

# **State of Alaska FY2015 Governor's Operating Budget**

## **Department of Health and Social Services Children's Services Results Delivery Unit Budget Summary**

**Children's Services Results Delivery Unit**

**Contribution to Department's Mission**

To work in partnership with families and communities to support the well-being of Alaska's youth and children.

**Results**

(Additional performance information is available on the web at <https://omb.alaska.gov/results.>)

**Core Services**

- Safety
- Permanency
- Well-being

**Measures by Core Service**

(Additional performance information is available on the web at <https://omb.alaska.gov/results.>)

- 1. Safety**
- 2. Permanency**
- 3. Well-being**

**Major RDU Accomplishments in 2013**

Of all children who were victims of a substantiated or indicated maltreatment allegation during the first 6 months of the reporting period, what percent were not victims of another incident during a 6-month period? Program Improvement Plan Goal = 89.5%, (national standard: 94.6% or more) Alaska's best score to date since the review = 92.4%

Of all children in foster care during the reporting period, what percent were not victims of substantiated or indicated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff member? Program Improvement Plan Goal = 99.2% (national standard: 99.68% or more), Alaska's best score to date = 99.59%

Reunification timeliness and permanency composite: Program Improvement Plan Goal = 102.4, (national standard: 122.6 or higher) Alaska's best score to date since the review = 114.6

The reunification timeliness and permanency composite is a federal score based on four measures:

- 1) Exits to reunification in less than 12 months
- 2) Exits to reunification, median stay
- 3) Entry cohort reunification in less than 12 months
- 4) Re-entries to foster care in less than 12 months

Timeliness of Adoptions: Program Improvement Plan Goal = 81.1, (national standard: 106.4 or higher) Alaska's best score to date since the review = 138.5

The timeliness of adoptions composite is a federal score based on five measures:

- 1) Exits to adoption in less than 24 months
- 2) Exits to adoption, median length of stay
- 3) Children in care 17+ months, adopted by the end of the year
- 4) Children in care 17+ months achieving legal freedom within 6 months
- 5) Legally free children adopted in less than 12 months

Achieving permanency for children in care for long periods of time composite: Program Improvement Plan Goal = 105.9, (national standard: 121.7 or higher) Alaska's best score to date since the review = 137.0

Achieving permanency for children in care for long periods of time is a federal composite score based on three measures:

- 1) Exits to permanency prior to 18<sup>th</sup> birthday for children in care for 24+ months
- 2) Exits to permanency for children with parental rights terminated
- 3) Children emancipated who were in foster care for 3 years or more

Placement Stability: Program Improvement Plan Goal = 84.9, (national standard: 101.5 or higher) Alaska's best score to date since the review = 111.2

The placement stability composite is a federal score based on three measures:

- 1) Two or fewer placement settings for children in care for less than 12 months
- 2) Two or fewer placement settings for children in care 12 to 24 months
- 3) Two or fewer placement settings for children in care for 24+ months

Creation of the Office of Children's Services' first external publication entitled, *The Pipeline*. This quarterly newsletter seeks to reduce the perceived walls that the public see as barriers, and to increase opportunities to increase transparency, promote partnership, and provide ongoing education on topic specific issues that are of most interest to the public.

## **Key RDU Challenges**

The Office of Children's Services provides a range of services and support systems to prevent and remedy child abuse and neglect. These services and supports include: child abuse and neglect prevention services, child protective services, foster care, family support and preservation services, adoption and guardianship, and permanency planning related to adoptions and guardianship.

Every child welfare agency has challenges and no child welfare agency excels at every aspect of its mission. The ultimate challenge in an agency such as the Office of Children's Services is to keep children safe in their homes. All too often, children in the child welfare system experience multiple losses and then multiple placements, increasing their vulnerability rather than stabilizing their circumstances so that long-term success can result. In cases involving Alaska Native children, the Office of Children's Services must comply with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) that provides federal guidance to help support cultural connections, family ties, and preservation of the family whenever possible. The Office of Children's Services must teach, maintain, and adhere to the underlying philosophy of keeping children in their homes whenever possible and safe to do so. It must reduce foster care placements, and if it is necessary to remove a child from their home in order to assure their safety, the Office of Children's Services must strive to reunite that child with their family as soon as possible thereafter. When permanency through adoption or guardianship is the only option, it should be timely, and adoptive parents or guardians should receive the appropriate support from the state.

