

State of Alaska FY2017 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 2015

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 percent, (national standard: 94.6 percent or more) Alaska's best score to date since the review = 91.8 percent

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 percent (national standard: 99.68 percent or more), Alaska's best score to date = 99.61 percent

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 = 115.2

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 = 160.8

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 = 134.3

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 18th 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 = 93.7

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

Key RDU Challenges

The Office of Children's Services provides a range of services that are heavily focused on responding to reports of maltreatment that has already occurred with a small portion geared towards preventing maltreatment. These services and supports include: prevention and early intervention services, child protective services safety assessments, foster care, family support and preservation services, adoption and guardianship, and permanency planning to ensure permanency is achieved and that children don't languish in the foster care system.

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 229 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 turnover continues to be a challenge. The Office of Children's Services solicits feedback from staff about this issue through two primary methods: annual staff surveys and exit surveys. Reasons for leaving provided by outgoing staff are: lack of on-site supervisors at some locations, personal safety concerns, lack of access to available technology that would help improve success on the job, 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 20 years primarily, but not exclusively, 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 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 an efficient service delivery for families. Alaska's Child Advocacy Centers continue to experience an increasing number of referrals.

Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2017

Improvements are planned to ensure timely, accurate, and excellent customer services are provided through the intake process in each of our five regions. 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.

Enhanced collaboration with Tribes to help refer families to tribal services whenever possible, aide the Tribes in creating enhanced or new infrastructure to grow their programs and to, whenever possible work in partnership - while eliminating barriers to their progress and increase compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act.

Anticipated expansion of our Title IV-E pilot program, that the State first started by entering into the very first agreement of its kind with Tanana Chiefs Conference in December of 2013, by signing a second such agreement with the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Tribes of Alaska. These agreements create a mechanism for Tribes to access Federal dollars to operate their own tribal child welfare programs independent of state government oversight. Office of Children's Services continues to work on the development and 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.

Contact Information

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

All dollars shown in thousands

	FY2015 Actuals				FY2016 Management Plan				FY2017 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
Formula Expenditures												
Foster Care Base Rate	12,651.7	0.0	3,313.5	15,965.2	15,288.0	0.0	3,739.3	19,027.3	15,288.0	0.0	3,739.3	19,027.3
Foster Care Augmented Rate	1,133.6	0.0	206.5	1,340.1	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	8,869.8	3,000.0	685.2	12,555.0	7,168.2	2,000.0	632.1	9,800.3	7,168.2	4,000.0	632.1	11,800.3
Adoptions/Guardians	15,115.1	0.0	16,179.2	31,294.3	13,829.6	0.0	13,777.0	27,606.6	18,654.6	0.0	18,602.0	37,256.6
Non-Formula Expenditures												
Children's Services Management	6,735.3	0.0	2,110.1	8,845.4	5,620.3	50.0	3,832.5	9,502.8	7,408.6	50.0	4,379.8	11,838.4
Children's Services Training	876.1	0.0	385.3	1,261.4	614.2	0.0	813.0	1,427.2	614.2	0.0	813.0	1,427.2
Front Line Social Workers	37,141.1	14.1	15,388.4	52,543.6	39,456.8	300.0	15,621.8	55,378.6	39,456.8	300.0	15,621.8	55,378.6
Family Preservation	2,972.3	2,336.4	5,353.0	10,661.7	3,340.9	3,433.4	6,205.1	12,979.4	3,340.9	3,433.4	6,205.1	12,979.4
Early Childhood Services	8,750.3	960.7	2,354.2	12,065.2	9,254.8	798.1	2,362.7	12,415.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Totals	94,245.3	6,311.2	45,975.4	146,531.9	95,610.4	6,581.5	47,622.0	149,813.9	92,968.9	7,783.4	50,631.6	151,383.9

Children's Services
Summary of RDU Budget Changes by Component
From FY2016 Management Plan to FY2017 Governor

All dollars shown in thousands

	<u>Unrestricted Gen (UGF)</u>	<u>Designated Gen (DGF)</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Federal Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
FY2016 Management Plan	90,010.4	5,600.0	6,581.5	47,622.0	149,813.9
One-time items:					
-Early Childhood Services	0.0	0.0	-40.0	0.0	-40.0
Adjustments which continue current level of service:					
-Children's Services Management	1,788.3	0.0	0.0	547.3	2,335.6
-Early Childhood Services	-9,254.8	0.0	-758.1	-2,362.7	-12,375.6
Proposed budget increases:					
-Foster Care Special Need	0.0	0.0	2,000.0	0.0	2,000.0
-Subsidized Adoptions/Guardians	4,825.0	0.0	0.0	4,825.0	9,650.0
FY2017 Governor	87,368.9	5,600.0	7,783.4	50,631.6	151,383.9