

**Public Health Nurse, Probation Officer, Social Worker
Safety and Support Equipment**

**FY2002 Request: \$2,831,000
Reference No: 32446**

AP/AL: Appropriation

Project Type: Equipment

Category: Health/Human Services

Location: Statewide

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House District: Statewide (HD 1-40)

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Estimated Project Dates: 07/01/2001 - 06/30/2006

Brief Summary and Statement of Need:

Project would provide funds for critical equipment needed by Department to enhance security, improve program efficiency and replace aging or dysfunctional equipment for the Department's statewide operations. There is an urgent need for this equipment so that Family and Youth Service social workers, Juvenile Justice detention and probation officers and Public Health nurses can perform their duties safely and effectively. Failure to fund some equipment purchases will mean that they may not be able to do their job or may be placed in danger. In any case, delays in procurement of needed equipment will mean that workers will not be able to do their jobs as well as they should and could.

Funding:	FY2002	FY2003	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	Total
Fed Rcpts	\$2,331,000						\$2,331,000
Gen Fund	\$500,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$5,500,000
Total:	\$2,831,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$7,831,000

<input type="checkbox"/> State Match Required	<input type="checkbox"/> One-Time Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - underway	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On-Going
0% = Minimum State Match % Required		<input type="checkbox"/> Amendment	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Bill	

Operating & Maintenance Costs:

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Staff</u>
Project Development:	0	0
Ongoing Operating:	0	0
One-Time Startup:	0	
Totals:	0	0

Additional Information / Prior Funding History:

CH135/SLA00/P14/L21 \$163.2 AHFC \$38.9 Federal.

Project Description/Justification:

This project includes a broad range of equipment needed for the Department's operations. The intent is that adequate funds will be made available for the acquisition of equipment necessary to improve security for youth corrections facilities, youth probation officers, public health nurses, family and youth services staff, and staff and clients at all facilities operated by the Department. Funds would also be available for items such as needed clinical equipment at public health centers, laboratory equipment, kitchen equipment at youth facilities, transportation equipment, beds and furnishings at youth facilities. Building related replacement equipment for the Department's facilities will also be included, for example, replacement of archaic, energy wasting lighting fixtures and ballasts, replacement or repair of emergency generators, etc.

The amounts requested represent the minimum safety and support equipment needed for Department staff to function. The items in this request are urgently needed. Worker safety and efficiency demand that staff be adequately equipped. While many needs can be postponed, the current request involves items that are simply needed for workers to function safely and effectively.

Vehicle Needs Analysis

The Department recently surveyed available vehicles in the *DHSS Comprehensive Vehicle Analysis* report (copies of the

report are available on request). The report identified, by division and field location, the number of vehicles available and the ratio of relevant field staff to vehicles. The study identified which vehicles were leased by the Department and which were owned. In some cases vehicle credits are available to replace aging existing vehicles. In the following cases, however, capital funds may be needed for vehicles:

- to replace leased vehicles
- to acquire additional vehicles because of increased workloads, staffing levels or new facilities;
- to replace existing vehicles that have already been depreciated out, where replacement credits were used for another vehicle.

The ratio of relevant direct field office staff to vehicles in some locations is 12.6 and higher, which is clearly unacceptable. The Department is in the process of establishing a standard or standards for staff to vehicle ratios and will use the standards as the long-term goal on which to base a phased procurement plan.

In the meantime, the vehicles included in the requests below are based on interim standards for FY02 only. These requests attempt to alleviate only the most glaring deficiencies that are documented in the *Comprehensive Vehicle Analysis* report.

A. Division of Family and Youth Services (\$310.0 GF, \$59.0 Fed)

The Department of Health and Social Services requests \$369.0 in capital funds for the Division of Family and Youth Services (DFYS) to provide DFYS front line workers with basic operating equipment and safe, reliable vehicles. Aging and unreliable equipment is counterproductive and increases the burden that is already placed on DFYS workers.

