

Alaska Inclusive Childcare Initiative

Major activities and accomplishments with implications for the Council.

One of the major accomplishments of this grant has been the significant increase, statewide, of childcare providers that have received training on caring for children that are differently abled. This year alone, over 103 providers have attended inclusion and disability specific workshops. As a result, more families are having success finding placements in child care. Even families with difficult-to-place children have had more success as a result of the outreach efforts, training, and supports provided by the Resource and Referral (R&R) staff and their partner agencies.

Approximately one hundred children and their families benefit from the service provided by the Alaska IN! grant, per month. Families require varying levels of service. Some only need assistance in finding a list of providers who have identified themselves as having training or background in caring for children with special needs. Other families require more intense services that may include provider referrals, agency referrals and the special needs subsidy. The R&R staff serve as a liaison between families and providers, addressing accommodation issues, identifying training opportunities, and supporting both family and provider as concerns arise.

Trends and Issues with Implications for the coming year(s)

Nationally, the financial picture for child care is tenuous. If funding diminishes, fewer families will have access to subsidized care. Currently, the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) offers an additional stipend, based on an assessment scale, to providers for the care they provide for children with special needs. Only parents eligible for the CCAP program can access this funding; the stipend is not offered to non-participating families. However, these families do receive child care and agency referral services and support in making informed child care choices.

The biggest challenge continues to be finding placements in child care for children with behavioral/emotional issues. There are few training opportunities or supports for child care providers around this topic. Currently, a system does not exist to address the mental health issues of young children in this state. The Blanket of Wellness Project in the Southeast area has been instrumental in assisting families whose children have behavioral issues in finding and keeping child care.

Priorities

Alaska IN! is an integral part of the Child Care Program Office mission. The CCPO is planning to institutionalize this program as a function of the Child Care Resource and Referral agencies. However, due to limited resources, the CCPO will have to reallocate funding from other programs to cover the expenses related to this enhanced subsidy and referral system.