

# 2016

## Annual PROGRESS & SERVICES Report



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## **SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION**

This is the first update to Alaska’s 2015-2019 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). The report is designed to provide an annual report of progress made on the CFSP.

### **OVERVIEW**

The Governor of Alaska has designated the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services as the single state agency responsible for administering Child Welfare Services (Title IV-B, subpart I), Promoting Safe and Stable Families (Title IV-B, subpart II), Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), Chafee Foster Care Independence and Education & Training Vouchers (ETV).

The Office of Children’s Services (OCS) has administrative responsibility for the development and implementation of the CFSP, including all policies and procedures relating to child protection services in Alaska. In addition, the OCS administers the Early Intervention Programs and Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Planning.

The CFSP is a five year strategic plan that sets forth the goals and objectives needed to strengthen the overall child welfare system. Alaska’s plan for 2015-2019 was submitted June 30, 2014, and was approved November 6, 2014. The State of Alaska is not currently under a Program Improvement Plan for any programs. Alaska is scheduled for a Title IV-E audit in November 2015 and the Child and Family Services Review in 2017.

Alaska has a disproportionate number of Alaskan Native children involved in the child welfare system. Alaskan Native children are the subject of a disproportionate number of child abuse reports, substantiated reports of abuse/neglect, and custody/placement into foster care. Consequently, the OCS dedicates time and resources towards nurturing our relationships with tribal partners, developing practice and policy strategies to increase Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) compliance, targeted Alaskan Native foster home recruitment, and the purchase of culturally appropriate family support services. Many of these strategies will be highlighted through-out this report.

The OCS provides services to families whose children have been determined to be unsafe or at high risk of maltreatment by their parent or caregiver. The OCS strives to serve families with dignity and consideration of their cultural values. Services are to be provided in the least restrictive, least intrusive manner possible. Decisions regarding needed interventions with families are based on thorough information collection that guides the initial and ongoing assessment of safety and risk. The OCS has experienced an increase in the number of children in care. The table below shows OCS’ statistics on children in out-of-home care for one or more days during the calendar year:

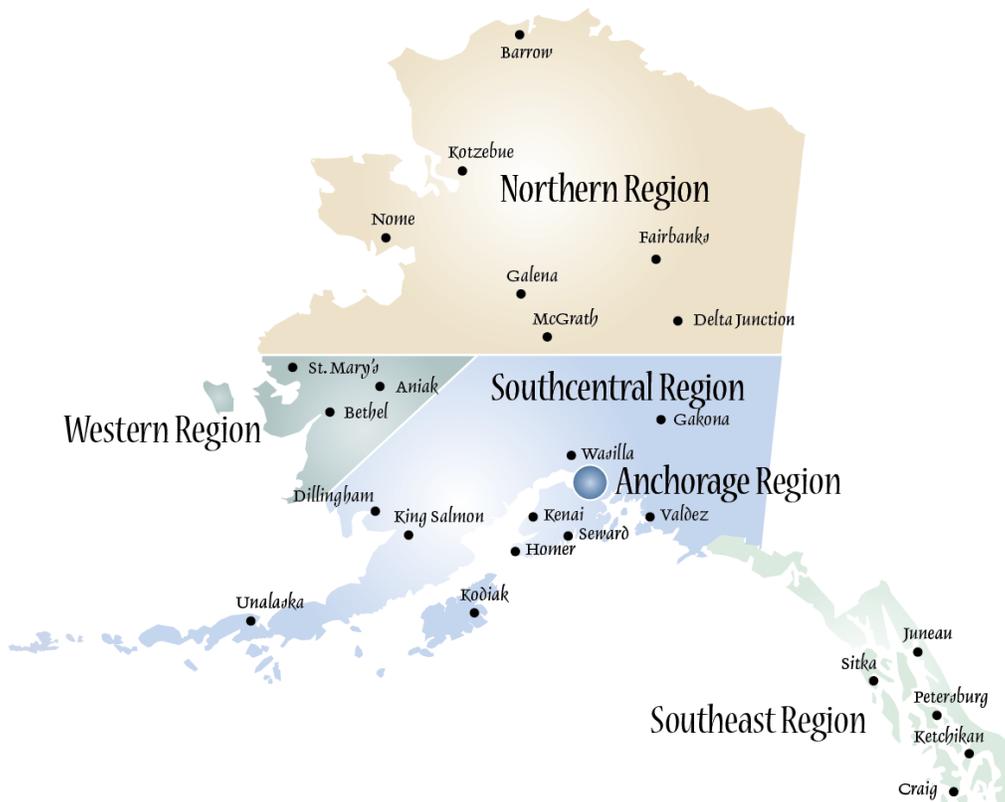
<b>OCS Children in Out-of-Home Care (Calendar Year)</b>					
<b>Region</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
<b>Statewide</b>	2,803	2,730	2,775	2,904	3,253
<b>Anchorage</b>	1,035	987	1,064	1,174	1,316
<b>Northern</b>	504	469	419	512	575
<b>Southcentral</b>	735	712	711	724	830
<b>Southeast</b>	253	239	244	251	256
<b>Western</b>	276	323	337	243	276

Source: State of Alaska Online Resources for Children in Alaska (ORCA) Report Children in Out of Home Placement RR00161

## AGENCY STRUCTURE

The Director has overall responsibility for the administration of the OCS. The Deputy Director is responsible for statewide program management and the Division Operations Manager oversees field operations. OCS is state administered and has 26 field offices statewide, organized into five geographic regions. A Protective Services Manager II administers each Region:

- The Anchorage Regional Office (ARO) is responsible for the Municipality of Anchorage and the communities of Eagle River, Chugiak, and Whittier.
- The Northern Regional Office (NRO) is located in Fairbanks and is responsible for management of the Fairbanks, Nome, Kotzebue, Barrow, Galena, McGrath, and Delta Junction field offices and the surrounding areas. In FY 16, the Galena office will be closed, but the community will continue to be served by NRO.
- The Southcentral Regional Office (SCRO) is located in Wasilla and is responsible for management of the Wasilla, Kenai, Valdez, Kodiak, Dillingham, Homer, King Salmon, Gakona, Seward, and Unalaska field offices and the surrounding areas. In FY 16, the Unalaska office will be closed, but the community will continue to be served by SCRO.
- The Southeastern Regional Office (SERO) is located in Juneau and is responsible for management of the Juneau, Craig, Sitka, Petersburg and Ketchikan field offices and the surrounding areas.
- The Western Regional Office (WRO) is located in Bethel and is responsible for management of the Bethel, St. Mary's, and Aniak field offices and the surrounding areas.



## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES, MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT**

OCS' Practice Model provides guidance with the following guiding principles:

- A child's safety is paramount.
- A determination that safety threats are present within a family does not equate with removal of a child from their home. The assessment of safety threats directs staff to make informed decisions about safety planning that will control and manage the threats identified. These actions may be in-home, out-of-home or a combination of the two.
- Relevant services will be sought with respect for and understanding of the families' culture and specific needs.
- Collaboration with Alaska Native Tribes is fundamental to best practice.
- Families are treated respectfully, thoughtfully and as genuine partners.
- A person's right to self determination is valued and supported.
- A safety intervention system is congruent with strengths based and family centered practice.
- Assessing for the safety of children is what we do; family centered practice is how we do it.
- Interventions are identified using the family's perspective about what needs and strengths exist that are selected in collaboration through family engagement.
- By engaging in a collaborative problem solving process with the family, case plans will be specific to the uniqueness of each family served.
- Enhancing parent/caregiver protective capacities are essential for the ability of families to protect their children.
- OCS needs partnerships within the community and stakeholders to achieve strong outcomes for children and families.

Mission Statement: OCS works in partnership with families and communities to support the well-being of Alaska's children and youth. Services will enhance families' capacities to give their children a healthy start, to provide them with safe and permanent homes, to maintain cultural connections, and to realize their potential.

Vision Statement: Safe Children, Strong Families

## **COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION**

The OCS is highly invested in collaboration, coordination, and partnership with stakeholders. In the past year OCS has engaged in substantial, ongoing and meaningful collaboration in implementing the 2015-2019 CFSP and the development of the 2016 APSR. The lead OCS position responsible for oversight, collaboration, and coordination of the Child and Family Services Plan was vacant from July 1, 2014 – December 8, 2014. Due to this vacancy the agency efforts were minimal prior to January 2015.

- January 12, 2015 - Meeting held in Anchorage to review and implement the CFSP and discuss the priorities, strategies, and objectives. Recommendations were made to update, change, and enhance the CFSP objectives. Present at the meeting were OCS managers, Department of Law, Facing Foster Care in Alaska, Court Improvement Project and the OCS ICWA Program Coordinator. Through discussion and review of current data, it was determined that specific goals to address services to children under the age of five should be incorporated throughout the plan, as this is the population at greatest risk of maltreatment. After reviewing the plan, the group did recommend changes to dates for completion of items. Plan for improvement objective 1.C.1 was changed. Although the assessment of resource families will continue to be a focus in this objective, the group recommended focusing on the complete assessment through background check process to ensure safe environments, and not implementing a brand new Resource Family Assessment process. These changes were incorporated into this APSR submission.

- April 8, 2015 – OCS supervisors, managers, tribal and community partners met in Anchorage to review the CFSP priorities and strategies. Breakout sessions recommended changes, highlighted work completed, and identified barriers to the priorities, strategies, and objectives in the CFSP. Small workgroups met to discuss the strategies in the CFSP. Each group was asked to review the objective and activities, identify priorities, efficiencies, and suggested changes. Focus in groups was on the following CFSP strategies 1.A, 1.B, 1.C, and 2.A. The work groups determined the goals were appropriate based on what is happening in OCS practice, they noted that some strategies already have work happening to draw on, and identified some of the key components that are already on the plan. The most effective workgroup was the resource family support workgroup focused on 1.C. They identified a need to review position descriptions for licensing staff, identify point of contact for families (customer services), and identify financial support options for families outside of the foster care stipend. New position descriptions are included with this APSR submission.
- May 7, 2015 – Tribal State Collaboration Group Meeting presentation and handouts provided to OCS managers, Tribal Partners, Department of Law, Guardians ad Litem, and the Court Improvement Project. A follow up phone conference for Tribal Partners was held May 15<sup>th</sup> for further discussion of the CFSP and APSR. The presentation was brief with minimal discussion. Two follow up calls were scheduled, but only the 5/15 call had tribal partners call in. The phone conference included 8 tribal partners and two OCS staff; they were told they could also send written comments by 5/30/15 but no written comments were received. Input included clarifying the term used through the document; Alaska Native is appropriate to use but no Native Alaskan. It was suggested that we consider 1.A.3 that IA notices be sent timely; this is part of OCS policy already. There was discussion in the phone and face to face meeting about the OCS centralized intake plan and timeline. The timeline was changed in the CFSP plan for improvement with this APSR submission.
- May 11, 2015 and June 8, 2015– The Resource Family Advisory Board met and reviewed/discussed the CFSP. No recommendations for updates or changes were provided by this group.

In the coming year, tribes and other partners listed in this section will be involved in continued efforts through meetings and workgroups aimed at implementing CFSP strategies and achieving the objectives set out in the plan. In preparation for the 2017 APSR, meetings and phone conferences will be scheduled with stakeholders to continue to actively work on the identified strategies, and gather information needed to complete the APSR and update the CFSP. Tribal representatives will continue to be included on Executive Steering Committee and the OCS Policy Committee. OCS will continue to partner closely with Facing Foster Care in Alaska on youth issues through regular meetings and collaboration on implementation of strategies to improve outcomes for youth. OCS will continue to partner with the Department of Law and Court Improvement Project through regular meetings to assess progress and implement strategies to improve outcomes for children and families. OCS will continue to fund and support the Resource Family Advisory to assess and implement changes to improve support to Alaska’s Resource Families.

Throughout the past year, OCS has been involved with other collaborative efforts that will improve outcomes and services to children and family. At statewide and regional levels, the following internal and external stakeholder groups have an essential role in implementation of Alaska’s CFSP goals and objectives.

#### **Alaska Citizens’ Review Panel**

Alaska’s Citizens’ Review Panel (CRP) evaluates OCS compliance with federal and state laws, examines policies and procedures for consistent statewide implementation. Additionally, the CRP conducts public outreach and gathers public comment on current OCS procedures and practices involving children and family services. Each year, the CRP prepares a public annual report containing a summary of its activities and recommendations for the improvement of child protection services in the state. OCS works closely with the CRP and the Director participates in regular communication with the CRP. See Appendix A for the 2014 Report and agency response to the report.

## **Casey Family Programs**

The OCS is participating in a program with Casey Family Programs in an effort to strengthen State and Tribal collaboration in the recruitment and retention of native foster homes. Regionally based workgroups were established to include OCS staff representatives of various functions of child protection management, licensing managers, licensing supervisors, ICWA case reviewers, child protection front line workers, and adoption staff. Tribal partners, Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), Alaska Center for Resource Families and foster parents were also involved in the workgroups. The tribal partners participating in the work groups represent area tribes such as Aleutian-Pribilof Indian Association, Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, Kenaitze Indian Tribe, Chickaloon Village Tribal Council, Tanana Chiefs Conference, Nome Eskimo Community, and Bristol Bay Native Corporation. The workgroups have developed plans to increase the number of native foster homes and developed strategies around support and retention of the homes. The work groups meet regularly and joint participation in the strategies identified between the state and tribal partners are occurring. A progress update and training is scheduled for October 2015 with all of the workgroups and Casey Family Programs. Casey Family Programs support OCS in our work to improve services. Casey Family Program staff was present at the Tribal State Collaboration Group meeting in May and had an opportunity to provide input on the CFSP and APSR.

## **Children's Justice Act Task Force**

The Alaska Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force meets quarterly, with the 5 active committees meeting more frequently to work on projects and discuss current issues. The task force created two new committees this year: 1) the Needs Assessment Committee to examine ways to inform its future efforts through information gathering and evaluation of statewide data on child maltreatment and the child maltreatment response system and 2) the Information Sharing Committee was formed with a focus on determining what information sharing barriers may be affecting the collaborative work of child protection, law enforcement and others who are part of the multidisciplinary response to child abuse.

In November of 2014 the task force supported the Alaska Child Maltreatment Conference: Child Advocacy Center staff; law enforcement; social workers, mental health practitioners; pediatric forensic nurses and doctors; Assistant District Attorneys; and CINA Attorneys attend the Alaska Child Maltreatment Conference. The Alaska CJA Scholarship Program funds professionals to attend the CMC as well as other trainings to enhance their professional skills.

The task force is in the process of developing a video and an online training to educate the public and mandatory reporters in Alaska in the following areas:

- signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect;
- short and long-term effects of child maltreatment;
- responding to signs of maltreatment; and
- resources for reporters, families and professionals who work with children and families at risk.

This project is a collaborative effort between OCS, the Alaska CJA Task Force, the Alaska Division of Juvenile Justice, Senior and Disability Services and the Department of Health and Social Services. A priority for this new training is to provide detailed information and guidance on how to recognize and respond to child sexual exploitation.

## **Court Improvement Project (CIP)**

CIP and OCS have continued to work closely in their efforts to achieve systemic improvements in child welfare in Alaska. The OCS Director is a key member of the statewide CIP committee, which meets 3-4 times per year. The CIP representative was included in discussion, assessment, and planning for the CFSP and APSR through meetings in January and May (as listed above). During SFY 15, CIP has collaborated with OCS on several critical projects, such as:

- The CINA Therapeutic Court (CTC) pilot began in Anchorage in July 2014 – this pilot program is based on a restructuring of the previous Family Care Court (FCC) therapeutic court, with the pilot utilizing a “parallel track” model. The CTC focuses only on substance abuse treatment progress and issues for parents, with all other CINA case-related matters being dealt with by a separate judge in the “regular” CINA track. OCS is represented on the CTC Steering Committee by the OCS Anchorage Region Protective Services Manager II.
- The CINA Core Curriculum workgroup held its second round pilot rollout in October. Three new, day-long CINA curriculum modules were presented to a group of 54 CINA stakeholders from around the state. The concurrent modules presented were: Family Well-Being; ICWA; and Services & Resources. The workgroup plans to present several additional modules at the 3-day Statewide CINA Conference in Anchorage in October 2015.
- OCS Centralized Intake Project – OCS staff have provided updates to the CIP committee regarding progress in their Centralized Intake Project. The OCS Director and management staff has engaged in dialogue with CIP members about the project for input/feedback from CIP members.
- Review and implementation of updated Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) ICWA guidelines/regulations – CIP & OCS have cooperated in conducting an analysis and review of the impact of the new ICWA guidelines/regulations on the child welfare system in Alaska. This was a main agenda topic at the recent CIP committee meeting on June 5, 2015.

### **Department of Health and Social Services Information Technology (IT) Governance Team**

The vision of the DHSS to move towards an integrated enterprise of which the OCS SACWIS system, the Online Resources for Children in Alaska (ORCA) will be a part of the larger enterprise. The DHSS IT Governance Team consists of the DHSS high level leadership. This team is now making all IT infrastructure and funding decisions for DHSS as a whole, as the Department moves forward with this level of integration. In the last year, this team had an integral role in the oversight of a project to replace of all OCS Live Scan fingerprint machines, and has approved the development and implementation of an OCS Incident Tracker which is due to go live on 7/1/2015.

### **Division of Juvenile Justice**

The OCS partners with the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to improve outcomes and services to children and youth in Alaska. In the past year collaborative efforts have been utilized to address human trafficking and sexual exploitation and meet the requirements of Public Law 113-183. Additionally, the Department of Health and Social Services has received a grant to enhance and improve existing infrastructure and systems at DJJ, OCS, and the Alaska Court system to provide dual status Alaskan youth with the highest quality of integrated, efficient and effective services.

### **Division of Public Assistance**

The OCS partners with the Division of Public Assistance (DPA) on a variety of projects. In the past year enhanced efforts to improve coordination of services has been a focus for the two divisions. Collaborative efforts to streamline and improve service delivery related to childcare funding and Medicaid coverage for youth exiting foster care have been priorities for OCS and DPA.

