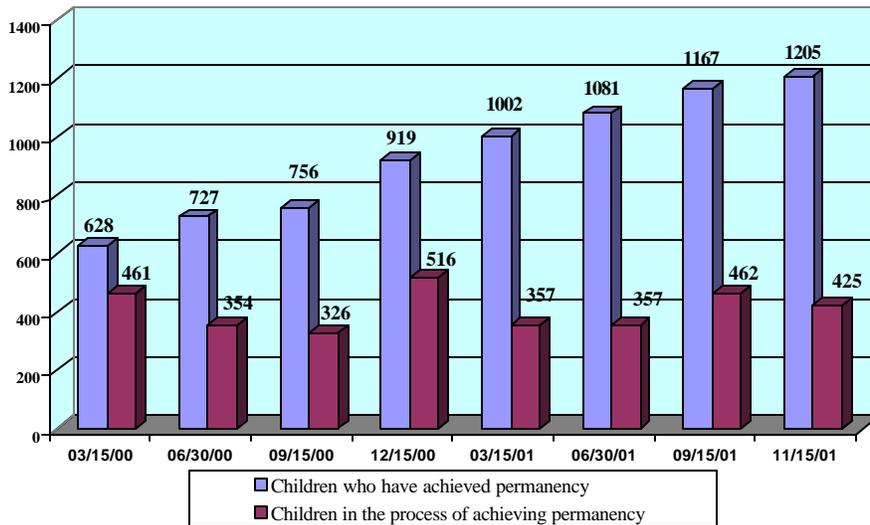


Governor's Priorities: Children and Education

Desired Result: Safe, healthy children who are well prepared for the future.

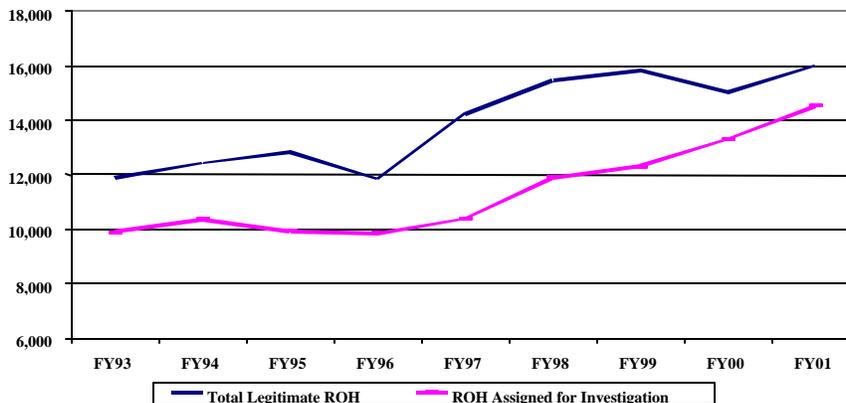
KEY BASELINE INDICATORS FOR CHILDREN AND EDUCATION:

Department of Health & Social Services Placing Children in Permanent Homes



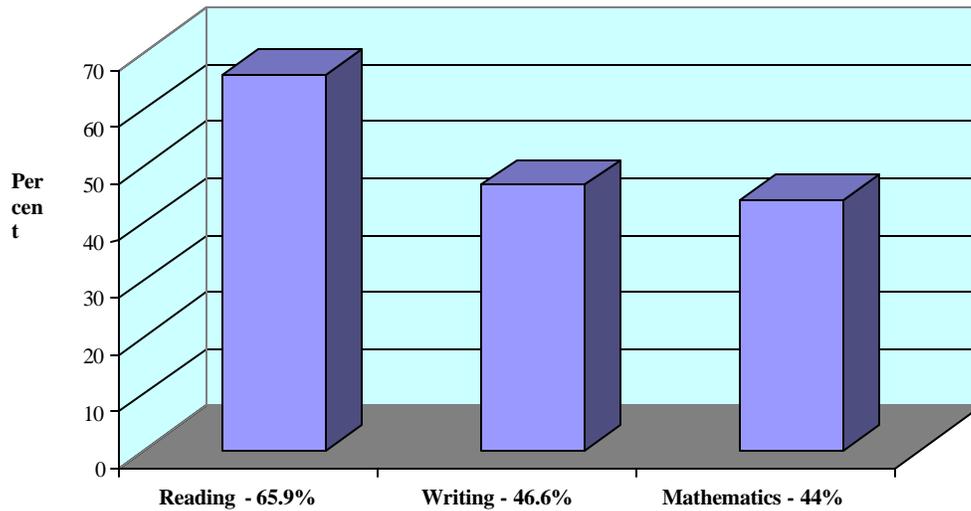
The Balloon project initiated by the Division of Family & Youth Services (DFYS) has substantially increased the number of foster children placed in permanent homes. The project focuses on children who have been in foster care the longest.

