 caseworkers. OCS has 302 PSS I/II positions, but on 3/31/2023, 229 of those positions were filled.

According to this point in time data:

- Supervisors support 5.2 caseworkers
- Caseload is 15 cases per caseworker
- Turnover at the PSS level is 54%

*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
SFY 22	Transfer to DJJ	4

2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHERS

School Year	Total ETVs Awarded	Number of New ETVs
Final Number: 2021-2022 School Year (July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022)	35	13
2022-2023 School Year* (July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023)	42	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 65%. This is decrease from the previous year’s data. The percent of children visited in their home was 71%, which exceeds the 50% federal standard.

*Source: RR00124 Federal Monthly Caseworker Visits Measure, FFY22

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 \$602,990 in FFY 2021 funds from title IV-B, subpart 2 and spent those funds as follows:

- \$144,717 or 24% of its FFY 2021 award on family preservation services.
- \$144,718 or 24% of its FFY 2021 award on community-based family support services.
- \$313,555 or 52% of its FFY 2021 award on time-limited family reunification services.
- Alaska did not spend any of its FFY 2021 award on adoption promotion and support services.

Per the attached CFS-101, Part III, Alaska did not spend any of its FFY2021 award on administrative costs.

Alaska spent \$37,828 on Monthly Caseworker Visits.

In FFY 2021, OCS did not expend approximately 20% of the grant on each of the four PSSF service categories. Funds were spent disproportionately during FFY 2021, 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 FFY2022, OCS expended approximately 1% 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. In SFY 2023 Alaska's Governor allocated the Office of Children's Services additional state funding to support current and former foster youth to obtain housing. Those additional state funds were also utilized for necessary room and board.

2. CURRENT YEAR FUNDING—FY 2022 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 FY2023

Attachment E. State of Alaska Data Quality Plan

Attachment F. OCS Workforce Workplan USSG Framework

Alaska CFS101 FY 2023 signed

Alaska CFS-101 FY2023 Excel

Alaska Attachment C ETV Chart FY 2023