### **Division of Public Health**

Alaskan babies die every year from unsafe sleeping conditions; many of these deaths are preventable. For this reason, the OCS partners with the Division of Public Health (DPH) to increase awareness regarding safe sleep practices. OCS and DPH have partnered to provide education to Alaskan families through public service announcements, educational information, and posters from the Alaska Infant Safe Sleep Project.

### **Executive Steering Committee**

OCS facilitates the Executive Steering Committee (ESC). This group is made up of OCS managers from the field, regional, and state offices. The ESC also includes Tribal State Collaboration Group and Supervisory Leadership Council Representatives. This group leads the program changes and implements strategies identified in the CFSP as needed to improve outcomes for OCS. This group focuses on areas identified in the CFSP and in the last year has

been included in planning and development related to Strategy 1.A, Centralized Intake. This is an opportunity for OCS managers, TSCG representatives and SLC to have input on the discussion, assessment, and planning for the CFSP and APSR.

### **Facing Foster Care in Alaska**

Alaska OCS has partnered with Facing Foster Care in Alaska (FFCA) on improving outcomes for older youth, who are either in care or have exited foster care. OCS continues to participate in quarterly leadership meetings between OCS and FFCA to discuss relevant concerns, issues and program improvements. These leadership meetings occur in conjunction with the quarterly FFCA-led youth retreats; this venue provides the opportunity for peer mentoring in life skills and exposure to available resources. The Independent Living Program staff continue to work side by side with Facing Foster Care in Alaska to train and recruit foster homes to specifically support older youth and provide joint trainings to OCS staff, community agencies, and to schools on the importance of supporting youth in transition. The FFCA representative was invited to participate in discussion, assessment, and planning for the CFSP and APSR through meetings in January and May (as listed above). Ms. Metivier participated in the January meeting.

### **Resource Family Advisory Board**

The Resource Family Advisory Board (RFAB) currently has fourteen members made up of resource families, staff from the Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF), tribal members, and OCS staff. In the past year, the ACRF received grant funding to manage and administer the RFAB. The RFAB meets by teleconference every month and has had two face to face meetings. The RFAB was given opportunity to review the CFSP and provide input the strategies and goals during their monthly meeting in their June 8th meeting.

The regular RFAB meetings have led to the development of specific initiatives upon which to focus. The Board is working on the following initiatives:

- Develop Board Members as Mentors to other resource families.
- Starter Kits Project to assist resource families with emergency placements.
- Compile and share lists of resource/services available for resource families.
- Develop organizational by-laws for the RFAB.

### **Supervisory Leadership Council**

The Supervisory Leadership Council (SLC) began in the fall of 2009 when a committee of supervisors was selected to meet and begin working on a plan to improve the substance and consistency of supervision statewide. In spring of 2014, the SLC met and a decision was made to revise the Strategic Plan to align more closely with OCS' CFSP.

A new vision was created: "Supervisors work cohesively to advocate, influence and support the OCS Priorities." The new plan identified four main areas:

1. Safe Children & Strong Families;
2. Quality Workforce;
3. Tribal Relationships; and
4. Community Partnerships.

Within these areas, the group identified 3 areas to work on this year:

1. addressing the high rate of repeat maltreatment,
2. standardization of in-home cases, and
3. trauma stewardship.

### **State of Alaska Department of Law (DOL)**

The Chief Assistant Attorney General was involved in the development of the Child and Family Services Self-Assessment, as well as ongoing development of the CFSP and the APSR. DOL and OCS have been working

collaboratively on streamlining improvements to the OCS notifications systems, administrative review system, and compliance issues with ICWA cases. DOL continues to provide on-going training and staff development through the Child Welfare Academy to OCS workers and supervisors on best practice in court preparation and participation. DOL partners with OCS on foster home licensing to improve practice. DOL assists OCS with litigation regarding child protection and foster home licensing cases.

The DOL has always provided discovery to Tribes in CINA cases. Recently the DOL and OCS were able to negotiate a new system that relieves the Tribes from payment for discovery copies. THE DOL participate in Tribal State Collaboration meetings and are part of the OCS Policy Committee. DOL representatives have attending meetings to review and assess the progress related to the CFSP and plan for the coming year.

### **Tribal State Collaboration Group**

Tribal State Collaboration Group (TSCG) is comprised of Tribal child welfare leaders and ICWA workers, and OCS statewide leaders, regional managers and OCS ICWA Specialists. Over 100 Alaskan tribes are represented at TSCG meetings. The TSCG meetings are one of the forums OCS uses to solicit feedback on the progress of goals and evaluate effectiveness of policy implementation. Through November 2014, the Tribal State Collaboration Group (TSCG) met three times a year. Changes were made to the structure to encourage regional collaboration work. Beginning in 2015 the TSCG will meet annually, with Tribal State Advisory Team (TSAT) meetings occurring monthly, and regional TSCG meetings occurring more frequently. A detailed list of activities to enhance tribal and state relations, reduce disproportionality and increase ICWA compliance are listed later in this report. TSCG representatives were invited to participate in discussion, assessment, and planning for the CFSP and APSR through meetings in January, April, and May (see details listed above). TSCG representatives participate in the OCS policy committee, which is responsible for developing and amending OCS policy and procedure in the CPS Manual. Tribal representation on this committee allows the tribal partners to be involved with policy development and implementation on a consistent basis.

### **University of Alaska**

OCS was a recipient of a five year grant from the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI), for use towards a University Partnership Program. Through partnership with the University of Alaska, OCS intends to increase child welfare practice effectiveness through workforce systems development, organizational interventions, and change leadership using data-driven capacity building, education, and professional development. The UAA Child Welfare Academy (CWA) was invited to participate in discussion, assessment, and planning for the CFSP and APSR during meetings in January. CWA staff participate on the Executive Steering Committee and have participated in meetings to review and assess the progress related to the CFSP and plan for the coming year.

### **Anchorage Region**

The Anchorage Region is the most populous of the five designated regions. The large and diverse population residing in Anchorage requires collaboration with many of the tribes throughout the state. Many tribes and associations have representatives located in Anchorage along with the regionally based tribes allowing for convening and workgroups to occur locally in the Anchorage area.

There are multiple collaborative efforts actively occurring in the OCS Anchorage service region:

- Greater Anchorage Area Partnership (GAAP). This group meets monthly and is comprised of community partners including: service providers, educators, military personnel, medical and therapeutic service representative and tribal partners. The purpose of the partnership is to provide a consistent forum for local child, youth, and family service providers and stakeholders to discuss issues, brainstorm solutions, and further strengthen services to improve outcomes for families in Anchorage.
- A quarterly “Fix It” meeting, which includes representatives from OCS, Office of Public Advocacy, Public Defender’s Office, and Attorney General’s Office, is scheduled to maintain open communication regarding practice changes at OCS. The Anchorage Regional Disproportionality Team includes local tribal partners and community partners and meets monthly.

- There is a community partnership group that meets monthly regarding permanency and trauma informed care. The group consists of OCS and local mental health providers, and has developed a train the trainer curriculum on the 3-5-7 model which discusses transitions with children and grief and loss. Each agency in the group will use the training with their staff.
- The ARO management team meets twice a year with the Anchorage School District administration.
- The CINA Therapeutic Court Steering Committee consists of OCS, OPA, PD, AAG, the Court Judge, Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) and Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC).
- Fostering Hope Continuing Conversations meets monthly where the faith-based community works with the State on supporting families, recruitment of foster homes, and other events.
- The ARO Multiple Disciplinary Committee unit continues the collaboration related to the work of the Anchorage Child Advocacy Center, Alaska Cares. OCS and the Anchorage Police Department (APD) are collocated together; collectively, this unit works all of priority 1 Protective Services Reports together.

### **Northern Region**

Geographically, the Northern Region is the largest of the five regions serving over 90 villages in an area over 325,000 square miles. Because of the regional vastness, collaboration and workgroups are achieved in the main areas of Nome, Barrow, Kotzebue, and Fairbanks.

- OCS and Tanana Chiefs Conference provided a 3 day Family Services Training with a wide variety of workshops: Self-Governance; Barrier Crimes 101; Mandate Reporter Training; Trauma Informed Care, etc. There were over 100 ICWA workers from surrounding villages and OCS workers in attendance.
- The Nome and Kotzebue areas attended a 3 day Family Group Conferencing Training with OCS staff and Kawerak, Inc. ICWA/Tribal Family Coordinators. Maniilaq Association serves the Kotzebue area; and Kawerak, Inc. serves the Nome area. Both organizations are in the second year of the Rural Child Welfare grant which provides caseworker visits, and assists with some case management.
- Casey Family Programs has provided the Northern Region and its community partners and tribes with training and technical assistance to increase and improve recruitment and retention of ICWA preferred placements. There are 2 Northern Region recruitment teams: 1) Nome/Barrow, and 2) Interior Rural. The teams have identified their respective plans and will work throughout 2015, and report their findings in October 2015.
- The Family 2 Family Workgroup continues with its work in the focus areas of Building Community Partnerships; Team Decision Making; Data; and Recruitment and Retention of Foster Families. OCS is partnering with the ACRF and convenes monthly meetings to work on the four focus areas.

### **Southcentral Region**

The Southcentral Region is a large area that reaches from Valdez on the southern coast to Unalaska on the Aleutian Island chain, and includes the Matanuska-Susitna Valley; the Mat-Su Valley is an area of Southcentral Alaska and includes the communities of Palmer and Wasilla.

Regional leadership participates in Multi Disciplinary Team meetings, the Mat-Su Health Foundation Community Scan group and Mat-Su Area Partnership Meeting. Monthly meetings occur with tribal partners. SCRO was the first region to facilitate Regional Tribal State Collaboration meetings. Meetings have occurred in Wasilla and Gakona. Additionally, adoption and foster care staff partner with the ACRF and other community partners to facilitate resource family appreciation and training opportunities.

### **Southeast Region**

Southeast Alaska has a land area of 35,138 square miles and is comprised of a 600 mile long narrow strip of mainland coastline and hundreds of islands. The Southeast Region serves 17 cities or communities; however the majority of the population is concentrated in the city of Juneau. OCS partners with community and tribal representatives in the communities served.

Southeast OCS managers and supervisors meet with Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (T&H) Tribal Family & Youth Services staff on a quarterly basis to help facilitate communication and collaboration. Routinely, OCS, T&H, and AWARE (the local domestic violence service provider) routinely provide new staff orientation to the new staffs of each agency in order to familiarize the staff on the responsibilities and services available and to build relationships and understanding of the respective agency missions. Additionally, Regional leadership participates in Multi Disciplinary Team meetings and provides ongoing training to school district staff on mandatory reporting requirements.

### **Western Region**

The Western Region of the Office of Children Services is located in the South West area of the State of Alaska. The regional population is approximately 8500 people, who are primarily Alaska Native. The largest community is Bethel, with a population of 6300. The Western Region covers an area roughly equal to the entire state of Oregon or 59,000 square miles, and includes 56 villages. Each village represents an individual tribal council. Many of the tribal governments have contracted with Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) to provide ICWA services, housing and other social services programs.

The Western Region of OCS works closely with tribal and community partners on the following collaborative efforts:

- In SFY 15, AVCP Bethel based ICWA staff began collocating at the OCS facility to improve collaborative efforts and services to children and families.
- The Western Region actively partners with the Probation and Parole Division, the Sex Offenders Treatment Program, Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation, the Division Behavioral Health (DBH), DJJ, Public Health Nursing, and local law enforcement agencies.
- Western OCS is currently working on development of an MOA to enhance the Multi Disciplinary Team work in their community.
- OCS, tribal partners, and resource families attended training and work sessions through Casey Family programs to support resource family recruitment.
- A resource family recruitment workgroup has been in place since February 2014 to identify and support families in the region. This workgroup includes OCS, tribal partners, the Division of Behavioral Health, and local health care services providers.

### **Alaska Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems**

The Alaska Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Project's primary purpose is to facilitate the building and implementation of statewide comprehensive systems of care that support family and community approaches to promoting positive early development and early school success for young children. This important project is driven by a multi-disciplinary, governor-appointed task force that meets three times per year. ECCS' mission is to promote positive development and improved health outcomes for Alaska's children prenatal to eight years by creating a culturally responsive, comprehensive and accessible service delivery system that links service providers, empowers families, and engages communities.

### **Strengthening Families Leadership Team**

This team, which includes OCS representation, is made up of a variety of key decision makers in state and private programs and provides the leadership for the state Strengthening Families programs. The efforts are focused on embedding the "protective factors framework" in a variety of early childhood and family support services and systems. Through this team, early childhood programs statewide receive intensive training and coaching. Additionally, regular trainings were available to interested providers by the Child Care Resource and Referral Network agencies.

### **Early Childhood Mental Health Learning Network**

OCS leadership facilitates the “Network” which is designed to develop/increase expertise in the existing workforce about early childhood mental health issues including trauma, diagnosis, and appropriate interventions, and create collaboration between a variety of service providers. Through grants to local agencies in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau the program provides consultation and/or professional development to mental health clinicians, family support workers, and early interventionists. The grantees also provide “Reflective Facilitation” groups to a cross-disciplinary group of professionals working with young children and their families. These groups have been especially helpful in support best practices in the field.

### **Early Childhood Protective Services Collaborative**

An Anchorage Early Childhood Protective Services Collaborative was formed in 2012. This Collaborative is made up of a variety of early childhood and family support providers in the Anchorage area who may have children from the child protective system involved in their programs. This group meets bi-monthly with a focus on facilitating communication between agencies and improving services for young children in the child protection system. The strategic plan developed by this group includes strategies to: prevent additional reports of harm/maltreatment for children 0-5 years, increase stability of children in the child protection system, and enhance quality and quantity of service providers and in turn effectiveness.

### **Infant Learning Program**

Child welfare and the Part C early intervention system (known in Alaska as the Infant Learning Program) continued to improve processes related to serving families of very young children including the development of regional protocols, outlining steps for collaboration, referral and ongoing planning. The two programs continue to work together to improve processes related to serving families of very young children including the development of regional protocols outlining steps for collaboration between child welfare and early intervention providers with regard to planning and intervention. There are currently 16 agencies providing Infant Learning Services in the State of Alaska; this service available statewide.

### **Headstart Programs**

OCS provides data to Head Start programs statewide regarding the number of children that may be eligible for Head Start programs due to their foster care status. This data is helpful to Head Start in establishing their service needs and capacity. Anchorage and Mat-Su Valley Head Start directors participate in the Anchorage-based, Early Childhood Protective Services Collaborative meetings. Most Head Start programs and OCS offices have established MOAs.

OCS facilitates an annual meeting with Head Start grantees and their mental health consultants following the Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Institute. This meeting is focused on improving the services to young children and their families with difficult situations in Head Start programs. The Head Start programs are often in rural/remote communities and consultants are located in hubs. These consultants are often the only ones in their area doing this work through these efforts it is hoped to establish a system that will connect them to each other and provide best practice information.

## **SECTION 2: UPDATE ON ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE**

Statewide assessment of performance considers data collected through the internal OCS case review system, the AFCARS/NCANDS data reported by OCS, and CFSR State Performance Workbook available on the ACF site. OCS is scheduled for a Child and Family Services Review in 2017 and the goals and objectives identified in the CFSP are intended to address areas likely to require a plan improvement plan in the future.

All three data sources identify Repeat Maltreatment, Permanency Composite 1, and Placement Stability as areas needing improvement by OCS. OCS is committed to these three areas and has specific strategies included in the Child and Family Services Plan for Improvement to address these areas. Specific strategies to address the identified areas of needed include the following:

1. OCS continues to be committed to centralizing and standardizing the intake process (See strategy 1.A) in Alaska; this is a key strategy in reducing repeat maltreatment.
2. Through Strategy 1.B, Alaska intends to improve permanency outcomes for children; this includes timely and accurate case plans for families.
3. Placement stability is addressed through strategies 1.C and 2.C. Through support to resource families and early identification of relatives, OCS expects to see improved placement stability.

### **CHILD AND FAMILY OUTCOMES THROUGH THE OCS CQI/QA UNIT**

The OCS has continued a rigorous case review system. OCS has a Continuous Quality Improvement Unit (QA team) with dedicated staff which maintains the ongoing case reviews. The agency has utilized the federal review instrument with 23 items and in March 2015, the QA team began using the revised instrument through the Online Management System (OMS). In CY 2014 there were 255 case reviews conducted. CY 2014 findings show gains were maintained in all 7 outcome areas over the findings of the CFSR 2008.

Each field office is reviewed annually. A review of the case review findings for CY 2014 show results significantly below the federal standard of 95% achievement (see table on the following page). Both Safety 1 and Safety 2 are areas for concern as well as Well Being 1. These areas are addressed through Field Office Program Improvement Plans.

As noted, in March 2015 the agency began use of the OMS. During the first quarter of CY 2015, there were 38 cases reviewed from two field offices (see table on the following page). Although the number of cases reviewed is small which can result in significant “swings” in findings, there are concerns in several areas. Well Being 1 is an area significantly below the national standard. This area reflects the agency’s challenges in establishing the base activities needed for accomplishment of permanency goals.

These outcome areas indicating concern for the areas of Safety and Well Being 1 are of continuing concern for the agency; they will likely be reflected in the CFSR Round 3. In the coming year OCS will monitor this closely and consider revision of the CFSP goals and objectives to better align with the identified statewide data indicators.