The responsibility is daunting and the job, while often times rewarding, is always emotionally taxing. The Office of Children's Services struggles to:

- Attract and retain qualified staff, particularly in rural office locations, that can meet the emotional and complex demands that are placed on them regardless of their workload.
- Direct available funds to invest in prevention and in-home services to keep families intact and prevent them from entering the system.
- Provide culturally relevant services in rural areas.
- Adequately equip our staff to work effectively, collaboratively, and sensitively with the more than 200 Alaska Native Tribes whose culture is not always well understood by staff.

### *Recruitment and Retention*

Retention of staff is the number one challenge this agency faces. Without the necessary positions filled in so many offices statewide, we know that our ability to meet state and federal requirements for family contact, worker visits with children, and worker visits with parents will and does greatly suffer. Those three requirements alone directly correlate to the likelihood of a family being successful or a child being reunified or achieving permanency in a timely fashion.

The Office of Children's Services FY2013 vacancy rate was 5.5%. This represents the average quarterly percentage of the number of positions vacant at the end of each quarter divided by the total number of positions. The Office of Children's Services solicits feedback from staff about this issue through three primary methods: annual staff surveys, exit surveys, and the Staff Advisory Board that meets regularly with senior leadership. Reasons for leaving provided by outgoing staff are: lack of on-site supervisors at some locations, possible safety concerns, lack of office assistants and other support staff to assist with the vast amount of paperwork required by federal law, insufficient pay, high levels of stress, and in some cases just the nature of the work becomes too much to bear. Retention is not a challenge unique to Alaska, but one that has become "normal" for child welfare programs nationwide. The work requires uniquely qualified individuals with fortitude, and a diverse set of skills. Simply put, it is a job where the demands are high, the pay is low, and the work is emotionally taxing, (as noted in staff exit surveys).

### *Indian Child Welfare Act Compliance*

The intent of the Indian Child Welfare (ICWA) Act of 1978 was to "protect the best interests of Indian children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families" (25 U.S.C. § 1902). The Indian Child Welfare Act sets federal requirements that apply to state child custody proceedings involving an Indian child who is a member of, or eligible for membership in, a federally recognized tribe. Alaska Native children are over-represented in Alaska's child welfare system. They are more likely to be reported for alleged maltreatment, they are less likely to be reunified timely, and more likely to ultimately have poorer outcomes of well-being while in care.

The Office of Children's Services has diligently and collaboratively worked with Tribal partners in a systematic and structured manner for the past 18 years through the ongoing efforts of the Tribal-State Collaboration Group that meets three times annually face to face. The Office of Children's Services has increased the training efforts to support culturally appropriate practices, some of which are done jointly with Alaska Native representatives, and have in recent years been engaging Tribes in our practice model and policy development and implementation plans. Ultimately, however, the data has changed very little over time. At the front line caseworker level we still struggle to communicate effectively, understand the various cultural nuances and traditions, and are often unable to successfully recruit native foster homes.

### *Service Delivery*

Prevention services are crucial to the success of the Office of Children's Services' mission and philosophy to keep children safe and to keep families together. The Early Intervention and Infant Learning Program (EI/ILP) provides for early intervention services to families with children who have special developmental needs. In FY2003, 1,964 children were referred for Early Intervention and Infant Learning Program services. FY2012 referrals reached 3,008. Program challenges include a workforce shortage in the areas of specialized services such as speech and language pathology, occupational and physical therapy, and mental health clinicians.

The Child Advocacy Center (CAC) model of community-centered, multi-disciplinary team decision-making and child-centered service delivery has been a highly successful and cost effective strategy for combating abuse. This model provides a firm foundation for reducing the trauma associated with forensic investigations of abuse and provides efficient service delivery for families. While Alaska's ten current Child Advocacy Centers continue to experience an increasing number of referrals and support through co-location with partner agencies, they report challenges in operating and maintaining services as the cost of doing business increases. Both issues indicate a need for increased funding to catch up with ever-rising operational costs, such as heat and utilities for Child Advocacy Center buildings.

## **Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2015**

Improvements to ensure timely, accurate, and excellent customer services are provided through the intake process in each of our five regions are planned. In addition, there will be continued enhancements and focused development on the accurate initial and ongoing assessment of safety in children who are being served in their own homes and through an out of home placement.