Office Automation and Replacement of Dysfunctional Equipment, \$89.4 - Needed to provide basic operating and safety equipment for the 29 Field Offices located in the four DFYS regions (Anchorage, Southcentral, Northern, and Southeast). A survey of our field offices indicates that basic operating equipment is aging and needs to be replaced. For example, field office copiers average between 3 to 7 years old, faxes 4 to 9 years, and the telephones over 10 years. The inability to replace this basic equipment is an impediment which undermines our front line workers' ability to perform their vital function of protecting Alaska's children from abuse and neglect.

Vehicles, \$279.6 - Eleven vehicles are needed in the DFYS regions. Currently the Division has an inadequate number of vehicles given the Statewide presence of DFYS and the number of front line workers that need access to vehicles. DFYS social workers and social services associates typically spend between 50-60% of their working week out of the office performing investigations, conducting home visits, going to court, transporting children, attending case planning meetings, and performing other case-related activities. With the exception of transporting children, field workers must frequently use their personal vehicles to conduct these activities when a state-owned vehicle is not available. For example, in the Anchorage Field Office there are currently only 7 vehicles which must be shared by over 88 workers in the investigations, permanency planning, and licensing units (over 12.6 workers per vehicle). Again, these workers spend about 50-60% of their time in the field, and the shortage of available vehicles impedes their ability to perform their jobs.

This shortage of vehicles is not a matter of simple inconvenience, but rather is one of safety and liability. For example, a social worker performs a routine home visit, finds that a child or children are being abused or neglected and determines that the child or children must be taken into emergency custody. Unfortunately, because a vehicle was unavailable the worker had to take their personal vehicle. Now the worker must call their field office to request a transport. In the meantime, the child's (children's) parent becomes agitated and hostile. The emotionally charged nature of these types of situations can quickly escalate into violence.

In a recent incident a DFYS worker was threatened by a highly enraged person brandishing a firearm. Other real hazards faced by workers and the children they transport include heavy snowfall, extreme temperatures, and bad roads. Our workers must have the basic resources including a sufficient number of vehicles so that they can perform their jobs and get themselves and the children that they are charged to protect out of potentially dangerous situations. Reliance upon the use of employee-owned vehicles to respond to reports of harm or to transport children also exposes the employee-transporter and the State to potential liability.

The following table outlines the minimal need for additional DFYS vehicles in FY02:

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	Current # of Vehicles	# of Direct Staff	Current # of Direct Staff per Vehicle	# of Vehicles Needed	Amount Requested
Anchorage	7	88	12.6	3	\$87.3
Dillingham	0	2	n/a	1	\$29.1
Fairbanks	5	42	8.4	1	\$29.1
Kenai	2	12	6	1	\$29.1
*Kotzebue	1	2	2	1	\$15.6
*McGrath	1	2	2	1	\$15.6
*Nome	1	3	3	1	\$15.6
Palmer	2	11	5.5	1	\$29.1
Seward	0	1	n/a	1	\$29.1
Totals:	46	240	5.2	11	\$279.6

Number of Division of Family & Youth Services Direct Staff includes Social Services Associates I-III, Social Workers I-IV and Community Care License Specialist I-II only.

*Kotzebue, McGrath, and Nome field offices have vehicles, but need to upgrade to vehicles for dirt roads, to obtain 4-wheel drive, and to meet the arctic conditions. Costs shown for vehicles are in addition to credits available.

B. Division of Juvenile Justice (\$90.0 GF)

Probation Officer Safety, Security and Equipment Improvements - This request will provide for the most critical safety, security and equipment improvements for probation officers and offices statewide. Needs far exceed requested funds. Funds will be used to install security and safety equipment and to design and build access control points for probation offices primarily in small non-urban offices. The request will also provide some funds to equip probation officers working in the community with bullet proof vests, hand held radios, telephones, two way radios and enough vehicles to allow for frequent activity in the community. Bullet proof vests, hand held radios, intrusion barriers and other safety/security equipment are necessary to provide safety and security for probation officers in and out of their offices. Communication equipment is a major component of safety, security and efficiency for staff. This equipment will be used to: request back up for staff, intercept escape attempts, provide emergency back up communications and efficiency during field work. Many existing DJJ 2-way radios are in excess of 8 years old and replacement is needed.