**Quality Assurance Reviews**  
**January 2014 – December 2014 Calendar Year**  
**Outcome and Items**

Item	CFSR 2008	Qtr 1 Jan- March 2014	Qtr 2 April- June 2014	Qtr 3 July- Sept 2014	Qtr 4 Oct- Dec 2014
<b>Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect</b>	<b>47.1%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>42%</b>
S1- Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	56%	82%	55%	67%	58%
S1 - Item 2: Repeat maltreatment	81%	76%	83%	93%	65%
<b>Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate</b>	<b>38.5%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>55%</b>
S2 - Item 3: Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal	51%	86%	65%	47%	59%
S2 - Item 4: Risk of harm to child(ren)	39%	84%	58%	50%	60%
<b>Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situation.</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>55%</b>
P1 - Item 5: Foster care re-entries	91%	100%	100%	100%	100%
P1 - Item 6: Stability of foster care placement	73%	76%	83%	91%	83%
P1 - Item 7: Permanency goal for child	45%	90%	68%	82%	77%
P1 - Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives	33%	79%	43%	43%	71%
P1 - Item 9: Adoption	18%	65%	64%	54%	56%
P1 - Item 10: Permanency goal or other planned permanent living arrangement	60%	100%	100%	no cases	100%
<b>Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connection is preserved for children.</b>	<b>62.5%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>94%</b>
P2 - Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement	90%	98%	100%	100%	100%
P2 - Item 12: Placement with siblings	91%	94%	94%	100%	100%
P2 - Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	62%	85%	82%	78%	89%
P2 - Item 14: Preserving connections	78%	98%	93%	100%	100%
P2 - Item 15: Relative placement	83%	100%	98%	100%	98%
P2 - Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents	47%	83%	96%	75%	84%
<b>Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.</b>	<b>23.1%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>33%</b>
WB1 - Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents	32%	74%	64%	42%	53%
WB1 - Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning	37%	56%	41%	26%	30%
WB1 - Item 19: Worker visits with child	26%	54%	50%	46%	38%
WB1 - Item 20: Worker visits with parents	20%	30%	27%	19%	9%
<b>Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs</b>	<b>76.1%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>96%</b>
WB2 - Item 21: Educational needs of the child	76%	96%	96%	88%	98%
<b>Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.</b>	<b>52.5%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>59%</b>
WB3 - Item 22: Physical health of the child	71%	99%	96%	85%	88%
WB3 - Item 23: Mental health of the child	55%	90%	75%	57%	62%

## AFCARS AND NCANDS DATA MEASURES

The chart below illustrates the goals for safety and permanency federal measures established by OCS. OCS continues to track and monitor these measures. Alaska continues to be well below the national standard in Absence of Maltreatment Recurrence, Permanency Composite 1 (Timeliness and Permanency of Reunification, and Permanency Composite 4 (Placement Stability)

Data Measures	FFY06b07a	FFY 2011AB3	FFY 2012AB4	FFY 2013AB4	FFY 2014AB4	National Standard
Absence of Maltreatment Recurrence	90.7	91.8	87.8	87.1	86.1	94.6
Absence of Child Abuse and /or Neglect in Foster Care		99.49	99.08	99.01	99.61	99.68
Permanency Composite 1: Timeliness and Permanency of Reunification	122.4	103.7	102.9	115.2	110.8	122.6
Permanency Composite 2: Timeliness of Adoptions	81.1	141.6	140	144.2	160.8	106.4
Permanency Composite 3: Permanency for Children and Youth in Foster Care for Long Periods of Time	125.4	132.7	134.3	134.2	130.4	121.7
Permanency Composite 4: Placement Stability	73.1	86.1	87.6	90.5	93.7	101.5

## CF SR ROUND 3 STATEWIDE DATA INDICATORS

CF SR State Performance Workbook can be found at the following site:

[http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cfsr\\_stateperformanceworkbook.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cfsr_stateperformanceworkbook.pdf)

The CFR SR State Performance Workbook provides details regarding state performance on the CFR SR 3 statewide data indicators and compares it to the National Standards, and identifies areas the national standard is not being met, indicating a program improvement plan is needed. Areas identified for Alaska, that do not meet the national standard include:

1. Permanency in 12 months for children entering foster care. Recommendation to address so OCS can document additional exits. Timely permanency is an identified goal in the OCS CF SP and is listed in the plan for improvement under strategy 1.B and 2.B.
2. Placement Stability. Recommended to have fewer moves for children in care. Placement Stability is an identified goal in the OCS CF SP and is listed in the plan for improvement under strategy 1.C.
3. Maltreatment in foster care. Recommendation to have fewer documented victimizations in foster care. Improving safety in foster care is a goal of CF SP strategy 1.C.
4. Recurrence of maltreatment. Recommendation to have fewer documented recurrences. Reducing maltreatment is an identified goal in OCS CF SP and is listed in the plan for improvement under strategies 1.A, 1.B, and 2.A.

The plan for improvement provided later in this document will highlight specific data and assessment or progress towards each of these identified areas of need.

## **SYSTEMIC FACTORS**

### **Statewide Information System**

In the 2008 CFSR Alaska was found to be in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of statewide information system. The Online Resources for Children of Alaska (ORCA) is a fully functioning, compliant SACWIS. ORCA effectively and accurately identifies the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care. Tribal and court stakeholders have reported no concerns with current ORCA functionality. There are no 'concerns' regarding ORCA.

There are a number of enhancements planned over the next year that will leverage ORCA data to automate processes that are currently manually completed by field staff. These enhancements include enhancements to ORCA User Experience; expansions to the functionality for automating additional letters and notices to providers and/or case participants; new ORCA Audit functionality, which allows tracking of user activity; and enhancements to assure compatibility with the State of Alaska new accounting system, IRIS. Additional projects include increasing the number of data reports that are available on demand, and improvements to the initial assessment maltreatment findings functionality. In the past year, the following efforts have been made to enhance or improve ORCA:

- Collaborative efforts with the AK Court System, Division of Juvenile Justice and Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice on a long term action plan to enhance services for youth who are or have been involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.
- The Search, Assignment, Eligibility, Request for Funds, Permanent Fund Application, Out of Home Placement, and Maintain case modules were modified to enhance usability and decrease user clicks.
- All financials batches were converted from COBOL to Java.
- A CPS Involvement summary tab was added to assist intake workers with researching details of a family's history of PSRs and Investigations
- A decision tree tool was added to Initial Assessments (investigation) in the interest of standardizing Findings results.

### **Case Review System**

#### ***Written Case Plan***

In the 2008 CFSR, case planning was identified as an area in need of improvement. Alaska has demonstrated minimal progress in this area. The state provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan, to be developed jointly with the child's parent(s), that includes the required provisions. Although there is a process in place, case planning continues to be an area of need for OCS. SACWIS data shows that 57% of cases with a child out of the home for 60 days or more have a current case plan (ORCA 6.15.2015). This number does not include details about when children and parents are included in case planning process. Internal QA data shows that children and family are included in case planning less than 40% of the time. This data can be found earlier in this report (see QA Review data). This is addressed in the current CFSP plan for improvement in objective 1.B.1. OCS has established a timeline of June 2017 for completion of the objective and demonstration of improvements in the case plan process. Case planning is an area of need identified by the courts and other partners and will require internal and external stakeholder involvement to develop and implement improvements.

#### ***Periodic Reviews***

The state provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child that includes the required provisions no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review. This was found to be a strength in the 2008 CFSR. Administrative reviews are conducted by OCS staff at least every six months. The reviews look at federal requirements as well as reviewing the involvement of all parties in the development of the case plan. A system is in place to notify caregivers of the administrative reviews this is successful due to

administrative support to draft and send notices. Due to the number of meetings and staff issues, OCS is looking at changes to the current review system. This is addressed in CFSP Plan for Improvement objective 2.B.2. Administrative reviews are a strength for OCS. The table below documents State Fiscal Year 2015, and shows OCS average 90% of our cases have timely reviews.

SFY 2015 Admin Reviews

<u>Year - Month</u>	<u>Reviews Overdue</u>	<u>Reviews Current</u>	<u>Review Population</u>	<u>Percent Current</u>
14-Jul	147	1,997	2,144	93.14%
14-Aug	158	1,992	2,150	92.65%
14-Sep	142	2,079	2,221	93.61%
14-Oct	166	2,113	2,279	92.72%
14-Nov	181	2,106	2,287	92.09%
14-Dec	186	2,076	2,262	91.78%
15-Jan	212	2,148	2,360	91.02%
15-Feb	213	2,170	2,383	91.06%
15-Mar	216	2,219	2,435	91.13%
15-Apr	244	2,240	2,484	90.18%
15-May	277	2,233	2,510	88.96%
15-Jun	311	2,290	2,601	88.04%

Source: State of Alaska Online Resources for Children in Alaska (ORCA)

### ***Permanency Hearings***

This area was rated a strength for OCS in the 2008 CFSR. The state provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the state has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body that includes the required provisions no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter. OCS does not have data to document our performance in this area. The QA case review system does not collect data on permanency hearings. Although this is AFCARS data, OCS has been undergoing a change in reports and collection to better meet the needs, and at this time is unable to provide data related to timeliness of permanency hearings. This element will be reviewed as part of the Title IV-E requirements in our scheduled Title IV-E audit scheduled for November 2015. OCS will be able to provide AFCARS and Title IV-E Audit data about this in the 2017 APSR.

### ***Filing for Termination of Parental Rights***

The state provides a process for filing for termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings in accordance with required provisions. However, in the 2008 CFSR this was found to be an area needing improvement. This continues to be an area of need for OCS. The QA case review system does not collect data on filing of termination of parental rights. Although this is AFCARS data, OCS has been undergoing a change in reports and collection to better meet the needs, and at this time is unable to provide this. OCS will be able to provide AFCARS about this in the 2017 APSR.

### ***Notice of Hearing and Reviews to Caregivers***

This was rated an area needing improvement during the 2008 CFSR. The state is responsible to provide a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have a right to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child. This continues to be identified as an area of need for OCS. The responsibility for notifying caregivers of court hearings is assigned to CPS caseworkers. Due to heavy caseloads and competing priorities it is not consistently achieved.

## **Quality Assurance System**

This was rated as an area needing improvement in the 2008 CFSR. OCS believes this has been improved since that time through development of a strong case review system and the development of the CQI committee.

### ***QA Case Reviews***

The state is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates implemented program improvement measures. Alaska maintains a rigorous system of ongoing case reviews. The system mimics the federal Child and Family Services Review Process. Each field office (25) is reviewed at least annually with the largest metropolitan field office reviewed twice yearly. The review includes case files of children served by the agency under the title IV-B and IV-E plans and interviewing parties in the cases.

Cases are selected through a random selection of cases of children by field office. The review attempts to review fifty percent of the sample for out of home cases and fifty per cent for in home cases. When there is not a sufficient number of in home cases, the number of cases reviewed is augmented by out of home cases. A sample of 12 cases is drawn for all field offices except the largest metropolitan area in which 26 cases are drawn. The sampling is conducted two to three months in advance of the review. Both the electronic and paper records are reviewed. The sample is sent to the field office with a due date for a mail in of the paper records.

The review uses the CFSR instrument. OCS began using the federal Online Management System in March 2015. The review encompasses a careful review of safety, permanency, and well being using the 18 item instrument. Phone interviews are conducted with a parent, tribal representative, foster parent, Guardian ad Litem, and the assigned caseworker. Other collateral parties such as case providers may be interviewed as case review needs indicate. These interviews are used as part of the information gathering on a case and are documented in the evaluation process. Areas remaining to be resolved are the challenges in reaching parents; phone numbers change frequently. Also, the agency has opted not to reach children by phone out of concern for younger children and for further trauma when there is not a relationship with the reviewer. These two areas remain to be resolved.

Second level QA is conducted on cases by the QA Unit Supervisor. When all cases have been reviewed, the data reports are run by the research analyst and presentations of data are prepared. The review team meets for debriefing and preparation of the written report. The report provides both quantitative findings and comments on the findings by the reviewers. The report is finalized and is forwarded to the management team to include the Director, Deputy Director, Operations Manager, Program Manager, and Regional Managers. A video or phone debriefing is then scheduled with the field office in which all staff participates. The findings are provided along with recommendations for change. Regions are then required to respond to the findings through the field office program improvement process.

### ***CQI Committee***

The OCS has established a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Committee. This group meets monthly and includes: the Division Operations Manager; the Child Welfare Administrator; Social Services Program Administrator; the Continuous Quality Improvement Manager; and the five Regional Protective Services Manager IIs.

This group has reviewed federal guidance regarding the CQI requirements. A CQI manual was developed to guide the group in their work. The agency has further refined its system by taking steps to enhance the communication process. This provides for exchange of issues identified through ongoing case reviews, specialized reviews, and use of other SACWIS data. When issues are identified, there is an immediate opportunity to collaborate and engage in

problem solving. Changes planned and then implemented are able to be monitored through the committee. The CQI committee is also linked to the Executive Steering Committee (ESC) which has a broader management membership and tribal partner representation. The ESC may utilize subgroups to develop revised policy and procedures and to engage in program development in response to issues identified through the CQI process.

In spring of 2105, OCS held two successful Data Summit events, involving internal and external (tribal) stakeholders. The mission of the Data Summits was to enhance the OCS CQI system through providing stakeholder access to OCS data in a user-friendly, digestible way, building a bridge between fieldwork and data to impact practice and improve quality of service to children and families, and to increase managers' capacity to perform analysis of data on their own. As a result of the events, OCS management gained better understanding of stakeholder data needs and began working to develop reports and a data dashboard to allow access to OCS data in a user-friendly way.

### **Staff and Provider Training**

The 2008 CFSR found this to be an area needing improvement because the initial training that was provided to staff was not sufficient to prepare them to carry out their responsibilities and due to the state not requiring workers or supervisors to receive ongoing training as a part of their job requirements OCS has made changes in the training system and expects to demonstrate improvements in this area.

#### ***Initial Training***

The state is operating a staff development and training program providing initial training that includes the basic skills and knowledge required of all staff who deliver services pursuant to the CFSP. OCS and the CWA collaborate to provide training to OCS staff. SKILS training is classroom based training and continues to be the initial training provided to front line staff. New line workers are provided with webinar and teleconference opportunities following attendance at SKILS, as well as field training they complete and review with their supervisor. The staff development plan outlines specific training requirements, and is an appendix to this document. Additionally CWA provides training opportunities for OCS supervisors and Social Services Associates, to assist them in development of their unique roles in the agency.

#### ***Ongoing Training***

The state is operating a staff development and training program that provides ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP. Throughout the year learning opportunities are available for staff to enhance their knowledge of existing policy and practice and to provide training on policy or practice changes. There have been changes made to the training plan to better meet the training needs of staff. The current training plan is attached in Appendix C. OCS has not yet established a required number of continuing education hours, however mandatory trainings are provided to all staff throughout the year, as well as other (non-mandatory) training opportunities. In the past year, mandatory trainings were provided regarding: title IV-E eligibility, emergency adoption regulations, relative placements and denials, and assessment of future risk of abuse/neglect (FRAN).

#### ***Foster Parent Training***

The 2008 CFSR final report rated this item as an area in need of improvement because it was determined that foster parents were not receiving sufficient training to carry out their responsibilities. The state provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and the staff of state-licensed or -approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E, and the training addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children. Resource Families are able to access a wide array of trainings in a variety of formats.

OCS provides a grant to the Alaska Center of Resource Families (ACRF) for provide this service. ACRF provides comprehensive training and continuous support services for all current and prospective resource families. Resource families include licensed foster families, and "kinship" or unlicensed relative caregiver families who are responsible

for the day-to-day care of children who must reside outside their parent's home due to abuse or neglect. Resource family training and support services provide education and support resource families, and consists of basic training (CORE) for new and returning resource families and specialized, ongoing trainings for current, continuing resource parents. Trainings are provided in a variety of formats and may be available by face to face, self-study, small groups, and teleconferences. ACRF training course are provided at no cost to the resource family. Licensed foster homes are required to complete annual training hours to maintain their license. The current recruitment plan is attached.

## **Services Array and Resource Development**

### ***Array of Services***

Alaska did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array during the CFSR in 2008. The state does provide an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families as well as the individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency. The state works to ensure that these services are accessible in all political jurisdictions covered the CFSP, although the geographic makeup of the State of Alaska may impede access. Areas of need continue to be identified in Alaska, specific to mental health and substance abuse services. The agency has demonstrated improvements in services provided through the Independent Living Services provided to older youth. OCS is currently working to develop an easy to use list related to the services available through OCS contracts and grants, the agency providing the service, and what communities they are available in.

### ***Individualizing Services***

The service array (see services described in the later referenced "array of services") can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency. This item was rated as an area needing improvement in the 2008 CFSR final report. OCS uses flexible funding to establish grants and contracts to meet the needs of children and families in Alaska. OCS is able to authorize funding for specific services needed to meet the needs of children through the life of the case, such as child care, clothing, activities, and more.

Much work has been done in recent years to increase the agency's ability to measure the quality and effectiveness of services; however, this also continues to be a growth area. Developing strong, meaningful collaborations will be critical in achieving conformity in these rating criteria. The agency will continue its many ongoing efforts to address this item. OCS has collaborated with the Division of Public Assistance and Division of Senior and Disabilities Services to improve efficiencies in service development to children and families in need. Rural Child Welfare Grants are provided to offer culturally relevant services to Alaska Native children and families.

## **Agency Responsiveness to the Community**

Alaska did not achieve substantial conformity for this systemic factor during the 2008 CFSR. Alaska is highly invested in consulting and partnering with stakeholders, and acknowledges the importance of such consultation and collaboration. Collaborative work is central to developing, implementing improving services to support the safety, permanency, and well-being for children and families. The CFSP and enclosed plan for improvement incorporates strategies identified by stakeholders and partners.

### ***State Engagement and Consultation With Stakeholders Pursuant to CFSP and APSR***

This item was rated as an area needing improvement during the 2008 CFSR because OCS did not have a process to consistently seek input from and engage stakeholders. In implementing the provisions of the CFSP and developing related APSRs, the state has engaged in ongoing consultation with Tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies, and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals, objectives, and annual updates of the CFSP. OCS continues to consistently meet and consult with key statewide external stakeholder groups during regularly

scheduled meetings and teleconferences. These groups include: Tribal State Collaboration Group, Court Improvement Project, Alaska Citizen Review Panel, Facing Foster Care in Alaska, OCS grantees, Foster Parent Advisory Board, Children's Justice Act Task Force, Early Childhood Protective Services Committee, the Staff Advisory Board, the Executive Steering Committee, and other Departmental partners such as Juvenile Justice, Public Assistance, and Senior and Disabilities Services. See documentation earlier for more information about these partnerships and ongoing opportunities for engagement regarding the CFSP and APSR.

