



OFFICE OF
CHILDREN'S
SERVICES

**Annual Progress and Services Report Fiscal
Year 2020**

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Section A. The Children's Bureau Focus on Strengthening Families Through Primary Prevention of Child Maltreatment While Securing Permanency for All Children and Youth

INITIATIVES

PRIMARY PREVENTION

The ACF Children's Bureau asked states to focus on the primary prevention of child abuse ([ACYF-CB-IM-18-05](#)). Primary prevention of child abuse is defined as any intervention that prevents child abuse before it occurs. The Office of Children's Services (OCS) is collaborating with multiple entities to implement Plans of Safe Care (POSC) as Alaska's primary prevention initiative. Alaska believes that by engaging communities to initiate Plans of Safe Care for low to medium risk substance exposed infants and their families, future incidents of child maltreatment and even fatalities will be avoided.

With technical assistance from the National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare, OCS co-hosted a Statewide Kick-Off Meeting for Alaska's POSC Initiative in May 2019. Participants to the kick off included State Department partners, hospital and nursing staff, midwives, legal representatives, legislative staff, substance abuse treatment providers and other pertinent stakeholders. This meeting was well received, and helped to form a strong cross-collaborative interest and commitment to pursue a comprehensive, systemic approach to serving substance affected infants and their families in our state. Since that date, a statewide POSC steering committee and policy subcommittee have formed to begin the work of developing statewide screening, notification/reporting procedures and tools needed to implement POSC.

OCS has requested and plans to use, Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Transition Grant funds to contract with a service organization in two pilot sites to create a position dedicated to the implementation of the POSC in their communities. The positions funded will provide the direct services of creating and implementing POSC for non-child welfare involved families in two pilot sites located in Wasilla and Juneau. The POSC pilot will include all children born to identify any need of a family to provide support and referral opportunities.

Tribal partners and community stakeholders alike have requested OCS release screened out protective service reports in order to allow those families identified as being at-risk to be targeted for support services. The belief is that if there was a way to intervene sooner with this particular population, it may be possible to prevent families from entering the foster care system. Under the Tribal Child Welfare Compact, 94 Tribes are currently receiving screened out reports. However, most Tribes do not have the resources to keep up with the number of reports and the volume of need. Conversely, for non-tribal entities who may have resources, there is no legal mechanism to provide these reports due to confidentiality barriers. OCS identified this issue as a prevention strategy for the CFSP. OCS is undergoing efforts to engage stakeholders in the creation of a system for which families receive services following a screened out report in efforts to prevent additional reports and potential screen-ins.

CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE THAT SUPPORTS THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES

OCS has identified increased access to locally based, culturally appropriate services as being critical to supporting the well-being of children, families and communities. OCS has committed to the statewide expansion of cultural services for families. Five Regional ICWA Specialists work with the Public Information Team for the Department of Health and Social Services to update a statewide Cultural Health and Wellness Resource Guide that is located on the desktop of all OCS employees. This provides OCS Protective Services Specialists a tool to directly link families with culturally appropriate services and supports. The guide promotes traditional activities such as the gathering of wild plants and berries and talking circles as legitimate

activities for health and well-being. OCS has recently embedded a process to financially support Tribal Elders for providing education and peer support to parents when this service is identified as a need through the case planning process.

COMMUNITY-BASED, COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT FAMILIES

OCS is designated as the State Lead for the Community-based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) program. Prevention grants funded by CBCAP are awarded to community-based agencies that are already providing a multitude of services to children or families, which improves access and facilitates effective outreach. Services under these grants include in-home support services, parent education, parent engagement activities, service coordination and facilitated access to resources. In addition, OCS has a partnership with the Alaska Children's Trust to ensure the provision of local prevention programming in several rural communities in Alaska. The Alaska Children's Trust also works with OCS to coordinate statewide prevention efforts by collaborating with prevention resources across the state and promoting the April Child Abuse Prevention Month activities.