Several rural offices have safety and security issues requiring protective barriers between staff and the public in lobbies and entrances. These offices will require assessment and minor upgrades, with major upgrades following the assessments where indicated. Offices requiring these upgrades are Dillingham, Homer, Valdez, Kodiak, Ketchikan, Sitka, Petersburg, Fairbanks, Bethel, Barrow, Kotzebue, Nome.

C. Division of Public Health - (\$100.0 GF, \$2,272.0 Fed)

Public Health Nursing Section (\$100.0 GF, \$22.0 Fed)

The Public Health Nursing Section has need for a variety of equipment to improve the safety and productivity of its employees and improve their ability to provide important health services to Alaskans.

• **New Safe Vehicles and Replacement Vehicles, \$102.2** - Many older vehicles leased from DOT are plagued by repeated mechanical problems. Because nursing staff need to drive over difficult roads in isolated, rural and remote areas, during all seasons, there is cause for concern about their safety and the state's liability. The lack of vehicles has been documented in the recent *DHSS Comprehensive Vehicle Analysis* report. Costs of new vehicles are estimated at \$26,000 each per 4WD utility vehicle. Requested funds provide for one vehicle for which no vehicle credits are available

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and for ten vehicles for which credits will partially pay for the reimbursement.

New vehicles to be purchased (No vehicle credits available.)

Delta Junction	4WD Utility vehicle	<u>\$26,000</u>
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Total New Vehicles	\$26,000
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While the need for new vehicles for the Nursing Section is greater than just this one, the need in Delta Junction has priority for FY02. There is a full time nurse in Delta Junction who also provides services to the surrounding road areas, travels to Fairbanks regularly, and picks up vaccines and supplies. There is no state vehicle for her to use for this work-related travel.

Replacement vehicles (Partial vehicle credits available-costs show additional funds needed.)

Valdez	Replace 1989 Sedan with a 4WD	\$10,535
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Kenai	Replace 1991 4WD with a 4WD	\$2,602
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Mat-Su	Replace 1993 Minivan with another van	\$7,174
	Replace 1991 Sedan with 4WD utility	\$10,064
	Replace 1992 Utility wagon with 4WD utility	\$6,248

Fairbanks	Replace 1991 Utility wagon with 4WD utility	\$4,499
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Tok	Replace 1993 Utility wagon with 4WD utility	\$7,516
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Dillingham	Replace 1992 Utility wagon with 4WD utility	\$4,657
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Juneau	Replace 1989 Sedan with 4WD utility	\$10,417
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Wrangell	Replace 1983 Sedan with 4WD utility	<u>\$12,497</u>
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Total-Replacement Vehicles	\$76,209
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All of the vehicles above are considered unsafe for continued use because of their age and condition. This is especially true for the sedans—four wheel drive vehicles are an absolute necessity for the required usage.

• **Biojector Devices for Needleless Injections, \$19.8** - The Biojector Devices cost \$660.00 each and we will need 77 to implement state wide. With the passage and signing of SB 261 (*Preventing Needlestick Injuries*) effective January 2001, and with changes in OSHA regs, Public Health Nurses (PHNs) are facing additional costs to implement safer needles or needleless injection systems. The PHN product evaluation committee has formed and has looked at Vanish Point syringes (an expendable item from operating budget) and the Biojector Device (which is a clinical equipment purchase). Using the Vanish Point syringes will cost approximately \$76,000 per year more than current products. The expendable supplies for the Biojector are slightly less expensive than the Vanish Point syringes with a projected annual cost of \$68,000 after purchase of the Biojector Devices. The funding requested will purchase 30 of the needed devices.

Public Health Laboratories Section (\$2,250.0 Fed)

Alaska expects to receive this federal funding to complete the automation of the laboratory testing equipment. This includes an automated microbial culturing & susceptibility testing system, equipment for the special pathogens laboratory and equipment for the toxicology laboratory. This will allow the state to conduct tests that are currently being sent to facilities outside the state. Some of these tests can cost nearly \$2,500 per specimen. This increment will purchase the equipment and the hardware/software needed to support them.