#### ***Coordination of CFSP Services With Other Federal Programs***

This was rated as a strength in the 2008 CFSR because OCS has collaborative efforts among Federal and Federally-funded assisted programs. This continues to be an area of strength for the state, as demonstrated by ongoing collaboration and coordination with partners. The state's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population. OCS continues to partner closely with the following agencies: the Division of Behavioral Health (mental health and substance abuse services); Division of Juvenile Justice; Child Advocacy Centers; Alaska Children's Trust; Court Improvement Project; Division of Public Assistance (TANF and child care services); Department of Revenue (Child Support); Division of Senior and Developmental Disabilities; Department of Public Safety; Social Security Administration; Department of Law; Department of Labor (Workforce Investment Act); and the DHSS Bureau of Vital Statistics. OCS has memoranda of agreements with the Department of Education; Department of Public Safety; Department of Revenue and numerous Tribes/Tribal entities that outline the agency collaborative efforts and responsibilities for children in the purview of the Alaska's child welfare system. Additionally, the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Directors work cooperatively to resolve departmental issues that arise.

### **FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION**

#### ***Standards Applied Equally***

This item was rated as strength during the 2008 CFSR Alaska claims Title IV-E funds only for children placed in fully licensed foster homes. The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-B or IV-E funds. A Title IV-E Audit is scheduled in November 2015 and will provide additional information about the compliance with IV-E funding.

#### ***Requirements for Criminal Background Checks***

The 2008 CFSR final report identified this item as an area of strength because criminal background checks are completed on all foster, adoptive, and relative placement homes. The state complies with federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children. In SFY15 new fingerprint equipment was installed and changes to the State of Alaska Background Check Program system have assisted OCS in continuing to demonstrate compliance in this area. Background checks are completed consistently for licensed, unlicensed, and adoptive resource families and fingerprint results are received timely.

#### ***Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes***

The 2008 CFSR final report identified this item as an area in need of improvement. Statewide and regional recruitment and retention plans are used by OCS to prepare and plan for the diligent recruitment needed to meet the needs of Alaskan children and families; see attached appendix. OCS utilizes a variety of child specific recruitment techniques such as Wendy's Wonderful Kids and 3 adoption exchanges. Additionally, OCS participates in ongoing community collaboration and individual recruitment to meet the needs in all areas of the state.

The ongoing issue related to the disproportionate rate of Alaska Native children in care is a challenge for the agency, but with that OCS has chosen to focus on early identification of relatives. A pilot project was completed in the Western Region to enhance and support relative requests for placement. This specific item is addressed in the CFSP objective 2.C.1. In the past year OCS utilized a variety of methods to recruit foster and adoptive homes.

There has also been a workgroup to work on recruitment in Western Region. The workgroup has focused on identification of an Emergency Shelter Home, and is a collaborative effort with community and tribal partners. Here are a few highlighted activities from the past year:

- OCS has utilized Facebook to advertise the need for resource families
- OCS purchased an ad in Alaska Nursing Today to recruit for homes to serve children with complex medical needs.
- Recruitment events in medical care facilities to recruit for homes to serve children with complex medical needs.
- Recruitment booth at the Alaska State High School Basketball Tournament
- A variety of local events including presentation at service organization meetings and booths at community events.
- Retention events such as National Adoption Day Celebrations and foster parent appreciation gatherings.

***State Use of Cross-Jurisdictional Resources for Permanent Placements***

The 2008 CFPSR reported this as a strength Alaska has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children. OCS continues to manage the Alaska Adoption Exchange and contracts with the Northwest Adoption Exchange to list children on the Northwest Adoption Exchange and the AdoptUSKids exchanges. Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK) continues to be utilized in Alaska. OCS works closely with the Catholic Social Services WWK recruiter in Anchorage. The PARKA program is funded by a contract with the ACRF and continues to be utilized to recruit, train, and assist with matching children with potential adoptive families.

**SECTION 3: UPDATE TO THE PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT AND PROGRESS MADE TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES**

Beginning in January 2015, OCS facilitated meetings to gather additional feedback and input regarding the recently approved CFSP Plan for Improvement. Stakeholders who engaged in these opportunities included OCS managers and supervisor, Tribal partners, and representatives from Department of Law, CIP, Child Welfare Academy, FFCA, and others. The priorities and strategies identified in the 2015-2019 CFSP will continue to be the focus of OCS. Collaborative meetings occurred in January, April, and March to allow internal and external partners an opportunity for input on the state assessment, updates needed to the CFSP, and development of the APSR. Data from the CQI / QA unit reviews, as well as federal reporting data from the SACWIS system have also been used to assess progress. There has not been a recent CFSR or Title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Review in Alaska in the past year; however, Alaska is scheduled for a review in November 2015. OCS does incorporate items anticipated to require a program improvement plan in the future.

There have been modifications and alignment of objectives, completion dates, and proposed outcomes based on stakeholder input. In the last year, OCS has focused on the area of centralized intake functions. This is a large undertaking given the number of communities in Alaska. It is the belief of OCS management that consistent screening decisions will significantly affect the outcomes with children and families. Vacancies and staff turnover, coupled with caseloads that have grown significantly in the past year, are part of the reason some areas do not show progress. An additional focus for OCS in SFY15 has been to modify how maltreatment findings are made. In February 2015, OCS implemented a new statewide process; it is anticipated that OCS may see an increase in the rate of maltreatment due to this change.

The matrix on the following pages provides a detailed description of specific accomplishments and progress achieved during the past year. The 2017 APSR will include a column to document feedback looks and collaborative efforts on each objective. There are several objectives in place to address identified areas needing improvement identified in the assessment of performance using QA and AFCARS data, as well as the state performance workbook. Specific objectives to address the repeat maltreatment, permanency outcomes, and placement stability are included in this plan for improvement.

<b>Child and Family Services Plan for Improvement</b>				
<b>Priority #1: Assess and Address Risk and Need</b>				
<b>1.A</b>	<b>Strategy: Standardize and enhance decisions at Intake and Initial Assessments</b>			
<b>Objectives</b>		<b>Measure of Progress and Timeline</b>	<b>Projected Outcomes</b>	<b>Updates /Comments</b>
1.A.1	Refine and continue efforts to standardize and make safe intake screening decisions statewide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standardized screening criteria policy finalized.</li> <li>Develop and implement a CQI tool to measure the accuracy of the intake screening decisions by July 2016.</li> <li>Screening decisions will be accurate in 70% of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Reduce Repeat Maltreatment</b></li> <li>Initial Assessments will be completed in a timely manner.</li> </ul>	<p>2015 Work group established and work plan developed to outline tasks and implementation in process.</p> <p>Based on feedback received from internal and external stakeholders, OCS has changed the timeline for completion of this objective. Community messaging, human resource work regarding position locations, and work space issues</p>

		cases by 2017 and 90% of cases by 2019. • Centralize Intake statewide by January 2017	• Accuracy of screening decisions will increase.	will need to be addressed in the coming year.  **Projected outcomes have been changed. Repeat Maltreatment and timely completion of IAs will be measured through SACWIS data. The accuracy of screening decisions will be measured by the CQI tool being developed.
1.A.2	Ensure accurate risk assessments and impending danger assessments (IDAAAs) are completed and the appropriate intervention/case decision is selected.	• Case Review data monitoring (ongoing) • Case Review data indicates 75% achievement by June 2016 and 90% by June 2017.	<b>Reduce Repeat Maltreatment</b>	2015 FRAN and IDAA training completed. Coaching / Mentoring position in Anchorage began.  Data from QA reviews utilize the old CFSR instrument. Of 255 cases reviewed in CY 14, 67% were in compliance for item 4 (safety and risk assessment).
1.A.3	Ensure Initial Assessments are completed in a timely and accurate manner.	ORCA and Case Review data monitoring will indicate timely completion and accurate assessments in 75% of cases by June 2017.	<b>Reduce Repeat Maltreatment</b>	2015 No progress on this objective, as centralized intake has been the primary focus this year. IA completion will be a target in the next two years, we a goal date of June 2017. OCS will report work on this goal with the 2017 APSR. In calendar year 2014, IA completion compliance rate, meaning the IA was completed within 45 days, was 17.7% Statewide. In CY 2013, this was 20.9%.
<b>1.B</b>	<b>Strategy: Timely, Quality Case Plans &amp; Permanency Goals</b>			
<b>Objectives</b>		<b>Measure of Progress and Timeline</b>	<b>Projected Outcomes</b>	<b>Updates /Comments</b>
1.B.1	Support implementation efforts already underway to ensure Family Service Assessments/Case Plans are completed in an individualized, timely and family-centered manner for all parents and children.	ORCA data will indicate that 95% of out of home cases have a current case plan. Case plans will be completed within 60 days of removal. Case Review data will indicate statewide achievement of 75% for Well-being Outcome 1, indicating that parents and children are involved in the process, and accurately have their needs assessed and addressed by June 2017.	<b>Increase Timely Permanency</b>	2015 No work completed on this objective. OCS will report on this goal in the 2017 APSR. 6/15/15 data shows 57% of cases with a child out of the home for 60 days or more have a current case plan.  *Measure of progress language has been changed for this objective.
1.B.2	Improve the timeliness to	90% of children under the age of five will be	<b>Increase Timely</b>	2015 No work completed on this objective OCS will report on this goal in the 2017 APSR. 6/15/15

	permanency for children under the age of five through development of programming to meet the child's specific needs.	placed in a potentially permanent placement within 13 months of being in care.	<b>Permanency</b>	<p>data shows 337 children under age 5 have been in OOH care 13 months or longer. Of these, 271 (80%) are in a potentially permanent placement. This is an area of need identified in Alaska, this will be an area of focus in the coming year. OCS is developing a plan to realign positions to increase focus on timely permanency.</p> <p>Additionally, OCS is reviewing the accuracy of data related to timeliness of documenting the pre-adoptive homes. At this time, no specific data is being provided, as we are reviewing the policy and make changes in the documentation expectations for this data element.</p>
1.B.3	Increase timeliness of reunification and other permanency goals through implementation of alternative planning, transition planning, timely permanency goal setting and changing.	Case Review data will indicate a statewide achievement of 85% for Calendar year 2015, and 90% for Calendar year 2016 for Item 7 (Permanency Goal for Child)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Increase Timely Permanency</b></li> <li>• Reduce the number of children in foster/reduce caseloads</li> </ul>	<p>2015: A permanency conference facilitated by Facing Foster Care in Alaska, in collaboration with the OCS Independent Living Program staff. This conference focused on needs for older youth.</p> <p>Data from QA reviews utilize the old CFSR instrument . Of 100 cases reviewed for this item in CY 14, 66% were in compliance for item 8 (timeliness of reunification/guardianship). Of 102 cases reviewed for this item in CY 14, 61% were in compliance for item 9 (timeliness of adoption). Of 17 cases reviewed in CY 14, 100% were in compliance for item 10 (appla).</p> <p>This is an area of need identified in Alaska, this will be an area of focus in the coming year. OCS is developing a plan to realign positions to increase focus on timely permanency.</p>
1.B.4	Increase the quality and frequency of case worker visits with parents and children to promote progress towards case plan goals.	Monthly visit rate for children will be at 95% and for parents at 50% by June 2017.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease removals to foster care</li> <li>• Increase Reunification Rates</li> <li>• <b>Reduce Repeat Maltreatment</b></li> </ul>	2015 No work completed on this objective; OCS will report on this goal in the 2017 APSR. See monthly visit information provided in Section 7 of this report.
<b>1.C</b>	<b>Strategy: Resource Family Assessment and Support</b>			
	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Measure of Progress and Timeline</b>	<b>Projected Outcomes</b>	<b>Updates /Comments</b>
1.C.1	Improve timeliness, accuracy, and assessment of background check information for	Identify work group and develop an implementation work plan by October 2015.	<b>Improve safety in foster care settings and increase placement</b>	<p>2015 Information gathering has occurred with Foster Care Licensing Managers. Workgroup to be established.</p> <p>*This objective has been changed due to identified barriers to implementing a comprehensive</p>

	resource families (licensed and unlicensed).		<b>stability.</b>	Resource Family Assessment process. Through thorough assessment and background checks OCS intends to improve safety in foster care. The issue of background checks and assessment has been identified as a focus by our tribal and community partners through various meetings and discussions.
1.C.2	Support relative care givers to ensure placement stability by 6/30/2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore creating a “Resource Family Specialists” job class that would support both licensed and unlicensed caregivers.</li> <li>• Explore the development of flexible funding to allow for concrete supports in times of need, and other resources/services needed to stabilize the placement.</li> </ul>	<b>Increase placement stability and number of relative placements</b>	<p>2015 Community Care Licensing Specialist I (CCLS) position description (PD) updated. CCLS II and CCLS III PD’s will be updated.</p> <p>2015 Provider Payment Unit (PPU) Coordinator provided TA to 4 regional offices related to support and resources. PPU and Div. Public Assistance managers met to discuss support options for families.</p> <p>There are approximately 250 unlicensed relative caregivers in Alaska. Supporting these resource families will assist with increasing placement stability. This is an area of need identified in Alaska and will be an area of focus in the coming year. OCS is working to add additional positions to focus on resource family support and assessment.</p>
1.C.3	Develop a system for consumer input of youth ages 12-21 to assess concerns about placement disruptions and quality of care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In partnership with FFCA and RLS, develop a screening tool, policy and procedures related to placement disruptions by June 2015.</li> <li>• Fully implement the process by December 2015.</li> </ul>	<b>Increase placement stability</b>	2015 Minimal progress on this objective has been made. There have been collaborative discussions with youth and stakeholders, but the primary work will begin in Fall 2015. OCS will report on this goal in the 2017 APSR.

**Priority #2: Timely & Safe Permanent Homes for Children/Youth**

<b>2.A</b>	<b>Strategy: In-Home Services/Resource Linkages/Parent Support</b>			
	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Measure of Progress and Timeline</b>	<b>Projected Outcomes</b>	<b>Updates /Comments</b>
2.A.1	Develop and standardize a process for making and determining the right referrals are made to community services and families are assisted with initiating the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the participation/engagement of OCS referred clients in the Infant Learning Program (ILP) for children birth to age three with substantiated reports of harm by June 2019.</li> <li>• Develop and implement a tracking method to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance Community Partnerships</li> <li>• <b>Reduce Repeat Maltreatment</b></li> </ul>	<p>2015 No progress on this objective; OCS will report on this goal in the 2017 APSR. OCS is developing an easy to use list of services available in each community of the state. Barrier identified includes lack of feedback between CPS and ILP staff related to client referrals and follow through. Increased collaboration will be needed to impact this.</p> <p>*Timeline has been changed for this objective.</p>

	service if needed, regardless of whether a case is opened or closed.	monitor referrals by June 2016.  • Demonstrate incremental increases in number of referrals made annually by 2019.		
2.A.2	Standardize and enhance OCS's statewide in-home services model.	New in-home services model will be fully implemented with fidelity by December 2017. CQI data will indicate that in-home cases are appropriately identified and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease removals to foster care</li> <li>• Increase Reunification Rates</li> <li>• <b>Reduce Repeat Maltreatment</b></li> </ul>	2015 No progress on this objective. OCS will report on this goal in the 2017 APSR. OCS managers review in-home data on a regular basis. Other priority items such as administrative reviews and centralized intake have been the focus of OCS.
2.A.3	Establish a birth parent mentoring program to provide support to parents active in the OCS system.	Pre and post surveys of parents involved in the mentoring program for at least 90 days will indicate an improved understanding of the OCS system and increased confidence in their ability to self advocate and achieve case plan goals.	Increase Reunifications	2015 OCS continues to see the value of this as a way to engage parents. However, given other priorities, this objective is on hold until a later date.
<b>2.B</b>	<b>Strategy: Team Meeting Restructure</b>			
	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Measure of Progress and Timeline</b>	<b>Projected Outcomes</b>	<b>Updates /Comments</b>
2.B.1	Develop an effective, consistent structure for client team meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a work group with internal and external stakeholders to explore and identify needed changes and develop a work plan by December 2015.</li> <li>• Work plan will be fully implemented by June 2017.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Increase timely Permanency</b></li> <li>• Enhance Community Partnerships</li> </ul>	2015 This objective is on hold until 2.B.2 is completed.
2.B.2	Administrative Review process will be restructured and enhanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a work group with internal and external stakeholders to explore and identify needed changes and develop a work plan by June 30, 2015.</li> <li>• Work plan will be fully implemented by June</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Increase timely Permanency</b></li> <li>• Enhance Community Partnerships</li> </ul>	2015 OCS workgroup assessing the feasibility of court administered administrative reviews. A work plan has been developed. Additionally, OCS is reviewing the current process and exploring re-aligning positions to streamline the process.