Increased referrals to the Infant Learning Programs as a result of a now automated referral system and increased timeliness of closing initial assessments

Enhanced collaboration with Tribes whereby more families are referred for in-home services which encourages culturally driven case plan development and services

Anticipated completion of a pilot program to develop the State's first Title IV-E Maintenance Agreement with Tanana Chiefs Conference that, if successful, may open the opportunity for additional Tribes to establish agreements as well

Increased licensure of families in rural Alaska as a result of the implementation of SB 82

Creation of new policies and regulations for how substantiated findings are made by the investigating agency and how parents can be ensured due process to challenge those findings. This work effort will also create a clearer path for parents to file complaints that are not within the realm of what can be normally litigated and will ensure the Office of Children's Services is monitoring the timeliness of the responses to those complaints.

Contact Information
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**Children's Services  
RDU Financial Summary by Component**

*All dollars shown in thousands*

	FY2013 Actuals				FY2014 Management Plan				FY2015 Governor			
	UGF+DGF Funds	Other Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds	UGF+DGF Funds	Other Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds	UGF+DGF Funds	Other Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds
<b>Formula Expenditures</b>												
Foster Care Base Rate	11,308.8	0.0	2,453.0	13,761.8	12,688.0	0.0	3,739.3	16,427.3	12,688.0	0.0	3,739.3	16,427.3
Foster Care Augmented Rate	534.2	0.0	353.5	887.7	1,037.6	0.0	638.5	1,676.1	1,037.6	0.0	638.5	1,676.1
Foster Care Special Need Subsidized	5,895.0	2,280.0	329.3	8,504.3	7,168.2	2,000.0	632.1	9,800.3	7,168.2	2,000.0	632.1	9,800.3
Adoptions/Guardians	12,916.8	0.0	14,004.8	26,921.6	13,829.6	0.0	11,452.0	25,281.6	13,829.6	0.0	13,777.0	27,606.6
<b>Non-Formula Expenditures</b>												
Children's Services Management	5,507.5	0.0	2,076.3	7,583.8	5,714.3	50.0	3,525.0	9,289.3	5,485.0	50.0	3,524.5	9,059.5
Children's Services Training	669.1	0.0	430.7	1,099.8	991.5	0.0	813.0	1,804.5	614.2	0.0	813.0	1,427.2
Front Line Social Workers	34,173.4	22.1	15,167.7	49,363.2	34,781.9	300.0	15,051.4	50,133.3	34,702.1	300.0	15,030.3	50,032.4
Family Preservation	6,224.9	154.7	3,928.8	10,308.4	6,779.3	495.0	6,205.1	13,479.4	7,029.3	495.0	6,205.1	13,729.4
Residential Child Care	4,264.3	38.3	218.8	4,521.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Infant Learning Program Grants	6,917.9	1,150.5	2,790.6	10,859.0	9,234.4	1,038.1	2,353.7	12,626.2	9,233.7	938.1	2,353.9	12,525.7
<b>Totals</b>	<b>88,411.9</b>	<b>3,645.6</b>	<b>41,753.5</b>	<b>133,811.0</b>	<b>92,224.8</b>	<b>3,883.1</b>	<b>44,410.1</b>	<b>140,518.0</b>	<b>91,787.7</b>	<b>3,783.1</b>	<b>46,713.7</b>	<b>142,284.5</b>

**Children's Services**  
**Summary of RDU Budget Changes by Component**  
**From FY2014 Management Plan to FY2015 Governor**

*All dollars shown in thousands*

	<u>Unrestricted</u> <u>Gen (UGF)</u>	<u>Designated</u> <u>Gen (DGF)</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Federal</u> <u>Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
<b>FY2014 Management Plan</b>	<b>89,224.8</b>	<b>3,000.0</b>	<b>3,883.1</b>	<b>44,410.1</b>	<b>140,518.0</b>
<b>Adjustments which will continue current level of service:</b>					
-Children's Services Management	0.7	0.0	0.0	-0.5	0.2
-Front Line Social Workers	-79.8	0.0	0.0	-21.1	-100.9
-Infant Learning Program Grants	-0.7	0.0	-280.0	0.2	-280.5
<b>Proposed budget decreases:</b>					
-Children's Services Management	-230.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-230.0
-Children's Services Training	-377.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	-377.3
<b>Proposed budget increases:</b>					
-Family Preservation	250.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	250.0
-Subsidized Adoptions/Guardians	0.0	0.0	0.0	2,325.0	2,325.0
-Infant Learning Program Grants	0.0	0.0	180.0	0.0	180.0
<b>FY2015 Governor</b>	<b>88,787.7</b>	<b>3,000.0</b>	<b>3,783.1</b>	<b>46,713.7</b>	<b>142,284.5</b>