FOSTER CARE AS A SUPPORT TO FAMILIES, NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR PARENTS

OCS sees foster care as a temporary placement setting that provides an opportunity to keep children safe while parents engage in services. Reunification is the primary goal after families are separated by the placement their children into foster care. Strong and supportive relationships between resource families and parents facilitates improved engagement of parents, promotes timely reunification, builds protective factors in parents, and strengthens overall child and family well-being, while ensuring child safety.

OCS values resource families working closely with biological families and has statute in place that encourages foster parents to serve as mentors for facilitating family reunification when it is in the best interest of the child and the foster family will not be placed in undue risk of harm. OCS partners with the Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF) to train resource families and "Working with Birth Families and Family Contact" training is in the required CORE training. Foster parents learn, why contact between birth family and resource family is helpful to a child, how regular contact between birth parents and children in care can help plan for permanency, the challenges of contact between a birth family and resource family, and the resource parent's rights and responsibilities in regards to family contact.

FOCUS ON ACHIEVING PERMANENCY

OCS prioritizes essential child protection services to meet the safety, permanency and well-being needs of children in care. Efforts are made to ensure early placement with relatives, monthly case worker visits are conducted, and case planning is family centered and timely.

OCS leadership across the state meets in a monthly Essential Services Meeting for evaluation and continuous quality improvement. An Essential Services Scorecard is easily accessed within the state's Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) known as the Online Resource for the Children of Alaska (ORCA). The scorecard is reviewed monthly and compared to previous months to identify trends. Regions of the state review the trends to identify systemic issues, brainstorm ideas for solutions, and implement plans for improvement. The method utilized for Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is the Plan, do, Study, and Act (PDSA).

To further efforts to achieve timely permanency for children in care, OCS has also developed a Permanency Scorecard within ORCA that is utilized in the Quarterly Statewide Permanency Meeting. OCS leadership and permanency specialist teams from across the state meet four times a year to report successes and barriers in achieving permanency. The scorecard allows for easy access to data showing trends across time. Teams review these trends to identify systemic issues, brainstorm ideas for solutions and implement plans for

improvement. Participants in this meeting utilize the CQI method of PDSA similar to the Essential Services Meeting.

A STRONG, HEALTHY CHILD WELFARE WORKFORCE TO ACHIEVE BETTER OUTCOMES

In FY19 the annual statewide turnover rate of frontline caseworkers reached an all-time high of 57.6%. With the agency in crisis, recruitment and retention of staff became a primary goal. OCS has created a Five Year Recruitment and Retention Plan 2019-2023. This plan identifies issues and strategies to recruitment, retention, training, competencies and agency culture. Strategies within the plan have been implemented on a rolling basis to include:

- A Recruitment Team was created out of State Office to focus on the timely recruitment and hiring of all open OCS positions.
- A Safety Officer was hired to address agency culture and retention. This position has been conducting site visits, interviews, and surveys to develop a comprehensive assessment of needs.
- Frontline Protective Services Specialists received a retention bonus if they met the criteria of two years of OCS employment. These staff also received 5 days of additional annual leave for well-being and a financial stipend and 2 days leave to supplement continuing education.
- Additional training, including more on the job training and field mentors were implemented.
- An exit survey has been created and implemented with a plan to provide a synopsis of information gathered to OCS leadership.

HIGH QUALITY LEGAL REPRESENTATION AT ALL STAGES OF CHILD WELFARE PROCEEDINGS

Alaska's Court Improvement Project (CIP) has continued to focus on high quality legal representation and found additional ways to improve during the National Judicial Leadership Summit in September of 2019. Currently parents in Alaska are represented at all stages of CINA proceedings and substantive hearings are not held until parents have had an opportunity to speak with their attorney. Alaska's Public Defender Agency (PDA) statute allows for pre-petition or intervention counseling by the public defender. Multiple trainings and Core curriculum training is afforded to all attorneys who represent children and parents in the state to improve the quality of representation in child welfare matters. New initiatives and ideas include a more consistent training for contract attorneys and attorneys for children, reducing the length of time for conflict checks, process for parents to access the PDA during the initial assessment phase of a child protection case, reduction of caseloads for legal parties, and continued collaboration with Tribal partners.