		2017.		
<b>2.C</b>	<b>Strategy: Early Identification of Relatives</b>			
	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Measure of Progress and Timeline</b>	<b>Projected Outcomes</b>	<b>Updates /Comments</b>
2.C.1	Increase early identification of relatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By December 31, 2015 50% of children will have 2 relatives documented within 30 days of placement.</li> <li>By June 2016 80% of children will have 3 or more relatives documented within 60 days of removal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance Community Partnerships</li> <li><b>Increase Placement Stability</b></li> </ul>	<p>2015 pilot project in Western Alaska was completed. This pilot supported relatives in requesting placement of children in custody, and held OCS accountable to document the requests and make a decision about the request in a timely manner. The relative request process was updated in policy 3.5.4 and statewide training complete in June 2015.</p> <p>55% of children removed during CY14 for 30+ days had 2 or more relatives documented within 30 days. 45% of children removed during CY14 for 60+ days had 3 or more relatives documented within 60 days of removal</p>
<b>Priority #3: Continuous Quality Improvement</b>				
<b>3. A</b>	<b>Strategy: Implementation of the OCS CQI Plan</b>			
	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Measure of Progress and Timeline</b>	<b>Projected Outcomes</b>	<b>Updates /Comments</b>
3.A.1	Finalize the CQI Policy and Procedure Manual and raise internal and external awareness regarding CQI.	Manual will be finalized by June 30, 2015.	Enhance Community Partnerships	<p>2015 CQI Manual finalized and is attached.</p> <p>*Timeline was been changed for this objective.</p>
3.A.2	Regional and Statewide CQI teams will be fully implemented, including the institutionalization of a feedback loop between the Regional, Statewide and Director's Executive Team prior to the implementation of program changes.	A system for documenting, sharing and storing meeting notes/decisions is implemented by December 31, 2015.	Enhance Community Partnerships	<p>2015 Internal Statewide CQI team is fully implemented. This committee includes regional and statewide managers.</p> <p>*Timeline has been changed for this objective.</p>

	By June of 2016.			
3.A.3	Standardized data dashboards/higher quality and user-friendly reports/data will be developed and available for managers, CQI teams, external stakeholders and Tribal partners.	Dashboard is available on-demand in ORCA by December 31, 2015.	Enhance Community Partnership	2015 Meetings with OCS managers, tribal partners, and community stakeholders occurred to identify the needs and requirements. The Research Unit is in process of developing improved reports for OCS, stakeholders, and the general public.  *Timeline has been changed for this objective. To assist OCS in meeting requests from internal and external stakeholders regarding accessible data.
3.A.4	Integration of IV-E CQI with CPS CQI efforts will be initiated and enhanced through efforts to increase the visibility and significance of IV-E compliance with child welfare field staff.	Staff training post-tests will demonstrate a statewide competency level of 90% or higher with respect to understanding key concepts about IV-E eligibility by June 2015 and annually.	Increase IV-E compliance	2015 Online training provided to all OCS staff. This training is now included in the staff development plan for new employees.

## **SECTION 4: UPDATE ON SERVICE DESCRIPTION (TITLE IV-B SUBPARTS 1 AND 2)**

Services Array is the component of community-based services that OCS provides through professional services contracts or grants. The services are aimed at meeting the needs of children and families that come to the attention of the child protective services system, and to provide the necessary services and supports towards reunifying families. Funding from the Federal IV-B, 1 and 2, the Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP), the Chafee Foster Care Independent and Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program, the Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force Program and the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) are blended with state funds to support federal and state goals of service delivery and promote ongoing efforts to improve outcomes for children, youth and families served through Alaska's child welfare system. Service providers are located across Alaska and are provided by Tribal and non-Tribal entities.

The services supported through the Service Array Section continually adapt to changes in field practice, and are coordinated through ongoing dialogue and engagement with management in the five OCS regions. Additionally, other OCS collaborative efforts on statewide and regional levels ensure that available services through other federally funded programs, community-based public and private providers for programs such as substance abuse, domestic violence, and behavioral health ensure that families served in the state child welfare services receive priority services that meet their specific needs to achieve case plan goals. Alaska's community based services are an exercise in positive collaboration within communities. In order to aid children and families, OCS grantees must cultivate and utilize relationships with community resources from school districts, local non-profits and faith communities, as well as state agencies. These collaborations allow families to identify a safety net of resources to strengthen them, and protect children. Evidence of collaboration is required from grantees.

Alaska continues to explore other service options to meet the needs of children and families in the child welfare system. OCS is currently working on outlining all available services through OCS funded grants and contracts, including the communities they are available in. Additionally we work closely with other Department of Health and Social Service Divisions to identify areas of need or overlap. Due to the remoteness of Western Alaskan communities, OCS is working to increase available services in that region and we look forward to reporting on this in the coming year.

### **TITLE IV-B, PARTS 1 & 2**

All title IV-B funding received is awarded through grants and/or contracts managed through OCS. No Title IV-B II funding is allocated to support planning and service coordination. The following chart provides percentages of the breakdown of Title IV-B, subpart 2 funds in the allowable categories:

Service Type	Percent Allocated
Family Support	5%
Community Service Option 1 (FP)	25%
Community Service Option 2 (TLFR)	50%
Adoption Promotion	20%

The allocations of Title IV-B, subpart 2 funding to the respective categories is based on an analysis of utilization and service outputs in each service category; the blending of additional funding supporting each service priority; the availability of services in each category statewide; and the capacity of providers to deliver the services within each category. Based on utilization data from the previous five fiscal years, funding has been realigned to increase the services utilized most by children, youth and families.

The allocation of Title IV-B, subpart 2 funding to family support was reduced to 5% in 2013 due to an increase in the Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) funding, coupled with low utilization of the program

services. Information prior to 2013 has been difficult to locate and use in the report due to changes in reporting, the new accounting system, and staff turnover in our fiscal unit. To address the increased utilization of TLFR services, funding was shifted from the Family Support category to expand the resources available to support the ongoing growth in need and utilization of TLFR services. As the number of children in an out-of-home placement continues to increase, the need for increased TLFR services will continue. For this reason, OCS anticipates the funding percentages will remain consistent in the coming year. OCS has identified *resource linkages and parent support* as objectives in the plan for improvement.

OCS is collaborating to identify all services available through the agency and other divisions, along with the communities served by those services. After collection of information, an analysis will be completed to identify needs or gaps to assist in assessing new programs, services, and activities needed to meet the needs of children and families. Additionally the State has been working on service development in the Western Region, and is collaborating with community partners to improve available services in those communities (see page 35 for details about this work). Initially, progress will be measure by documentation of establishing additional programs or expanding programs. Long term, progress will be measured by client participation and data changes, such as reduction in repeat maltreatment rates.

### **Family Support Services (FSS)**

FSS are community-based services to promote the well-being of children and families and designed to increase the strength and stability of families, to increase the parents' competence in their parenting skills, to afford children a stable and supportive family environment, and otherwise to enhance child development (1993 OBRA Provisions, PL 10366). Each member of the family is considered when coordinating services, with special attention given to young children ages' birth to three years. The core services of the FSS include: Daily in-home support; facilitated access to resources; service coordination early childhood services, medical services, educational or employment services; parent education and support; transportation services

Families participating in FSS do not have an open child protection case. These services are designed for families who need support for basic needs and crisis stabilization. The families may be referred OCS case workers or by other service agencies, such as schools or early education programs, medical services, other community agencies, or may self-refer. In FFY 14, 213 families and 400 children were served by this program.

FSS Grantees report robust use of services. During the past year, training and technical assistance included quarterly newsletters, quarterly teleconferences, monthly "check in calls", and central office response to technical assistance requests. With the integration of the Strengthening Families program, we have documented an increase in parent engagement and program participation.

### **Community Based Support Services to Promote Safe Children, Strong Families**

These services are designed to serve families and children living in Alaska who are at risk of out-of-home placement and/or children who are in out-of-home placement needing services to reunify with their families. Family Preservation (FP) Services are provided to OCS involved families to prevent the removal of children to out of home settings and support the reunification process when children are returned home from an out of home placement. These services are provided to families with an open child protection case. In FFY 14, 91 families and 182 children were served by this program.

### **Time Limited Family Reunification (TLFR)**

These services are designed to provide ongoing family contact and transportation services for OCS involved families in the agency, home or community settings; and facilitate the reunification of the child with their biological parent(s). In FFY 14, 204 families and 282 children were served by this program.

### **Family Contact Services Center (FCSC)**

The FCSC services are designed to provide ongoing family contact and transportation services for OCS involved families needing higher levels of supervision in the agency setting; and facilitate the reunification of the child with their biological parents(s). Services are delivered in the home whenever possible and focus on engaging the family with both community and natural supports to enhance protective capacities and promote a safe environment. In FFY 14, 76 families and 169 children were served by this program.

### **Adoption Promotion and Support Services**

The Office of Children's Services continues to provide "Services for Adoption Support" through a grant with the ACRF. The grant was established to provide seamless continuation of support for adoptive and guardianship families of Alaska through pre- and post- adoption/guardianship services. This ongoing collaboration with ACRF provides for improved outcomes to children and families through the provision of services including: family preparation services, information and referral services, crisis intervention services, and case management services. The population served through this grant includes all families in Alaska who have adopted children through public and private adoptions. Services are available throughout the State of Alaska by face to face contacts, self-study courses, and telephone services. During the past year, services were provided through the grantee from July 1, 2014 through March 31, 2015.

Training and support were available in the follow formats:

- Face to face classes – 245 offered
- Self-study course – 1460 available
- Telephonic or webinar classes - 47 offered

The following family specific support services to adoptive and guardianship families:

- Recruitment services provided to 9 families
- Case management services provided to 85 families
- Resource referrals provided to 32 families
- Support services provided to 205 families

### **The Independent Living Program (ILP)**

OCS serves all Alaska youth ages 16 years and older who are eligible for the program. OCS has 594 eligible youth and includes in custody and out of custody youth. OCS partners with other State and community agencies to deliver services to youth. Increased efforts have been made to collaborate with the Office of Public Advocacy (OPA), to educate court appointed Guardians Ad Litem (GAL), and Court-Appointment Special Advocates (CASA) volunteers to better coordinate services during transition. The Independent Living Program hosted a focused discussion during the Independent Living Program Retreat in September 2014 to glean important input from other community providers and encourage increased communication and coordination of effort. The hope is that continued discussion and collaboration will reduce duplication of services and encourage ease of access for youth engaged in multiple services.

Partnerships continued with grantee and contracted providers in SFY 2015, adding additional resources to increase mentorship and permanency efforts and career preparation and support resources. Additional formalized agreements will be established with the DVR program in SFY 2016 to provide additional career navigation support and encourage greater retention of youth in career preparation services and career focused training programs. The IL Program manages five grants, contracts and provider agreements. Site visits with all five providers were completed for the purpose of gathering information and offering technical assistance to promote further service outputs. The visits were focused on reviewing program achievements and gathering information about agency staff and their facilities. Technical assistance was provided to the following during site visits:

- Covenant House Alaska – multiple visits conducted. Grantee transferred to Section in 2014. Discussed with agency the continued flat funding in spite of the increase in number of youth served and the increased length of stay. Discussed added services and negotiated realistic costs to provide services. Plans to increase grant award and include training funds for Child Sex Trafficking;
- Facing Foster Care in Alaska – quarterly OCS/FFCA Leadership meetings and FFCA facilitated retreats. Contractor to provide Leadership Skill Building and Transition Services to youth in care. Continued meetings with FFCA and OCS leadership to identify and work on common goals. Collaborative agenda development for retreats hosted by the contractor. Focus on permanency for older youth in 2016;
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters – multiple visits conducted. Grantee provides Mentorship for Independent Living Services in multiple OCS service regions. Provided assistance, redirection and plan of correction in 2015, allowing flexibility with budgeting to work through challenges with meeting the program goals;
- Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) – multiple phone and in-person visits conducted. Worked to develop stronger communication protocol between referring OCS staff and AHFC staff in Anchorage and more frequent oversight and support for youth in Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) housing; and
- University of Alaska (UAA) Child Welfare Academy (CWA) – multiple visits conducted. Reviewed program and discussed distribution of resources to youth enrolled in the program. Continued planning around outreach and the format for the annual educational conference.

## **OTHER SERVICES**

### **Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention**

The CBCAP and IV-B grant funded programs continue to be managed by a single program coordinator. This year a continued focus was participation in the statewide prevention team, and the integration of trauma informed practices throughout the programs. The statewide prevention effort included participants from many disciplines including educators, law enforcement, early childhood providers, mental health agencies, court representatives, juvenile justice, the Alaska Children’s Trust, and the state CBCAP lead and the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Program Officer. Several training opportunities were provided to grant funded programs in FY15:

- Training for all community in-home grantees included an abbreviated version of “SKILS”, which is the training provided to all new OCS workers;
- Training in offering services to disabled parents;
- Training in interface with GEMS, our new electronic grant management system was offered to all grantees at a two and a half -day training even held in Anchorage;
- Grantees were encouraged to attend the child maltreatment.

### **Rural Child Welfare Services**

Because of the high number of Alaska Native/American Indian children involved in the OCS system, and because young Alaskan Native children are the population at greatest risk in Alaska, there is a critical need for OCS to provide culturally relevant services that are available to meet the needs of families in remote areas. In many of these areas, OCS must serve clients remotely and/or does not have a stable workforce to provide the close monitoring and support necessary to adequately meet the legal mandates needed to serve Alaskan Native families. The Rural Child Welfare grant program utilizes state general funds to fund service providers with a demonstrated understanding of the ICWA, and an existing infrastructure in remote/local settings to provide culturally relevant, intensive case management services. This program is designed to provide services to children and families living in rural Alaska who are at risk for out-of-home placement, and children who have been removed from their home setting. In FFY 14, 100 families were served by this program.

## Western Region Support Development and Recruitment

This workgroup is a new collaborative effort beginning in early 2014 but has continued through the past year. OCS partners with Western Region tribal partners, Yukon- Kuskokwim Health Corporation, Alaska Child and Family, and the Division of Behavioral Health to improve and increase the therapeutic foster care services available to children in custody. The focus is on development of services in the Western Region to allow children to remain in their home region. The workgroup has focused on foster care recruitment, emergency shelter home development, and exploration of more available services for children and youth with high needs.

### POPULATION AT GREATEST RISK OF MALTREATMENT

Alaska Native children (birth to 18 years) are the subject of a disproportionate number of child abuse reports, substantiated reports of abuse/neglect and custody/placements into foster care. For this reason, OCS dedicates a significant amount of time and resources targeted at nurturing relationships with tribal partners and purchase of culturally appropriate services in the continuing efforts to reduce disproportionality and disparity of Alaska Native children and families who are involved in OCS services.

More specifically, OCS has determined that Alaska Native children, age birth to five years, are the population at greatest risk of maltreatment. Alaska Native children ages birth to five years makes up 8.3% of the general population of children in Alaska. However, this population makes up 30.6% of the substantiated protective services reports and 31.1% of substantiated abuse and neglect allegations. With the new process of determining maltreatment findings implemented in February 2015, we anticipate an increase in substantiated findings statewide, but expect an increase in the consistency of decision making. Through the Child and Family Services Plan priorities and strategies, OCS will be working on activities to target services to improving outcomes for this specific population. See the chart on the next page.

2014 Maltreatment Data				
Age Range	Child Race	% Alaska Children Under Age 18	% Substantiated Children	% Maltreated
Ages 0-5	Native	8.3%	31.1%	3.8%
Ages 0-5	Non-Native	26.6%	12.7%	0.5%
Ages 6-10	Native	6.4%	21.0%	3.4%
Ages 6-10	Non-Native	21.5%	9.5%	0.5%
Ages 11-15	Native	6.2%	13.9%	2.3%
Ages 11-15	Non-Native	20.6%	6.3%	0.3%
Ages 16-17	Native	2.4%	4.3%	1.9%
Ages 16-17	Non-Native	8.0%	1.1%	0.1%

Source: State of Alaska Online Resources for Children in Alaska (ORCA) and State of Alaska Department of Labor 2013 Population Estimates

### SERVICES FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF FIVE

A variety of services are available to provide support and services to children under five years of age. OCS has identified specific objectives in the CFSP Plan for Improvement to improve outcomes for this group of children. OCS has capitalized on opportunities to facilitate focus groups with OCS managers, tribal partners, and Department of Law representatives to brainstorm ideas to enhance and support services for this population. In the coming year, OCS will be developing a plan to increase participation and engagement in the Infant Learning Program by children in custody, age birth to three years. This will be done by increased communication between OCS CPS and ILP staff. Additionally, OCS is reviewing the accuracy of data related to timeliness of documenting the pre-adoptive homes.

At this time, no specific data is being provided, as we are reviewing the policy and make changes in the documentation expectations for this data element.

In the last year, OCS management initiated two processes to improve monitoring of cases involving children under the age of five:

1. The “Hot for Permanency” project: statewide managers utilized data to identify children in care more than 24 months, then reviewed each case to assist in facilitating the actions needed to achieve permanency and to develop greater understanding of the systematic factors contributing to the delay in permanency; and
2. Regional management reviews information regarding high risk infants who have been the subject of a new protective services report and are living in a household which has had significant child welfare history. The managers monitor the report weekly to ensure timely and accurate assessment and service provision.

OCS has identified permanency for children under the age of five as a primary objective in the CFSP. Although minimal progress has been made towards this goal, it is expected to be an area of focus in the coming year. The 2017 APSR will include data and updates on progress, including strategies and barriers identified. OCS is currently exploring staff available to focus on permanency issues for children, through re-alignment of duties.

Through the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems program, OCS has a multitude of services and collaboration efforts to improve outcomes for children under the age of five. Although there are many services and activities happening through this program, the agency has not consistently had data to demonstrate the effect the services have had on child safety for children and families involved with child protection services. OCS has identified an area of need to include improved collaboration with our ECCS program (plan for improvement 2.A.1). It is anticipated that the next submission of this report will include data specific to the activities and outcomes of the services provided, specific to children involved in the child protection system. The following list includes collaborative efforts focused on improving services and outcomes for children ages zero to five:

- **Alaska Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems**

The Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Program Officer partnered with the Alaska Mental Health Board to make several presentations at conferences regarding early brain development, the impacts of toxic stress, and data regarding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in Alaska. Training was provided at nine conferences/meetings including: All Alaska Pediatric Partnership Conference; Homer Early Childhood Coalition Annual Meeting; Alaska Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention Summit; and Juneau Suicide Prevention Coalition Conference.

