

**State of Alaska**  
**FY2003 Governor's Operating Budget**

**Department of Health and Social Services**  
**Court Orders and Reunification Efforts**  
**Component Budget Summary**

## **Component: Court Orders and Reunification Efforts**

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### **Component Mission**

The mission of the Division of Family and Youth Services (DFYS) is to protect children who are abused and neglected or at risk of abuse and neglect.

### **Component Services Provided**

Program Summary: AS 47.14.100 mandates the Department to provide for the "...care of every child committed to its custody by placing the child in a foster home or in the care of an agency or institution providing care for children inside or outside the state." (emphasis added). To meet this mandate, the Department, through the Division of Family & Youth Services (DFYS), provides various foster care programs to children placed in custody of the State. These are children who have been removed from situations of abuse and/or neglect and are at risk for further abuse and neglect.

The Department provides a spectrum of foster care services including the Foster Care Base Rate, Foster Care Special Needs, Foster Care Augmented, and Foster Care AYI to meet the needs of children in State custody and to meet the Department's statutory mandate to provide for the care of children in State custody.

The Court Orders and Reunification Efforts (CORE) component captures the cost of court-ordered services and related expenditures necessary to meet the Department's "Reasonable Reunification Efforts" legal requirements and "Active Efforts" on behalf of native children and families. Court-ordered services include, but are not limited to: drug and alcohol assessment; counseling, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, assistance to address domestic violence, visitation with family members, parenting classes, in-home services, temporary child care services, transportation and other services or treatment for biological parents; room and board for parents while they attend treatment; witness fees; finding missing parents; court teleconference hearings; and travel costs for family visits.

Reasonable or reunification services and active efforts include but are not limited to drug and alcohol assessment and treatment for biological parents; travel costs for biological parents, grandparents, and siblings to visit children in custody; travel costs for home visits; and other services to assist in maintaining children in their homes or to return them to their biological parents.

This component improves accountability and makes a clear distinction between the cost of foster care services and services with the specific intent to preserve and reunite families. Accountability is improved by providing clear documentation of "active effort" services provided to native children and families.

### **Component Goals and Strategies**

#### **1) FOSTER CARE FUNDS SUPPORT FAMILY REUNIFICATION:**

- Every effort is made to maintain children in their own home. When they cannot safely remain in their home and require out-of-home care, the Division places strong emphasis on reunification of the family. This reunification sometimes involves providing special education, training, or therapeutic intervention for the family members. Special funds can be accessed to support family reunification, ameliorating the issues and concerns which could place the child at continued risk when returned to the home.
- Special needs children present unique challenges to families already experiencing deficits due to substance abuse, criminal activity, parental handicaps, and other conditions. The Department's foster care programs provide support services to reunite families.

#### **2) PROVIDE FUNDING AND IDENTIFY COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH FAMILY REUNIFICATION EFFORTS, WHETHER ORDERED BY THE COURT OR UNDERTAKEN AS PART OF A DFYS CLIENT CASE PLAN:**

- The Department provides a spectrum of foster care resources to meet its statutory mandate to provide for the care of children who have been taken into State custody. Typical services provided through the Department's foster care programs include food, shelter, clothing, counseling, psychological and medical needs, and other needs directly related to taking care of a child.

- In 1998 the Alaska Legislature passed new child protection legislation (Chapter 99, SLA 1998) which, in part, increases emphasis on prevention of out-of-home placement and reunification of families in the event of an out-of-home placement. This new law established AS 47.10.086 which mandates the Department to "...make timely, reasonable efforts to provide family support services to the child and to the parents or guardian of the child that are designed to prevent out-of-home placement of the child or to enable the safe return of the child to the family home, when appropriate, if the child is in an out-of-home placement...." (emphasis added). In the case of native children, the Federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) mandates the Department make active efforts towards the same goals. "Active efforts" denotes an even higher standard of service delivery to the child and to the parents or guardian of the child than the standard associated with "reasonable efforts".

- Family support services, as defined by AS 47.10.999 (9), include counseling, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, assistance to address domestic violence, visitation with family members, parenting classes, in-home services, temporary child care services, and transportation.

- Federal requirements also demand reunification services be "time-limited", thereby stressing the importance of establishing permanency for children in State custody.

- In many instances, the Alaska Court System has ordered DFYS to provide to DFYS clients and their families services that fall outside of the realm of what is normally considered foster care. For example, the court may order DFYS to pay for drug and alcohol assessment and treatment for biological parents, room and board for parents while they attend treatment, and travel costs for family visits.