CONVENINGS

STATE TEAM PLANNING MEETINGS

Alaska's Vision for Child Welfare

Empower Communities to Strengthen Families and Prevent Child Abuse

Develop a skilled and stable child protection workforce

- Recruit and develop workforce with continued enhancement of competencies and core values.
- Promote workforce wellness and retention.

Partner with Tribes and community agencies to provide support and services to families

- Strengthen families through Community engagement and connection to services.
- Statewide expansion of cultural services.



Prioritize identified essential child protection services

- Ensure early placement with relatives, timely initiations, monthly caseworker visits are conducted, and caseplanning is family centered and timely.
- Create a culture that values the prioritization of essential services.

Build a culture dedicated to evaluation and continuous quality improvement (CQI) informed by data driven decision making

- Implement best-practices and agency activities based on CQI.

Alaska participated in the State Team Planning Meeting in Washington DC in April of 2019. Alaska's team included CIP members, leadership from OCS, a Guardian ad litem, and an Assistant Attorney General (AAG). As this state planning occurred only a few months before the 2020-2024 Child and Services Plan was due, it was beneficial for the state team to work on a vision for Alaska's Child Welfare. This vision is a great reference as efforts on the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and Child and Family Services Plan 2020-2024 (CFSP) strategies as well as partnering with other agencies on prevention efforts.

ADOPTION CALL TO ACTION

Alaska participated in the Adoption Call to Action, which included review of the compilation of data and “Alaska Snapshot” statistics. Through dialogue with internal and external partners, Alaska determined that the strategies outlined in the recently approved Program Improvement Plan (PIP) addressed the primary permanency challenges Alaska faces. In addition to the call to action for adoption, Alaska recognized it provides permanency relatively well for adoption timeframes but experiences more struggle with guardianships and timely reunifications. For many Alaskan Native Tribes, guardianship is the preferred method for permanency and is a priority focus area for Alaska. It was communicated that the strategies identified in the PIP, including the plan to utilize dedicated Regional Permanency Specialists to be more directly involved in performing tasks related to achieving permanency goals and efforts; and moving administrative reviews to the court system; will help identify challenges and barriers earlier in cases and provide a platform for timely permanency in all cases.

2019 NATIONAL JUDICIAL SUMMIT ON CHILD WELFARE

Alaska participated in the National Judicial Summit in September 2019. The Alaska team was comprised of multidisciplinary leadership group from OCS, Guardian ad Litem, Assistant Attorney General, Public Defender, and the Court system. During this meeting the national message was clear that child welfare needs a change and should be challenged due to poor outcomes for children and families. Many of the ideas generated by the Alaska team during this summit are being incorporated into existing reform efforts and initiatives underway in the state such as the Title IV-E Prevention Plan, POSC, and the PIP.

HIGHLIGHTING FAMILY AND YOUTH VOICE

OCS values the participation and voice of family and youth involved with the agency as they are the experts on their family. Alaska has a robust Facing Foster Care in Alaska (FFCA) that is a statewide non-profit entity working to support foster youth and alumni and improve the foster care system in Alaska. FFCA partners with the OCS Independent Living Program to plan and facilitate ways to streamline services and supports for youth. The OCS Director’s team meets twice a year with the entire FFCA to discuss collaboration on mutual goals, share information, and plan for the future. FFCA representatives are routinely included in any focus groups, Tribal meetings, policy changes, and other OCS initiatives.