The ECCS continued to fund thread the Child Care Resource and Referral agency to provide training and technical assistance to early childhood programs regarding the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Approach. Additional presentations were made to: Alaska Resiliency Coaches, Alaska Children’s Trust; Regional Meeting for Community Teams (Nome); and Anchorage Early Childhood Protective Services Collaborative. The ECCS program has collaborated with the Division of Behavioral Health to develop more appropriate tools for young children: Client Status Review Instrument and Alaska Screening Tool

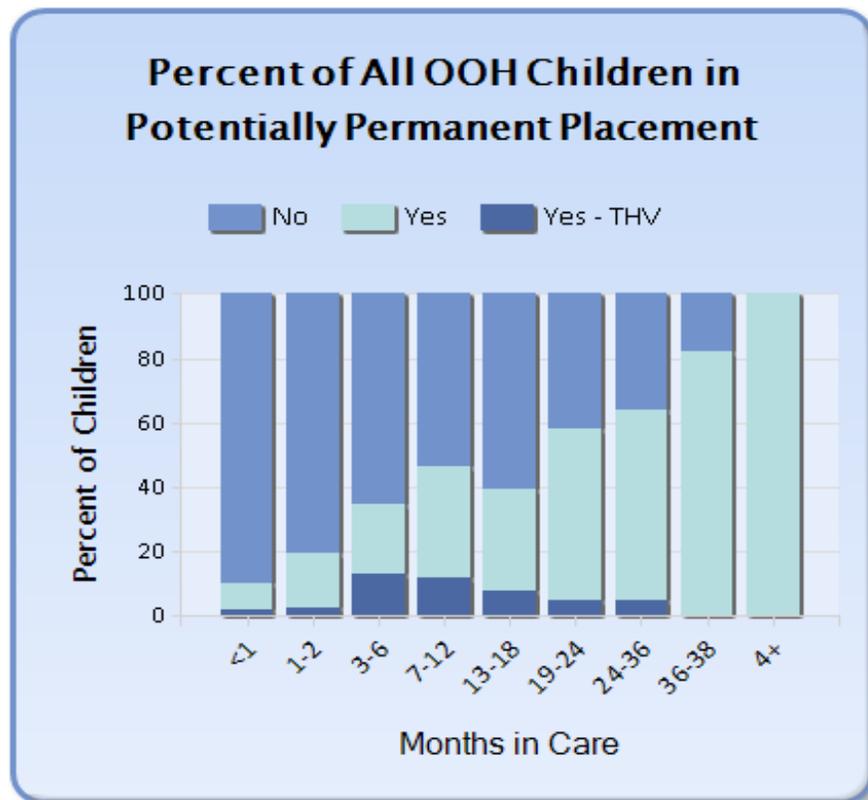
- **Strengthening Families Leadership Team**

In FY 2015, Strengthening Families began a new effort to reach rural communities and programs. Training was hosted in Nome, Alaska and 6 communities sent teams for training. The community teams followed-up the training with “mini-grant” proposals for bringing this approach to their communities. They are now receiving technical assistance a support for implementing this approach. In FY 2016 efforts will be expanded to the communities in western Alaska.

- **Early Childhood Mental Health Conference**

The Early Childhood Mental Health Network hosted the annual Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Institute. Over 250 participants attended this year’s conference which was focused on early childhood trauma and appropriate interventions.

OCS understands that timely identification of relatives is a key strategy in enhancing permanency for all children, including those under the age of five. As of September 2015, OCS had 1047 children under the age of five in custody; this is a significant increase from last year when OCS reported 726 children in this age group. The tables below provide details about the children, and identifies the number and percentage in an identified permanent placement. A lower percentage of children under five are in permanent placements, from 57% last year to 40.97% this year. This data supports the ongoing need to address timely permanency plans for children and youth, and supports objective 1.B.2. OCS is looking at realignment of duties for specialty staff, to allow for a focus on the permanency of children under age 5, and intends to show improvements in this data in the next year.



Source: State of Alaska Online Resources for Children in Alaska (ORCA) Report Perm. Status of OOH Children Under 5 (RR00138)

<b>Count of Potentially Permanent Placements</b>										
Months/Years in Care	< 1 month	1-2 months	3-6 months	7-12 months	13-18 months	19-24 months	24-36 months	36 – 48 months	48 + months	Grand Total
In Permanent Placement	5	24	78	128	69	60	55	9	1	429
Not in Permanent Placement	44	98	146	149	105	43	31	2	0	618
% in Permanent Placement	10.20%	19.67%	34.82%	46.21%	39.66%	58.25%	63.95%	81.82%	100%	40.97%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1047</b>

Source: State of Alaska Online Resources for Children in Alaska (ORCA) Report Perm. Status of OOH Children Under 5 (RR00138)

## **SERVICES FOR CHILDREN ADOPTED FROM OTHER COUNTRIES**

Services for adoption support are provided through a grantee. The grant specifically states that support services are crucial to ensuring the continued success of families who have adopted through private or international adoptions. For this reason, the grantee is required to provide support services for all adoptive and guardianship families, regardless of the how the adoption was finalized, so that children do not enter the public foster care system from a failed private or international adoption.

## **SECTION 5: PROGRAM SUPPORT**

### **TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Alaska did not receive training and technical assistance in the past year. OCS is scheduled for technical assistance in July 2015 to enhance knowledge and skills related to the CFSR and use of the Online Management System.

In the past year, the OCS provided technical assistance to many community partners that receive state and federal funds to help OCS achieve the CFSP goals. This technical assistance was provided in a variety of ways including teleconferences, emails, site visits and site reviews. The following programs received site visits and site reviews:

- Women in Safe Homes, Ketchikan
- Frontier Community Services, Soldotna
- Catholic Community Services, Juneau
- Sprouts, Homer
- Kawerak Child Advocacy Center, Nome
- Alaska Center for Children and Adults, Fairbanks
- Health Care Services Background Program
- DHSS Barrier Crimes Variance Committee
- Division of Senior and Disability Services
- Resource Family Advisory Board
- Alaska Center for Resource Families
- Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
- Bering Sea Women's Group
- Tundra Women's Coalition
- Kodiak Multi Disciplinary Team (KANA)
- Fairbanks Multi Disciplinary Team (RCPC)

### **RESEARCH AND EVALUATION**

In the SFY 15 the OCS Research Unit continued efforts to modernize OCS reports and reporting needs by converting from SAS to SQL. This was the second year of submissions for both AFCARS and NCANDS reports using the new SQL code. OCS is currently working with the Federal partners in a AFCARS Assessment Review of the new code. The Research Unit is in the process of updating the monthly web reports; draft reports are ready for testing and OCS management feedback. Efforts continue with providing "real time" data to OCS workers in the form of on-demand report. Data summits were held to solicit input regarding data needs from both OCS Management and Tribal Partners. In the past year, the Research Unit has published 34 new reports that are available to OCS staff on the intranet to assist them with prioritizing workload and meeting State and Federal standards. Additionally, the Research Unit has responded to over 175 data requests from internal and external customers including: OCS Management, State Legislature, other State agencies, the media, and other public and private users.

## **SECTION 6: CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION BETWEEN STATES AND TRIBES**

The partnership with OCS and Alaska Tribes is essential to the safety, permanency, and well being of children and families. Additionally, on April 15, 2015 an emergency regulation was issued regarding petitions for adoption in ICWA cases. This regulation provides enhanced opportunities for relatives and tribal members to adopt and reduces barriers in ICWA cases. OCS management is working diligently to get information and guidance to OCS staff and tribes regarding this regulation change. The link to OCS' APSR will be sent to tribal partners on July 1, 2015, after submission of the document.

### **GATHERING INPUT FROM TRIBES**

OCS has policy in place to address the responsibility for child welfare services and inclusion of tribal partners in Initial Assessments, case reviews, and case planning activities. Tribal representatives participate on the OCS policy development workgroup, the Executive Steering Committee, and have been included in planning to meet the requirements of Public Law 113-183. OCS data experts joined tribal partners in May 2015 to identify areas that can be enhanced or clarified to allow easy access to ongoing information from the ORCA system regarding child welfare outcomes.

Input from tribal partners was gathered in development of the CFSP and APSR. Documentation of involvement is provided earlier in this report. OCS works closely with the Tribal State Advisory Team (TSAT) and Tribal State Collaboration Group. The ongoing partnership with these groups has assisted OCS in identifying areas of need and developing plans to improve services in the state of Alaska. Through regularly scheduled meetings, occurring three times a year, the TSCG has been a forum to discuss the state compliance with ICWA, services related to permanency planning for tribal children, and independent living programs and services. Current efforts include CASEY recruitment programs in each of the regions, support for tribes receiving Title IV-E administrative funds, ongoing collaboration to support the Title IV-E maintenance with TCC, and changes to enhance information sharing between the state and tribal partners.

The Tribal Partners that participate in TSAT are:

- Lou Johnson, BBNA
- Mary Johnson, TCC
- Francine Eddy Jones, CCTHITA
- Cheryl Offt, AVCP
- Ozzy Escarate, APIA

The Tribal Partners that participate in TSCG are:

- Aleut Community of St. Paul Island
- Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association (APIA)
- Arctic Slope Native Association (ASNA)
- Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP)
- Bristol Bay Native Association
- Cheeshna Tribe
- Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes (CCTHITA)
- Chickaloon
- Chugachmiut
- Copper River Native Association (CRNA)
- Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC)
- Kawerak, Inc.
- Kenaitze Indian Tribe
- Ketchikan Indian Corporation (KIC)
- Knik Tribe
- Kodiak Area Native Association (KANA)
- Kwigillingok
- Maniilaq Association
- Metlakatla Indian Community
- Native Village of Barrow
- Native Village of Kotzebue
- Nome Eskimo Community
- Ninilchik Tribe

- Orutsararmuit Native Council (ONC)
- Sitka Tribe of Alaska (STA)
- Sun’aq Tribe of Kodiak
- Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC)

**ONGOING COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION WITH TRIBES**

OCS will continue all collaborative effort listed above. Additionally in the coming year quarterly teleconferences specific to the CFSP will be available to gather input and assistance from our tribal partners. A detailed list of activities to continue collaboration and coordination with tribes regarding child welfare programs, enhance tribal and state relations, reduce disproportionality and increase ICWA compliance is included in the chart below.

**UPDATE ON ARRANGEMENTS WITH TRIBES WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILD WELFARE SERVICES**

Information is provided below regarding updates related to tribal services and collaboration with OCS. Over the past year, OCS received permission to expand the Tribal Title IV-E maintenance pass-through agreement with additional tribes: OCS currently in negotiations with Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska. OCS is working closely with DOL and tribal partners to improve information sharing with tribes. OCS will be exploring the option of including a tribal representative on general variance committees for licensed foster care providers, and looks forward to reporting more details on this proposed change next year.

<b>Enhance Tribal and State Relations, Cultural Humility, Increase ICWA Compliance</b>	
<b>A. Goal: Promote positive state and tribal collaboration relations, build tribal capacity, reduce disproportionality and increase ICWA compliance.</b>	
<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Annual Update (includes date completed)</b>
4.A.1 Continue to meet with Tribal State Collaboration Group (TSCG) 3 times per year.	2015: Meetings held February 4-6 2014; May 6-8 2014; Nov. 4-6 2014; and May 7 2015. The TSCG participated in an Undoing Racism workshop Feb. 3-5, 2015. In the past year, Tribal State Collaborations restructured to allow for regional TS meetings.
4.A.2 OCS will engage in mutual updates on the CFSP with Tribal partners across the state.	2015: The CFSP/APSR was discussed at the May 2015 Tribal State meeting. Opportunities to provide feedback were provided at May teleconferences.
4.A.3 OCS Leadership will support the development and sustainability of Regional Disproportionality Teams.	2015: Regional TS meetings provide the opportunity for Regional Disproportionality Teams to become an ongoing workgroup, in which Tribes, OCS, and community partners will collaborate.
4.A.4 OCS will work with tribes across the state to strengthen relationships, coordinate services and explore opportunities to engage in authentic partnerships.	2015: OCS invites Tribal partners to trainings, provides Rural Child Welfare grants to 5 Tribal grantees, and has participated in the development of Title IV-E maintenance agreements with two Tribal consortia’s.
4.A.5 Continue Tribal State Co-Chair meetings on a bi-monthly basis.	2015: TSCG Co-Chairs met twice a month until January 2015. This group is now the Tribal State Advisory Team (TSAT) which meets once a month. Face-to-face meetings were held in January and March 2015.

4.A.6 Explore and adopt new strategies for communicating and engaging with tribes that are currently not attending TSCG.	2015: With the restructure of TSCG, the focus is for more tribes to participate in regional TS meetings which will improve the communication regionally and statewide.
4.A.7 Increase number of Tribal Title IV-E Agreements with Tribes/Tribal Organizations	2015: All IV-B Tribes were invited to the Tribal IV-E meeting to become familiar with the requirements. Technical assistance regarding Tribal Title IV-E maintenance pass-through was offered to Ketchikan Indian Community and St. Paul Island for their pursuit of direct funding.
4.A.8 Continue to provide technical assistance and support to Tribes/Tribal Organizations who access Title IV-E funding to provide child welfare related services to children that qualify under the Indian Child Welfare Act.	2015: Technical assistance was provided by telephone and email communication. In the past year, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association received a site review. All tribes were invited to a training summit in November 2014 and a meeting and training in May 2015.
4.A.9 Work with tribes to assess readiness, and develop the needed infrastructure necessary to expand and increase the number of Title IV-E Maintenance Agreements.	2015: Over the past year, OCS received permission to expand the Tribal Title IV-E maintenance pass-through agreement with additional tribes: OCS currently in negotiations with Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska.
4.A.10 Provide information regarding how tribes can access Chafee funding for tribal youth in tribal custody on an annual basis via various modalities. This will include consultation with tribes regarding determining eligibility for benefits and services to ensure fair and equitable treatment for Indian youth under Chafee Foster Care.	2015: The Independent Living Program’s quarterly teleconference to discuss the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act Funding and the Education Training Voucher program specifically targeting to the tribes of Alaska. The Statewide Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Coordinator and the Independent Living Program Coordinator sent out invitations via e-mail, fax, word of mouth, and by mail. A packet designed for youth in tribal custody is available to Tribes requesting assistance with Chafee funding or the ETV program. The Independent Living Program has goals to include tribes in the permanency summit for older youth in the leadership retreat planning sessions this coming year.
4.A.11 Develop policy and procedures to prioritize, standardize and streamline the referral process for OCS clients to receive tribal in-home and case management services where available.	2015: OCS staff was trained on how to make referrals to Rural Child Welfare Services Program in their area.
4.A.12 Continue to promote cooperation and collaboration on case-related matters and sharing reciprocal information through full implementation of the Tribal Confidentiality Agreements.	2015: Department of Law and Alaska Legal Services developed “frequently asked questions” regarding information sharing. Training was provided during May’s TSCG meeting. OCS’ policy and matrix along with a 2 page consolidated FAQs are currently being developed.
4.A.13 Work with ORCA Project Manager to determine feasibility of providing tribes access to AK OCS ORCA.	2015: ORCA reports and data are available to Tribes with a maintenance agreement.
4.A.14 Conduct critical review of 20 year old Tribal State ICWA Agreement.	2015: Will be reviewed in the coming year.

4.A.15 Develop ICWA Reference Guides for everyday use by state and tribal workers.	2015: Will be reviewed by Tribal State Advisory Team in the coming year to determine if action is needed.
4.A.16 Keep OCS ICWA webpage updated to allow easy access to all pertinent TSCG efforts and ICWA information.	2015: New confidentiality agreements are posted when received. The web page will be updated in 2015.
4.A.17 Continue to seek tribal participation in on-site QA reviews and other CQI related activities.	2015: Two tribal partners will participate in November 2015 Title IV-E review. During OCS quality assurance reviews, if a Native child is identified; reviewers make efforts to contact and interview the tribe.
4.A.18 Conduct ongoing OCS ICWA team teleconferences, which includes the tribes and others as needed.	2015: OCS ICWA Specialists have monthly teleconferences. Topics over the last year included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out-of-preference placement reviews, documentation, and providing Tribes with the placement preference level of their Tribal children in custody</li> <li>• Maintaining and updating Tribal providers, the list of tribes and affiliated agencies in ORCA;</li> <li>• Preparing ICWA presentations and speaking at conferences</li> <li>• How to process placement and adoption requests and educate staff regarding relative searches;</li> <li>• Development and delivery of consistent ICWA training regionally, tracking, and co-facilitating with tribal partners.</li> </ul>
4.A.19 Ensure placement preference data for Native children entered in ORCA is accurate.	2015: Over 95% of records have a placement preference. ORCA is being modified to ensure a higher level of accuracy in preferences.
4.A.20 Increase placement preferences for Native children in out of home care.	2015: 41.7% of Native children are in relative placements. Over the last year efforts were made to address out-of-preference reviews in Administrative Reviews and Team Decision Making Meetings. The WRO pilot project has been expanded to all Tribes being able to notify OCS when a relative requests immediate placement of a child. In June 2015 staff received training on how to document and process placement requests.
4.A.21 Increase number of licensed Native foster homes and implement a process for verifying that foster parents are Native.	2015: As of 12/31/14, OCS had 333 Native Foster Homes out of 1022. Regional recruitment and retention teams have a goal to recruit Alaska Native foster homes. OCS licensing unit has developed and implemented a consistent method to document and track Resource Families who may be an ICWA placement preference.
4.A.22 Provide on-going ORCA data as requested by tribes.	2015: OCS ORCA team met with Tribal IV-E and Title IV-B tribes to discuss data needs. The OCS Research Unit will be making changes to the reports available on the state web page. Annually data is prepared for the TSAT to review disparate data for Native and Non-native children.
4.A.23 Support ICWA related training including	2015: Tribal Title IV-E Partners meet in May 2014, Nov. 2014,

<p>KWYA, through grants, Title IV-E, and the Child Welfare Academy.</p>	<p>and May 2015 for a two day training summit. Support is provided as needed, examples include caseworker visit and case planning training by CWA and TCC staff, and RCW grantee training co-facilitated by CWA and OCS. Knowing Who You Are workshops were offered 15 times in the past year, and training for new KWYA facilitator candidates also occurred. The Regional ICWA Specialists conduct ICWA trainings with Tribal partners. The Child Welfare Academy supports these trainings by sending invites out to participants and tracking attendance and feedback.</p>
<p>4.A.24 Ensure tribes are notified of their right to intervene in State proceedings, or to seek transfer of the proceedings to the jurisdiction of the tribe.</p>	<p>2015: Notification of a tribe's rights is in the ICWA notice sent to the identified tribes. According to data listed in 4.A.26, notices are being sent over 90% of the time</p>
<p>4.A.25 Ensure/increase the notification of Indian Parents and Tribes of State proceedings involving Indian children and their right to intervene.</p>	<p>2015: The initial plan to notify DOL is currently in place. OCS continues to maintain well over 90% compliance. The DOL continues to notify Indian parents and tribes of State proceedings involving Indian children with a highly level of consistency.</p>
<p>4.A.26 Increase active efforts through the use of in-home services to prevent the breakup of the Indian family when parties seek to place a child in foster care.</p>	<p>2015: Several regions have In-Home Family Services units. Rural Child Welfare grantees also provide in-home services to families.</p>
<p>4.A.27 Provide capacity building support to regional disproportionality teams to develop child protection teams in rural communities.</p>	<p>2015: OCS has been working with Association of Village Council Presidents to develop and implement a project in which Rural ICWA workers OCS by conducting monthly quality caseworker visits, this pilot project is still in the development phase.</p>

## **SECTION 7: ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS:**

### **MONTHLY CASEWORKER VISIT FORMULA GRANT**

Alaska received a total of \$34,862 in Title IV-B, subpart 2 funding for FFY14 to support monthly caseworker visits with children in foster care. The funds were used to pay the travel costs associated with monthly caseworker sites in remote locations in the Northern Region. OCS intends to continue to use funds in a similar way in the coming year.

