

State of Alaska FY2022 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

Ensuring the safety, permanency and well-being of children by strengthening families, engaging communities, and partnering with tribes.

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 2020

- The Office of Children's Services continued to work in partnership with Alaska Native Tribes and Tribal organizations to implement the Tribal Child Welfare Compact and a total of five service agreements related to initial and ongoing relative searches, safety walk-throughs of potential foster homes, assisting potential foster parents in the foster care licensing process and facilitation of family visits.
- In accordance with the 2018, the Federal Family First Prevention Services Act, the Office of Children's Services submitted a Title IV-E Prevention Plan Proposal in January 2020. Negotiations with the Federal Administration for Children and Families are underway for the plan's approval. The implementation of Family First Prevention Services Act will take numerous years and will be an ongoing focus area of the Office of Children's Services with the goal of serving more families in-home and reduce the number of children in foster care.
- Alaska participated in a third Child and Family Services Review in spring 2017. After over two years of negotiation, Alaska's federally mandated Performance Improvement Plan was approved in June 2019. The Performance Improvement Plan is in place for two years and requires extensive efforts from all levels of the agency with quarterly progress updates to the Federal Children's Bureau to demonstrate practice improvement activities.
- The Office of Children's Services Independent Living program continues to serve all Alaskan youth ages 16 years and older who were in care on or after their 16th birthday and up to age 21. The Independent Living program has intensified its efforts to address the needs of youth in custody, providing targeted trainings and educational opportunities and helping youth to identify housing opportunities so that they are more self-sufficient and independent when they exit care. This has dramatically reduced the need for emergency services for former foster youth, which typically demands significant resources to manage.

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 have already occurred with a smaller portion of services geared toward 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 do not languish in the foster care system.

Every child welfare agency has challenges and no child welfare agency excels at every aspect of its mission. These challenges are due in large part to multiple factors: 1) the inability to predict or limit the volume of cases or families to be served. Office of Children's Services is statutorily required to respond to reports of child maltreatment, when these numbers continually increase, so does the workload; 2) the difficulty in maintaining adequate staffing levels to serve families; 3) the complex needs of families; and 4) the shortage of available behavioral health and family support services.

The Office of Children's Services adheres to the underlying philosophy of keeping children in their homes whenever it is safe to do so. If it is necessary to remove a child from their home, the Office of Children's Services must strive to reunite that child with their family as soon as possible. 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 to ensure long term stability and reduce the chance of reentry into the foster care system.

Although meaningful and important, child welfare work is complex and often emotionally taxing. The Office of Children's Services struggles to:

- Attract and retain qualified staff, particularly in rural office locations, that can meet the challenging demands including high caseloads.
- Adequately refer or assist families to access the services they need to address the behaviors or conditions that result in children being unsafe.
- Provide culturally relevant services statewide that meet families where they are within their own communities.
- Direct available funds to invest in prevention and in-home services to keep families intact and prevent them from entering the system.
- Adequately equip staff to work effectively, collaboratively, and sensitively with the 229 Alaska Native Tribes whose culture and values are not always well understood by staff.

Recruitment and Retention

- Workforce recruitment and retention continues to be an ongoing challenge for the Office of Children's Services. Many exiting staff indicate their top reasons for leaving as workload, personal safety, difficult nature of the work and the lack of competitive salaries.
- Employee safety continues to be a top concern for the Office of Children's Services. Many of the front-line staff have expressed concern with the COVID pandemic and new challenges that are associated with being a first responder. In addition, staff are threatened with bodily harm and are sometimes physically assaulted by clients. Efforts have been made to improve the physical safety of each field office. In addition, organizational procedures were developed to respond to violent threats and acts toward staff.
- The Office of Children's Services' workforce also continues to be challenged with the lack of appropriate technology resources to effectively and efficiently do the job. Other state's child welfare programs are vastly more technologically advanced with the use of mobile devices for case management.

Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2022

- The Office of Children's Services anticipates improved service delivery related to safety assessment, service planning, and permanency as a result of the efforts underway to comply with the Program Improvement Plan.

Contact Information

Contact: Sylvan Robb, Division Director
Phone: (907) 465-1630
E-mail: sylvan.rob主@alaska.gov

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

All dollars shown in thousands

	FY2020 Actuals				FY2021 Management Plan				FY2022 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	17,052.7	0.0	5,772.3	22,825.0	14,783.3	0.0	6,336.6	21,119.9	14,783.3	0.0	6,336.6	21,119.9
Foster Care Augmented Rate	1,093.4	0.0	243.0	1,336.4	1,252.6	0.0	250.0	1,502.6	1,252.6	0.0	250.0	1,502.6
Foster Care Special Need Subsidized	7,466.4	3,897.6	306.4	11,670.4	7,214.2	3,799.2	1,232.1	12,245.5	7,098.9	3,799.2	1,232.1	12,130.2
Adoptions/Guardians	21,590.3	0.0	19,351.4	40,941.7	22,561.2	0.0	17,664.3	40,225.5	22,561.2	0.0	20,064.3	42,625.5
Non-Formula Expenditures												
Children's Services Management	5,872.8	155.8	3,690.5	9,719.1	5,960.8	302.6	3,445.8	9,709.2	6,015.0	303.9	3,432.0	9,750.9
Children's Services Training	863.0	0.0	676.9	1,539.9	1,210.5	0.0	829.1	2,039.6	852.1	0.0	709.6	1,561.7
Front Line Social Workers	39,094.1	114.1	27,673.2	66,881.4	43,753.4	30.0	27,941.6	71,725.0	43,254.5	30.1	27,928.1	71,212.7
Family Preservation	2,675.4	3,564.2	7,775.2	14,014.8	2,771.4	3,995.9	9,812.8	16,580.1	2,726.6	3,995.9	10,364.5	17,087.0
Totals	95,708.1	7,731.7	65,488.9	168,928.7	99,507.4	8,127.7	67,512.3	175,147.4	98,544.2	8,129.1	70,317.2	176,990.5

Children's Services
Summary of RDU Budget Changes by Component
From FY2021 Management Plan to FY2022 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>
FY2021 Management Plan	93,907.4	5,600.0	8,127.7	67,512.3	175,147.4
Adjustments which get you to start of year:					
-Family Preservation	0.0	0.0	0.0	1,079.9	1,079.9
Adjustments which continue current level of service:					
-Children's Services Management	218.3	0.0	1.3	11.3	230.9
-Children's Services Training	-200.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-200.0
-Front Line Social Workers	243.7	0.0	0.1	171.4	415.2
Proposed budget increases:					
-Subsidized Adoptions/Guardians	0.0	0.0	0.0	2,400.0	2,400.0
Proposed budget decreases:					
-Children's Services Management	-164.1	0.0	0.0	-25.1	-189.2
-Children's Services Training	-158.4	0.0	0.0	-119.5	-277.9
-Front Line Social Workers	-742.6	0.0	0.0	-184.9	-927.5
-Family Preservation	-44.8	0.0	0.0	-528.2	-573.0
-Foster Care Special Need	-115.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	-115.3
FY2022 Governor	92,944.2	5,600.0	8,129.1	70,317.2	176,990.5