Total DFYS Legitimate Reports of Harm (ROH) to Children and the Number of ROH Assigned for Investigation



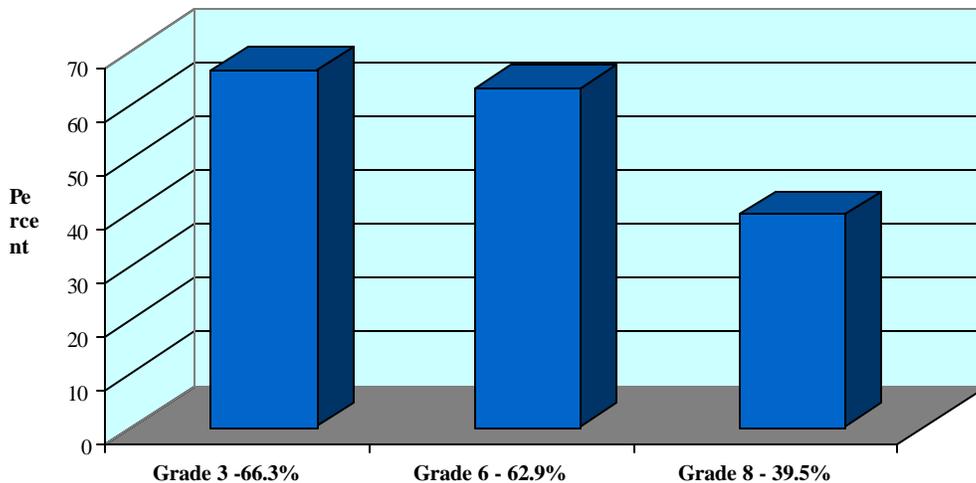
Alaska's response to reports of harm against children has improved from investigating only three-quarters of all calls for assistance in 1997 to the current statewide average of 90%. In some areas, the response rate is 100%.

High School Exit Exam - Percentage of 10th Grade Students with Passing Scores



The results from the Spring 2001 High School Graduation Qualifying Examination indicate that a substantial percentage of students need further assistance in improving their academic skills, particularly in writing and mathematics. Governor Knowles is proposing increases in education funding to provide Alaska's schools with sufficient resources to improve student performance. The legislature has authorized moving the effective date of the exam back to 2004 to give schools enough time to improve student skills. The Department of Education and Early Development is in the process of refocusing the exam to make sure it assesses essential skills for all high school graduates.

Percentage of Students With Passing Scores in Mathematics By Grade Level



The March 2001 benchmark examinations showed significantly lower level of student performance in mathematics for 8th grade students compared to 3rd grade and 6th grade students. The Department of Education and Early Development and school districts are evaluating the mathematics curriculum in light of these test results, so appropriate changes can address this disparity in math performance.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES:

1. Improve child health and development so children and their families are healthy.

- Increase the percentage of children who are fully immunized by age two.
- Expand health care coverage to the children and pregnant women of Alaska's working families.
- Reduce waiting lists for families in need of diagnostic and treatment services for the developmentally disabled.
- Eliminate the waiting list for infants and toddlers who need therapies and early intervention services.
- Prevent alcohol-related birth defects and help those born with fetal alcohol syndrome/ effects be as successful as possible.