OCS continues to be out of compliance with the overall target percentage goal for annual case worker visits with children. However, 83% is an increase from the previous year's data (2013 was 80%). The percent of children visited in their home, at 69%, exceeds the 50% federal standard. Managers and supervisors continue to have access to a weekly ORCA report which provides an up-to-date status, by worker, regarding how many visits have been made thus far in the month. Case worker visits with children continue to be a primary agency focus and we anticipate a continued progress towards making the target goal. The following chart documents the FFY 14 case worker visit data:

<b>Region</b>	<b>% of visits made on a monthly basis by caseworkers to children in foster care</b>	<b>% of visits that occurred in the residence of the child</b>
<b>Anchorage</b>	87%	68%
<b>Northern</b>	81%	65%
<b>Southcentral</b>	82%	75%
<b>Southeast</b>	91%	67%
<b>Western</b>	58%	57%
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>69%</b>

Source: State of Alaska Online Resources for Children in Alaska (ORCA) Report Monthly Caseworker Visits RR00124

### **ADOPTION AND LEGAL GUARDIANSHIP INCENTIVE PAYMENT**

In FFY14, The State of Alaska received \$620,000 in Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payment. OCS has until 9/30/2017 to expend these funds. With the extended time frame allowed under Public Law 113-183, OCS does not anticipate challenges in utilizing these funds. As in previous years, Alaska Office of Children's Services elects to use these funds to:

- Support grants that aid children in achieving permanency through timely completion of adoption and guardianship home studies.
- Support services to pre- and post-adoptive families, through the provision of adoption support services.

### **CHILD WELFARE DEMONSTRATION ACTIVITIES – Not applicable for Alaska**

### **PREVENTING SEX TRAFFICKING AND STRENGTHENING FAMILIES ACT OF 2014 (P.L. 113-183)**

On September 29, 2014, the President signed into law P.L. 113-183. This law amended Title IV-B and Title IV-E plan requirements. OCS has complied with the requirements that were effective upon enactment; and is actively working on requirements due in the coming year, and expects to submit all necessary documentation on time.

The Title IV-E State Plan amendment was submitted January 20, 2015; the plan was approved by Administration of Children and Families (ACF). OCS complied with recommendations from ACYF-CB-IM-14-03 and ACYF-CB-PI-14-06, and submitted necessary documentation regarding:

- Relative notification
- Sibling definition
- Successor guardians

The Title IV-E State Plan amendment will be submitted September 29, 2015. OCS is intending to comply with all recommendations from ACYF-CB-IM-14-03 and ACYF-CB-PI-14-06, and will submitted necessary documentation regarding our collaboration, policy development, and training related to:

- Section 101 – identifying, documenting, and determining services for children and youth at risk of sex trafficking
- Section 102 – reporting instances of sex trafficking
- Section 104 – locating and responding to children who run away from foster care
- Section 111 – supporting normalcy for children in foster care
- Section 112 – improving case review system and APPLA as a permanency option
- Section 113 – empowering youth ages 14 and older
- Section 114 – ensuring foster children have needed documentation when they exit care.

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

### **Assess the State's Current QA/CQI System**

The Quality Assurance case review and CQI system at OCS are described in detail earlier. OCS has a strong QA system and case reviews are found to be accurate and align with data collected through SACWIS. The case reviews encompass a careful review of safety, permanency, and well being using the 18 item instrument. Each field office (25) is reviewed at least annually with the largest metropolitan field office reviewed twice yearly. The review includes case files of children served by the agency under the title IV-B and IV-E plans and interviewing parties in the cases.

OCS has developed a CQI committee and desk manual to guide the committee in their work. This committee is in the development phase and will be working to identify how the data used will drive system change in the agency. The inclusion of regional and statewide managers, as well as commitment to monthly meetings is an improvement in Alaska's practice related to CQI.

### **Training and Technical Assistancess Needs**

OCS has received training and technical assistance related to the OMS from the Children's Bureau and Region X. In preparation for the 2017 CFSR, it is anticipated that technical assistance will be needed from the Children's Bureau to assist in preparation for the upcoming review, use of the review instrument, and ongoing assessment of the OCS CQI process. Statewide and regional managers and staff receive information about the case reviews, and have field office improvement plans which address areas of need identified through the case review process.

### **How Has QA/CQI Data Been Used To Update Goals and Objectives**

QA data supports the need for the identified strategies regarding repeat maltreatment, placement stability, and permanency planning. Please see the plan for improvement for more details.

### **Describe the State's Current Case Review Instrument**

OCS will undergo a CFSR in July 2017. The OCS case review system uses the CFSR instrument. OCS began using the federal Online Management System in March 2015.

## **SECTION 8: CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT ACT REQUIREMENTS**

### **CAPTA REQUIREMENTS**

#### **Describe Substantive Changes to State Law or Regulations**

There have been no changes in the state laws or regulations related to the prevention of child abuse and neglect that affect the state's eligibility for the CAPTA state grant.

#### **Describe Any Significant Changes from the State's Previously Approve CAPTA Plan**

There have been no significant changes in the states approved CAPTA plan related to how funds are used to support the program areas. In 2013 the Service Array Section entered into a collaborative with the Department of Law; the UAA Child Welfare Academy; the Department of Public Safety; local community law enforcement agencies; and the Alaska Children's Alliance to implement the ChildFirst Alaska Project. ChildFirst is a trademarked training program that was initially developed by the National Child Protection Training Center (NCPTC) in partnership with CornerHouse in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The adaptable curriculum that can be modified and utilized by states who are working to develop their own nationally certified training programs. ChildFirst Alaska was certified by the NCPTC in 2014.

Several years of preparatory work lead up to the roll-out of the first trainings on the new ChildFirst Alaska forensic interview training model. The trainings in year one resulted in the certification of nine (9) certified ChildFirst Alaska faculties, who provided ongoing training in Anchorage in 2013, expanding to Anchorage and Fairbanks in 2014 and will continue training in both areas in 2015.

#### **Describe How CAPTA State Grant Funds Were Used**

In the past year, CAPTA funding has been designated to support the implementation and ongoing delivery of the ChildFirst Alaska training for OCS staff, other Department staff, and community partners involved in the response to child sexual and physical abuse. Funding was used to support the project in multiple areas:

- a. ChildFirst Alaska Project Coordination: contracts with the UAA Child Welfare Academy and the Alaska Children's Alliance to support coordination efforts of the project and strategic planning by the ChildFirst Alaska Leadership Team activities;
- b. OCS and other Department Staff Participation in ChildFirst Training: direct funding for costs associated with OCS staff participation in the ChildFirst training. It is expected that all OCS staff receive training in forensic interviewing within the first 12 months of employment. Funding also supported participation of Department of Law and Department of Public Safety staff, as well as local law enforcement and other MDT member training; and
- c. Resource Development of ChildFirst Materials: funding to support the development of a web portal and tools for staff implementing the ChildFirst Alaska training protocol.

It is expected that this new model of forensic interviewing will provide a common language and standard across the system and promote an increased rate of prosecution of offenders.

In FY 16, CAPTA funds will be used to support additional grants and contacted services in state. The services will provide direct support to children and families through the following programs:

- Resource Family Training – provides training and instruction to resource families caring for children in OCS custody;
- Emergency Shelter Services for Youth – shelter and transition services for youth in or out of OCS custody. Provides shelter, employment preparation, and counseling services;
- Family Support Services – primary preventative services to reduce risk to families and children by assisting with basic needs and resources and referral; and

- Visitation and Skill Building for OCS involved families – home visitation and parenting education for families with OCS involvement or identified as at risk. Services are isolated to the Cordova area, where OCS does not have a local office or worker in the community.

Providers of these and other OCS funded grantees, contractors and partners will also receive training and technical assistance supported by CAPTA funding.

**Submit a Copy of the Annual Report from the CRP**

A copy of Alaska’s Citizen Review Panel annual report and OCS’ response to the report are submitted as an appendix to this report.

**WORKFORCE INFORMATION AND CAPTA DATA REPORT REQUIREMENTS**

**Education, Qualifications, and Training Requirements**

The OCS continues to contract with the Child Welfare Academy (CWA) to provide new staff training, called SKILS. The CWA provides core training to front line staff, social services associates and supervisors. Online training modules and webinars are offered in addition to classroom training. New workers are required to complete a Staff Development Plan that entails 6 months of required activities/events to further the staffs’ orientation to the OCS (see Appendix B). OCS does not require a minimum number of continuing education hours be required each year, instead when training is needed it is provided in a variety of ways including mandatory staff training. Job descriptions, including education and qualifications, have not changed since submitted last year.

**Demographic Information on Child Protection Service Personnel**

The OCS does not have data related to education and salaries of personnel at the time of hire. Human Resource information is maintained by the Department of Personnel (DOP) and additional information is not available. Prior to the next submission of this report, OCS will explore, through consultation with the DOP, the possibility of collecting additional data to include in reports to provide additional demographic information related to Protective Services Staff. The following demographic information about Alaska’s child protective services personnel was obtained from the Alaska Department of Administration, Division of Personnel & Labor Relations. This data includes the following protective services job classes:

- Protective Services Manager I &II
- Protective Services Specialist I - IV

<b>2015 Gender of OCS Protective Services Staff</b>		
<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>
214	67	281
76%	24%	100%

Source: Alaska Department of Administration, Division of Personnel & Labor Relations

<b>2015 Self Identified Race for OCS Protective Services Staff</b>						
<b>ALASKA NATIVE</b>	<b>AMERICAN INDIAN</b>	<b>ASIAN</b>	<b>BLACK</b>	<b>HISPANIC</b>	<b>WHITE</b>	<b>Total</b>
16	4	11	19	15	216	281
6%	1%	4%	7%	5%	77%	100%

Source: Alaska Department of Administration, Division of Personnel & Labor Relations

2015 Age of OCS Protective Services Staff					
20-29 yrs.	30-39 yrs.	40-49 yrs.	50-59 yrs.	60 yrs. +	Total
47	90	74	45	25	281
17%	32%	26%	16%	9%	100%

Source: Alaska Department of Administration, Division of Personnel & Labor Relations

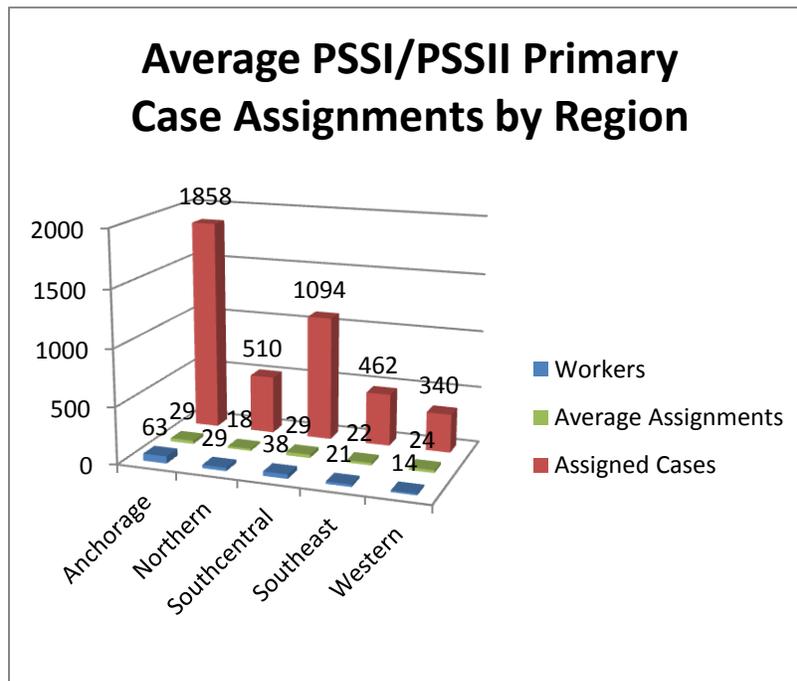
### Caseload / Workload Information for Child Protective Services Staff

Alaska OCS does not have formal requirements regarding average number or maximum number of cases per worker. Protective Services Specialist (PSS) IV is the job class for the 42 supervisors providing direct supervision to line workers. Statewide ORCA data shows that the PSS IV staff average workload includes: supervision of 6.5 workers; oversight of 56.9 cases; and management of 3.4 unlicensed providers.

Protective Services Specialist I & II are the job classes used for front line workers. Statewide ORCA data shows that PSS I / II staff have an average assignment of 26 cases. The following chart shows the case assignment averages for Protective Services Specialist I / II staff, by region.

PS Specialist I/II Primary Assignment Cases (06/09/15)			
Region	Workers	Assigned Cases	Average Assignments
Anchorage	63	1858	29
Northern	29	510	18
Southcentral	38	1094	29
Southeast	21	462	22
Western	14	340	24

Source: State of Alaska Online Resources for Children in Alaska (ORCA) Report RR00411



Source: State of Alaska Online Resources for Children in Alaska (ORCA) Report RR00411

### **CAPTA Fatality and Near Fatality Public Disclosure Policy**

Alaska statute 47.10.093, Disclosure of agency records, provides for public disclosure of the finding or information about the case of child abuse or neglect which has resulted in a child fatality or near fatality. The statute specifically states that the department may “publicly disclose information pertaining to a child or an alleged perpetrator named in a report of harm or to the department’s activities arising from the department’s investigation of the report.” The inclusion of these provisions encompasses the minimum information required by Section 106(b)(2)(B)(x) of CAPTA to include the release of:

- The cause and circumstances regarding the child fatality or near fatality;
- The age and gender of the child;  
Information describing any previous reports of child abuse or neglect that are pertinent to the abuse or neglect that led to the child fatality or near fatality;
- Information describing any previous investigations pertinent to the abuse or neglect that led to the child fatality or near fatality;
- The result of any such investigations; and
- The services provided by the State and actions of the State on behalf of the child that are pertinent to the child abuse or neglect that led to the child fatality or near fatality.

OCS policy (CPS Policy 6.1.2, Confidentiality) was updated in January 2014 to delineate the public disclosure of the above information in fatal or near fatal cases.

## **SECTION 9: CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM (CFCIP)/EDUCATION & TRAINING VOUCHERS (ETV)**

### **COLLABORATION**

The Independent Living Program incorporates CFCIP and ETV programs. The Independent Living Program (IL) is focuses on collaboration with tribal and community partners. In the past year the IL staff has continued to engage in substantial, ongoing, and meaningful collaboration with the following partners:

- Facing Foster Care in Alaska (FFCA) to train and recruit foster homes to specifically support older youth and provide joint trainings to OCS staff, community agencies, and to schools on the importance of supporting youth in transition.
- The State of Alaska Dept. of Labor Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to develop and implement a project to connect transition aged youth currently or previously in OCS custody with Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS). The project will connect transition aged youth currently or previously in OCS custody with opportunities to engage in hands on, career focused assessment and support services.
- The Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) collaboration continues to provide housing support to youth in transition around the State.

### **FFY 13 FUNDS**

OCS has under-spent the FFY 2013 Chafee funds. The FFY 2013 award amount was \$608,949.00; the grant was under spent by \$95,831.00. OCS has been working with Region X to address this under spending of these funds and to insure that future federal funds are fully spent for Chafee. OCS has been transitioning to a new statewide accounting system. The IRIS Project is set to go live on July 1, 2015. This system will better help us to track and record more accurately the major programs such as Chafee. OCS utilizes Chafee Funds to provide the following services and assistance to eligible youth:

- Emergency Housing Services
- Youth Retreat planning and coordination
- Employment Training and assistance
- Goods and services for youth.
- Regional Independent Living Specialist staff

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PLANNED ACTIVITIES IN FY 2016**

The IL Program experienced significant growth in many service areas during the past year. Supervision of the six Regional Independent Living Specialists (RILS) transferred from the 5 OCS Regional Offices to the State Office Independent Living Program Coordinator, offering improvements in program consistency, increased service delivery, and expends Chafee funding more effectively statewide. The spending matrix for the IL Program was reviewed with staff and revised to promote more accountability in the investment of resources for youth in transition. The plan is for youth to receive increased support and will achieve more of their goals with more focused support and increased monitoring of the outcomes for each youth engaged in services.

CFICP program has 8 purposes; the agency works to meet the requirements, and intends to meet them in the following ways:

1. *Help youth likely to remain in foster care until age 18 transition to self-sufficiency by providing services.*

Engaging youth in exit planning will continue to be an area of focus for SFY 2016. The Independent Living Program Transition Plan has been updated to promote youth involvement and streamline the process of transitioning from custody. Continued collaboration with FFCA to host retreats for youth with leadership development and service delivery as the focus of each event Statewide Permanency Summit will be

organized through collaboration with FFCA and Casey Family Programs. The Summit will focus on permanency for older youth. The Summit hopes to attract tribal leaders, legal and community partners, foster parents, children's services workers, and youth to discuss permanency and the importance of identifying adult supports for youth as they transition from care.

2. *Help youth likely to remain in foster care until age 18 receive the education, training, and services necessary to obtain employment.*

The contract with FFCA will continue, with three statewide youth leadership retreats planned in SFY 2016. See next question for more information about education and training.