### 3) IDENTIFY COSTS INCURRED BY THE DIVISION DUE TO STATE AND FEDERAL "REASONABLE EFFORTS" AND "ACTIVE EFFORTS" REQUIREMENTS TO PREVENT OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT AND TO REUNIFY FAMILIES:

- Federal foster care regulations and State law require the Department to make "reasonable efforts" to prevent out-of-home placements and to reunify families in a time-limited manner in the event of an out-of-home placement for non-Native children. Services are provided to prevent out-of-home placements or to reunify children who have been removed. Yet these services are provided in a time-limited manner to also focus on permanency or "a child's sense of time." The same regulations and State law require the Department to make "active efforts" for Native children. The Department, in response to these requirements, provides a range of services to children in custody and their families.

- "Reasonable efforts" and "active efforts" expenditures often extend beyond standard foster care services. Common "reasonable and active efforts" expenditures include drug and alcohol assessment and treatment for biological parents; travel costs for biological parents, grandparents, and siblings to visit children in custody; travel costs for home visits; and other services to assist in maintaining children in their home or to return them to their biological parents. If a timely reunification is not possible, services are focused on establishing permanency for the child through guardianship or adoption.

### **Key Component Issues for FY2002 – 2003**

- The Court Orders and Reunification Efforts component is used to capture the cost of court-ordered services and other expenditures necessary to meet the Department's "Reasonable Efforts" and "Active Efforts" legal requirements. This component will improve accountability and make a clear distinction between foster care services and services to preserve and reunite families. It also supplies the necessary documentation of "Active Effort" services being provided to a specific population mandated by the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

- The Division provides family support services to the child and to the parents to enable the safe return of the child to the family home. Special funds can be accessed to support family reunification. The Division's social workers also refer family members to mental health and alcohol services.

- Family Visitation Centers: As of August 1, 2001 there were 1,896 Alaska children in out-of-home care. In the reunification process, the ability to provide visitation between parent and child is difficult at best. The Division is

requesting funding in FY2003 to support Family Visitation Centers, a neutral location where a child and parent separated by a court order can meet. Family Visitation Centers help maintain critical links while the parent and child are separated. These proposed centers, located in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Mat-Su, Kenai, Juneau, and Bethel, will also provide additional services such as parenting classes, support groups and transportation. The visitation centers will allow the parental bond to continue or to be fostered while reunification efforts are in process.

### **Major Component Accomplishments in 2001**

This component improves accountability and makes a clear distinction between the cost of foster care services and services with the specific intent to preserve and reunite families. Accountability is improved by providing clear documentation of "active effort" services provided to native children and families.

In FY2001 the Division provided funding statewide in support of reunification efforts. Costs for court ordered services as well as other expenditures necessary for reunification included client travel, day care, respite care, diagnostic and evaluation services, training, living skills, and assistance with clothing, bedding, and utilities. The Division also covered the cost of items such as parental notification and searches, advertising and hospital and medical services.

### **Statutory and Regulatory Authority**

AS 47.05	Administration of Welfare, Social Services, and Institutions.	AS 47.10
	Children in Need of Aid.	
AS 47.14.100	Care of Children.	
AS 47.17	Child Protection.	
AS 47.40	Purchase of Services.	
7 AAC 53, Article 1	Child Care Foster Care Payments.	
7 AAC 53, Article 3	Children in Custody or Under Supervision : Needs and Income.	
Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act		
Indian Child Welfare Act		

**Court Orders and Reunification Efforts**

**Component Financial Summary**

*All dollars in thousands*

<b>Formula Program:</b>	<b>FY2001 Actuals</b>	<b>FY2002 Authorized</b>	<b>FY2003 Governor</b>
<b>Component Expenditures:</b>			
71000 Personal Services	0.0	0.0	0.0
72000 Travel	0.0	0.0	0.0
73000 Contractual	0.0	0.0	0.0
74000 Supplies	0.0	0.0	0.0
75000 Equipment	0.0	0.0	0.0
76000 Land/Buildings	0.0	0.0	0.0
77000 Grants, Claims	500.0	500.0	500.0
78000 Miscellaneous	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Expenditure Totals</b>	<b>500.0</b>	<b>500.0</b>	<b>500.0</b>
<b>Funding Sources:</b>			
1004 General Fund Receipts	500.0	500.0	500.0
<b>Funding Totals</b>	<b>500.0</b>	<b>500.0</b>	<b>500.0</b>

**Court Orders and Reunification Efforts**

**Proposed Changes in Levels of Service for FY2003**

No service changes.

**Summary of Component Budget Changes**

**From FY2002 Authorized to FY2003 Governor**

*All dollars in thousands*

	<u>General Funds</u>	<u>Federal Funds</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
<b>FY2002 Authorized</b>	500.0	0.0	0.0	500.0
<b>FY2003 Governor</b>	500.0	0.0	0.0	500.0