2. Protect children and help them move from risk to opportunity.

- Expand and reallocate resources to protect, support, and treat children who are victims of physical or sexual abuse or neglect.
- Encourage and support families to participate in their children's development through parent training and quality schools initiatives.
- Increase alcohol and drug prevention and treatment programs available for youth.
- Authorize communities to handle less serious offenses through community courts or youth courts.
- Increase the number of licensed childcare facilities and reduce staff turnover by improving benefits, such as training and the opportunity to purchase affordable health care.
- Continue effective youth development programs such as the National Guard's Alaska Military Youth Academy.

3. Break the cycle of abuse and neglect through strong families and safe communities.

- Expand successful early childhood education programs like Head Start and home-visit programs to help break the cycle of child abuse and neglect.
- Work with and promote the Alaska Children's Trust to provide communities with additional financial resources for the prevention of child abuse, neglect and family violence.
- Speed up the adoption process and increase support for foster families.
- Increase drug and alcohol treatment opportunities for adults with children, including incarcerated parents.

4. Improve schools so children succeed and are well prepared to enter the work force.

- Build on recent initiatives to improve the quality of Alaska's schools, including mandatory standards in the basic skills, fair and timely testing, and assistance for students who need it.
- Promote the Alaska Education Summit 2000 recommendations and work with school teams to help improve student learning.
- Implement the Education Funding Task Force's "A+" plan to provide a long-term, stable source of funding for schools.
- Continue working through the statewide priority list of school construction and major maintenance projects and develop a long-term, funding plan for the remaining projects.
- Promote fair and equitable funding of education to make sure all students have the chance to succeed.

5. Improve economic capacity so families and their children are financially secure.

- Provide sufficient child care funding so all eligible families are supported while they work and children are cared for in safe, nurturing environments.
- Continue moving Alaskans from welfare into jobs so they can support their families.

- Ensure child support enforcement is strong and fair.

6. Increase the public's awareness of children's well being and needs so citizens know what they can do to support children.

- Continue to deliver an annual State of the Child Address highlighting children's issues.
- Develop a blueprint to monitor how well children are faring based on indicators such as education, health and safety, economic well being, crime and violent death.
- Maintain effective recruitment and retention campaigns for child care and foster care providers and increase the number of providers in Alaska.

Highlights of Progress in 2001

- Continued to implement the "Smart Start for Alaska's Children" plan and developed a follow-up initiative to expand children's health care, break the cycle of abuse and neglect, and intervene when children are in peril.
- Implemented a landmark child-protection bill that allows quicker intervention for children at risk.
- Continued the Denali KidCare program, which since March 1999 successfully expanded health care coverage to about 21,500 more children and 4,000 more pregnant women in Alaska's working families.
- Put more child protection workers on the street to intervene swiftly and forcefully when children are in danger.
- Improved Alaska's response to reports of harm against children from three-quarters of all calls for assistance in 1997 to the current statewide average of 90%, and 100% in some areas of Alaska.
- Moved nearly 1,200 children who had been lingering in foster care more than three years into permanent homes.
- Implemented a comprehensive program to prevent alcohol-related birth defects and to help those with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) be as successful as possible.
- Made grants from the Alaska Children's Trust for prevention of child abuse and neglect.

Since 1998, 34 local organizations have received a total of \$1.5 million. Increased the Trust principal to \$9.1 million with contributions from businesses and individual Alaskans. Continued the "Foster A Future" public awareness campaign and recruited about 100 more foster parents in Alaska.

- Implemented the second phase of the Quality Schools initiative: mandatory academic standards in reading, writing and math; frequent and meaningful testing to make sure students are on track to graduate; and accountability for low-performing schools.
- Moved the effective date of the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam to 2004 to allow more time for increased student performance.
- Secured funding to construct four new schools in rural Alaska, plus 30 long-overdue major maintenance projects.

The Children's Cabinet

In 1995, Governor Knowles appointed a Children's Cabinet of top state officials to coordinate and advance priorities for children and families.

The members are:

- Commissioner of Education and Early Development
- Commissioner of Health and Social Services
- Attorney General
- Commissioner of Public Safety
- Commissioner of Corrections
- Director of the Office of Management and Budget
- Lieutenant Governor

For more information about the Children's Cabinet, contact the Department of Education and Early Development at (907) 269-4681