3. *Help youth likely to remain in foster care until age 18 prepare for and enter post secondary training and educational institutions.*

The Child Welfare Academy continues to administer the Education and Training Voucher Program on the Anchorage campus. Due to the increase of case management and academic support available through this partnership, the program is seeing increased retention and higher academic achievement by the youth served. Financial support was made available to allow youth to maintain residence on campus during the scheduled breaks and summer months in effort to promote stability in their living situation. Oversight and review will include documenting efforts for educational achievements, an area that has not been documented consistently. Training and capacity building in the area of career preparation and post-secondary education will continue in SFY 2016, with a focus on trades and apprenticeship programs and university and other post-secondary education programs available to youth across the State. These areas of focus were identified by youth in 2015 as the priority service areas to focus on for youth in transition. Career preparation and support services will be developed. This Program will focus on developing services with the State of Alaska Department of Labor Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) program, to provide career preparation and support services to youth in transition. The PETS Program will be online to provide career exploration and preparation services and offer navigation support to youth enrolled in the program.

4. *Provide personal and emotional support to youth aging out of foster care through mentors and the promotion of interactions with dedicated adults.*

Mentorship services to urban and rural youth statewide. A specialized program was developed to enhance permanency efforts to all youth by matching youth to mentors as well as searching for relatives, past foster parents and those that supported the youth as coaches, teachers, and leaders. These individuals will be brought in to support and develop a plan for permanency for each youth served by the program. This program was developed in SFY 2015 and will be solicited through a Request for Proposals (RFP) in SFY 2016. This grant program will increase the focus of IL Services on permanency and inform OCS management on best practice to integrate in to the work with older youth.

5. *Provide financial, housing, counseling, employment, education, and other appropriate support and services to former foster care recipient between 18 and 21 years of age to complement their own efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and to assure that program participants recognize and accept their personal responsibility for preparing and then making the transition to adulthood.*

Utilization of the Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) program has been consistent in the Anchorage region. Chafee funding was used to add additional housing vouchers. Chafee funding supported five additional housing vouchers for Anchorage based youth, increasing the number of available housing vouchers to 15 in the Anchorage area. There are currently 69 youth who received housing vouchers statewide, with 15 additional vouchers issued to youth currently searching for appropriate housing in the community. The "Ready to Rent" training was introduced in 2015 and has been expanded to provide to every youth receiving a TBRA voucher. OCS is also supporting youth attending college who are residing in dorms to maintain their dorm housing during the summer months and scheduled breaks on campus. This promotes permanency in a youth's living situation and offers them direct support during those periods

classes are not in session and the campus resources are closed. In 2015 the Independent Living program focused on expanding housing education and home management supports, leading to a stronger partnership with AHFC.

6. *Make available vouchers for education and training, including postsecondary education to youth who have aged out of foster care.*  
The UAA Child Welfare Academy continues to administer the ETV Program statewide. This is allowed for more direct support for youth attending college. Additional resources will be identified to support the growth of involvement.
7. *Provide services to youth who, after attaining 16 years of age, have left foster care for kinship guardianship or adoption.*  
Every youth who leaves foster care after age 16 due to an adoption or guardianship is eligible to have an individualized subsidy negotiated to meet their special needs until age 18. When each youth is close to turning 18 years old, a letter is sent out to inform the guardian parent(s) that the adoption or guardianship subsidy will be ending. Information about the Independent Living Program, how to apply for Alaska Medicaid beyond 18 years old and how to contact the Regional Independent Living Specialists around Alaska is dispersed. Once the youth engages in the Independent Living Program at age 16, the assigned Regional Independent Living Specialist will conduct the Life Skills Assessment which identifies areas of strengths and needs in functioning and independence. The assessment results guide the development of a transition plan, which guides services and supports for each individual youth. The youth will have opportunities for engagement in youth retreats where they are mentored to develop their leadership skills and identify supports that assist them in their transition. Academic supports are offered while youth attend high school. Post-secondary supports are offered for youth attending college. Many of these youth are utilizing the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program, housing supports, and academic supports offered through the program. There is an increase in the career preparation services offered.
8. *Ensure children who are likely to remain in foster care until 18 years of age have regular, ongoing opportunities to engage in age or developmentally-appropriate activities as defined in section 475 (11) of the P.L. 113-183.*  
Alaska will comply with the requirements for normalcy standards, and intends to submit all necessary documentation by the 9/29/15 deadline. Covenant House Alaska will be providing training to local community Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDT)s around Child and Human Sex Trafficking and will be a participant in the development of a community. Routine credit reporting now includes the 14 and 15 year old population as well as all youth in-custody ages 16 to 21 years old. A small number of youth have had credit reporting issues identified and was able to address those issues with support from their RILS. The OCS Program Coordinator will continue to negotiate agreements with all three credit reporting agencies to ensure compliance with credit reporting requirements.

## **NATIONAL YOUTH IN TRANSITION DATABASE (NYTD)**

### **Process to Inform and Involve Partners, Tribes, Courts, Etc. About NYTD Data**

- Quarterly phone conferences have been set up for regular communication and collaboration with Tribal partners. Additionally Facing Foster Care in Alaska (FFCA) representatives were invited to attend the Tribal State Collaboration meetings. At those meetings they have shared program goals using the NYTD outcomes pertaining to homelessness, education, substance abuse, and employment.
- The ILP Program Coordinator has shared NYTD outcomes with community partners, foster parents, and youth in communities around the State of Alaska. Including a large meeting in Anchorage held 9/17/14 to discuss program goals, barriers to services and permanency, and share NYTD data. This meeting included community partners such as Division of Behavioral Health, Guardians Ad Litem, Court Appointed Special Advocates, the Alaska Center for Resource Families, FFCA, OCS Independent Living Staff, Mental Health Trust representatives, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, community attorneys, and community mental health centers.

- ILP program presentation to Court Improvement Project in October 2014. Attendees of the meeting included representatives from Tribe Partners, Judges, and OCS leadership.
- FFCA representatives, ILP staff, and the OCS Director's Executive Team met in August and November 2014 to discuss programs, services, and needs for this population. These meetings will continue three times per year.

### **Utilization of NYTD Data in Consultation with Youth and Stakeholders to Improve Service Delivery**

NYTD data has provided Alaska with concrete numbers to develop and enhance program focus on three areas: 1) housing/homelessness, 2) healthcare and risk prevention, and 3) educational achievement. Additional funding was allocated in SFY 2014 and SFY 2015 to expand services to youth based on trends identified through both the NYTD survey and State of Alaska statistics tracked by the Department. NYTD data is shared at the quarterly retreats with youth. The NYTD outcomes have informed the FFCA and OCS about needs and caused collaborative efforts to find specialized presenters and activities supporting the areas identified, such as health education, homelessness, budgeting, and employment.

### **Improvements to NYTD Data Collection Based on the NYTD Assessment Review**

- In SFY 2016, the third cohort of NYTD surveys will be conducted, with the youth previously surveyed at age 17 and age 19, now being surveyed at age 21. This will provide a snapshot of the same population over a five year period, and give the agency increased information about the needs. The data will be informative in evaluating the efforts of the IL Program to provide adequate supports to youth and will suggest what supports will need to be strengthened to address identified trends.
- The increased use of social media tools has assisted Regional Independent Living Specialists (RILS) to reach out to more of our youth in transition population than in past years. RILS were able to locate and survey 82.9% of our cohort-age 21 young adults with only 14.3% unable to locate and 2.9% declining to complete the survey. The IL Program uses social media to survey groups of youth to inform program planning and service delivery, including career planning, job skills preparation and housing preparedness.
- The NYTD data has assisted OCS in documenting the need for youth engagement and training for attorneys and judges. OCS and FFCA have partnered with the Court Improvement Project to develop the training; the training is anticipated to roll out in September 2015.

### **EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHER PROGRAM**

The Child Welfare Academy has been administering our Education and Training Voucher funding since SFY 13. There has been increased focus in service delivery and support given to youth who attend the University of Alaska state schools. The Child Welfare Agency is housed on the Anchorage campus lending easy access to students who need supportive services, intervention or advocacy with school needs. This has led to better supported students with faculty and educational leadership more ready to accept our foster youth and understand their significant and individual needs. For additional information on ETV funds, please Section 11.

## **SECTION 10: UPDATES TO TARGETED PLANS WITH IN THE 2015-2019 CFSP**

### **FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT DILIGENT RECRUITMENT PLAN**

Statewide and regional recruitment and retention plans are used by the OCS to prepare and plan for the diligent recruitment needed to meet the needs of Alaska's children and families. There have been minimal changes and updates from the previous plan. The FY 16 plan is attached. In the past year, OCS experienced success with diligent recruitment, although there will be a heightened focus on this work, as the number of children in out of home care continues to rise in Alaska. During the past year, the following accomplishments were made:

- Tangible recruitment supplies were ordered and distributed around the state.
- Increased recruitment for homes to serve children with complex medical needs including development of posters and purchase of an advertisement in the Alaska Nursing publication.
- Western Region Support and Recruitment efforts have been made to increase the services in Bethel and surrounding communities. An Emergency Shelter Home was identified and established to prevent out of region placement when emergency situations arise.
- Enhanced support and recruitment for the FosterWear program. This program offers clothing discounts to foster parents in Alaska.
- Resource Family and Adoptive Family support and appreciation celebrations were held around the state to support families currently providing care to children in custody.
- Adoption exchanges continue to be utilized. Alaska OCS uses AdoptUSKids, Northwest Adoption Exchanges, and the Alaska Adoption Exchange.
- Wendy's Wonderful Kids continues to be a program provided by Catholic Social Services, through partnership with the Office of Children's Services
- The Preparation of Adoption Readiness for Kids in Alaska (PARKA) program through the ACRF is funded by OCS to recruit, train, and support families interested in adopting special needs children through the public child welfare system.

### **HEALTHCARE OVERSIGHT AND COORDINATION PLAN:**

The plan was submitted in 2014 and no updates have been made. OCS policy manual includes a schedule for initial and follow up health screenings that meet reasonable standards. OCS continues to track and monitor the medical needs of children through QA case reviews. OCS policy manual includes the monitoring and use of psychotropic medications. The OCS Regional Psych Nurses have an integral role in the oversight and management of medical issues for children at OCS. Due to a change in supervision and unclear expectations, data is not available for this submission. OCS will develop a plan and be able to provide additional information about the use of medication in the 2017 APSR.

### **DISASTER PLAN**

There have been no changes and updates from the previous plan, but it has been reviewed and signed by the OCS Director's Executive Team. The current plan is attached.

Alaska experiences natural disasters and weather related issues that may affect the health and safety of residents. It is not uncommon for communities in Alaska to experience flooding, wildfires, earthquakes, and avalanches. Often the situations may be dealt with locally without intervention by state or federal agencies. In the past year, the State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services responded to the following emergency situations:

- April 2015 Ketchikan flooding
- June 2015 Sterling fire
- June 2015 Willow fire
- June 2015 Tanana / Nulato fire

- June 2015 Aniak fire

To mitigate effects of imminent events, OCS researched the families served in each area and employees who might be traveling in the area affected. OCS staff contacted each family to determine their preparedness and response plans should they be affected. OCS tracks the events and families at risk. No OCS offices were affected by the events that occurred this year. No disaster plan changes have been.

## **SECTION 11: STATISTICAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **CAPTA ANNUAL STATE DATA REPORT ITEMS**

Information regarding Child Protective Services Workforce demographics and training and education are documented in Section 8.

### **JUVENILE JUSTICE TRANSFERS**

<b>OCS Discharges to DJJ</b>		
<u>Discharge Year</u>	<u>Discharge Reason</u>	<u>Discharges</u>
2010	Transfer to DJJ	2
2011	Transfer to DJJ	4
2012	Transfer to DJJ	3
2013	Transfer to DJJ	3
2014	Transfer to DJJ	4

**Source:** State of Alaska Online Resources for Children in Alaska (ORCA) Report to DJJ RR00147

### **SOURCES OF DATA ON CHILD MALTREATMENT DEATHS**

Alaska has a statewide Child Fatality Review Team. The OCS participates as a team member in the review of child deaths. The State of Alaska reviews child deaths through the statewide. This team operates under the auspices of the State Medical Examiner's Office (SMEO). The team meets monthly in Anchorage. Members of the team are local law enforcement, the AK State Troopers, the district attorney's office, a representative from the OCS, and community physicians. Each team member presents information from their respective fields. The SMEO conducts the autopsy and the manner and cause is determined. The Office of Children's Services reports the findings from the SMEO in the annual NCANDS report. The OCS collects the child fatality data in two ways:

- The Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics generates a monthly report of fetal, infant, and maternal deaths for the Alaska Maternal Infant Mortality Review (MIMR) program (managed by the Division of Public Health). As a participant on this team, the OCS representative gathers information at the monthly meetings and also reviews OCS case records for information.
- The SMEO maintains a master database of all child deaths. This data base is available to the OCS and is obtained at the time the NCANDS report is prepared and is used to verify the OCS database information.

Additionally, OCS management is part of the Alaska team participating in the National Institute for Children's Health Quality's Infant Mortality COIIN Learning Collaborative.

### **EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHERS**

The Education and Training Voucher served a total of fifty- seven students during the 2014-2015 academic year. There were 56 students enrolled in the Fall semester, and one additional student enrolled in the Spring semester. There was a 73% retention rate from Fall to Spring and one student graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering. The table on the following page tracks the awarded ETVs:

	Total ETVs Awarded	Number of New ETVs
2011-2012 School year (July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012)	40	15
2012-2013 School Year (July 2, 2012 to June 30, 2013)	40	22
2013-2014 School Year (July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014)	46	18
2014-2015 School Year (July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015)	57	27

### **INTER-COUNTRY ADOPTIONS**

During FFY 14 two children who were adopted from other countries entered into OCS custody as a result of substantiated abuse and neglect. The adoptions were dissolved and both children have a goal of adoption and are placed in pre-adoptive homes.

### **MONTHLY CASEWORKER VISIT DATA**

OCS will submit required data on monthly caseworker visits with children in foster care on December 15, 2015 as required. Last year's data showed that the total number of visits made by caseworkers on a monthly basis to children in foster care was less than the required 95%, OCS achieved 83%. This is an increase from the previous year's data (2013 was 80%). The percent of children visited in their home was 69%, which exceeds the 50% federal standard. Additional caseworker visit data is provided earlier in this report.

## **SECTION 12: FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

### **PAYMENT LIMITATIONS – TITLE IV-B, SUBPART I**

Alaska spent \$0 of FFY2005 Title IV-B, Subpart I funds for child care, foster care maintenance and adoption assistance payments. Alaska used \$0 of non-federal funds for foster care maintenance payment as match for the FFY2005 Title IV-B, Subpart I award. Alaska spent \$0 of Title IV-B, Subpart I funds for administrative costs.

### **PAYMENT LIMITATIONS – TITLE IV-B, SUBPART II**

Per the attached CFS-101, Part III, Alaska spent:

- \$139,776 or 25% of its FFY2013 award on Family Preservation services.
- \$27,956 or 5% of its FFY2013 award on Family Support services.
- \$279,552 or 50% of its FFY2013 award on Time-Limited Family Reunification services.
- \$111,819 or 20% of its FFY2013 award on Adoption Promotion and Support services.

Per the attached CFS-101, Part III, Alaska spent \$0 or 0% of its FFY2013 award on administrative costs. There were no Title IV-B, Subpart 2 funds spent on administrative costs for the Monthly Caseworker Visit fund.

### **FFY2015 FUNDING – REVISED BUDGET REQUEST**

Alaska will submit a revised FFY2015 budget form should unneeded portions of other State allocations of Title IV-B, CFCIP and ETV funds be reallocated to other States. Alaska does not intend to release funds for reallocation from the Title IV-B, Subpart 2, the CFCIP, or the ETV Program. Alaska does intend to apply for reallocation of unneeded portions of other State's allocation for the Title IV-B, Subpart 2, the CFCIP, or the ETV Program. See attached CFS-101, Part I.

### **FFY2016 BUDGET REQUEST – CFS-101, PARTS I AND II**

Alaska has completed Part I of the CFS-101 form to request Title IV-B, Subpart I and Title IV-B, Subpart II, CAPTA, CFCIP and ETV funds. Reference attached CFS-101, Part I. Alaska has completed Part II to include the estimated amount of funds to be spent in each program area by source, the estimated number of individuals and families to be served, and the geographic service area within which the services are to be provided. Reference attached CFS-101, Part II.

### **FFY2013 TITLE IV-B EXPENDITURE REPORT – CFS-101, PART III**

Alaska has completed the CFS-101, Part III to include the actual amount of funds expended in each program area of Title IV-B funding by source, the number of individuals and families served, and the geographic service area within which the services were provided. Reference attached CFS-101, Part III.

### **FINANCIAL STATUS REPORTS STANDARD FORM (SF) 425**

Alaska reports expenditures under Title IV-B, Subparts 1 and 2, CAPTA, CFCIP and ETV programs on the Financial Status Report, SF-425.

## **SECTION 13: SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

- Appendix A: Citizen Review Panel Annual Report 2014 and Office of Children’s Services Response
- Appendix B: CQI Manual
- Appendix C: Staff Development and Training Plan
- Appendix D: CCLS I Position Description
- Appendix E: Disaster Plan
- Appendix F: Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan
- Appendix G: CFS-101 (parts 1, 2, & 3) PDF Version
- Appendix H: CFS-101 (parts 1, 2, & 3) Excel Version

## **STATE CONTACTS**

### **2016 APSR Coordinator:**

Contact information: KariLee Pietz, 907-465-2145, [karilee.pietz@alaska.gov](mailto:karilee.pietz@alaska.gov)  
Link to 2016 APSR: [http://dhss.alaska.gov/ocs/Documents/Publications/pdf/2016\\_APSR.pdf](http://dhss.alaska.gov/ocs/Documents/Publications/pdf/2016_APSR.pdf)  
Anticipate date of posting: 7/01/2015 (will be updated after final approval)

### **2016 CAPTA Coordinator**

Contact information: KariLee Pietz, 907-465-2145, [karilee.pietz@alaska.gov](mailto:karilee.pietz@alaska.gov)