Protective Services staff are specifically trained on engagement skills and practice that encourage family and youth participation in all levels of the agency. During the initial assessment families are encouraged to identify safety concerns and create a plan for their family that mitigates the identified threats. Families are asked to identify relatives for family friends that can assist with the safety plan or take placement if separation is ultimately required. OCS utilizes Team Decision Making® (TDM) model in three of the five regional offices. TDM core values include a strengths based approach and parent expertise in their own family. Parents are engaged in case planning to identify services and Cultural supports that will assist in expediting reunification. OCS has partnered with the CIP to increase parental engagement in the court process. Benchcards for Judges are being updated to focus on permanency and parental engagement to include Judiciary oversight of case plans, and family contact.

Section B. Requirements of the 2021 APSR

COLLABORATION

UPDATE ON CONSULTATION AND COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES, CHILDREN, YOUTH, TRIBES, AND OTHER PARTNERS

OCS has several initiatives and strategies for improving practice to better serve the children and families of Alaska. These efforts require close collaboration with Tribes, Tribal Organizations, youth, children, families, faith based organizations, other state departments, legal stakeholders and many more.

OCS continues to have strong relationships with several statewide and local groups including:

- Court Improvement Project
- Regional Managers
- PSM I Collective
- Supervisory Leadership Council
- Child Welfare Academy
- Facing Foster Care in Alaska
- Tribal State Collaboration Group
- Tribal Compacting
- Change Management Leadership Team
- Rock Matsu and Rock Juneau
- Beacon Hill
- the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
- Alaska's Citizen Review Panel
- Alaska Youth and Family Network
- Resource Family Advisory Board
- Alaska Center for Resource Families
- University of Alaska

OCS has also benefited from partnering with national partners including:

- Casey Family Programs
- Region X
- Capacity Center Building for States
- State Planning Sessions
- Center for Children and Family Futures
- National Quality Improvement Center for Collaborative Community Court Teams (QIC-CCCT)

Some of the key initiatives include:

- Plans of Safe Care
- Title IV-E Prevention Plan
- Tribal Title IV-E Prevention Grant
- Tribal-State Compacting
- Family and Infant Court
- Family Contact Improvements
- Investigations and Assessment pilot
- 1115 Waiver Gap Analysis
- Parent Navigation
- Joint CIP and OCS Parent Engagement efforts

UPDATE ON COLLABORATION WITH STATE COURTS AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGAL AND JUDICIAL COMMUNITY, INCLUDING THE COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

OCS continues to partner with the Court Improvement Project on efforts to improve engagement of parents, youth and relatives. During this year OCS and CIP partnered on the creation of a video intended to be an orientation for a parent or youth to the Child In Need of Aid process. The video is now available for use and will be posted on the OCS website. Soon it will also be played in all OCS office lobbies where a television is available. The CIP and OCS joint projects from the PIP and the CFSP are underway that includes the Case Review hearing. These hearings were successfully scheduled and heard at six month intervals in the Fairbanks district. The Case Review benchcard and Findings court order were completed and are being piloted during hearings. CIP and Casey Family Programs hosted a legal training on permanency that was attended by multi-disciplinary CINA practitioners including judges, GALs, OCS staff, Tribal Representatives, CASAs, agency and parent attorneys. OCS and CIP are currently working closely with The Capacity Building Center to develop an evaluation tool in order to determine if the hearings and court process are increasing quality of hearings, increasing parent and youth engagement, and improving permanency data. Lastly, CIP and OCS have been active in organizing the voices and opinions of the Child in Need of Aid partners to guide our judges on how to prioritize and proceed forward in this current COVID-19 pandemic.

UPDATE ON HOW PARENT, FAMILY, AND YOUTH VOICE IS CRITICAL TO UNDERSTANDING HOW WELL THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM IS ACHIEVING ITS GOALS

Alaska collaborates with several community based stakeholders for feedback and ideas of how to improve the child protection system. OCS also seeks to involve families and youth in all aspects of the child welfare system and at all stages of a family's case. This includes investigation and assessment, family services case planning, out of home placement, safety planning, and supports. Engagement of families will continue as a goal for OCS and other partnering agencies and divisions. OCS has developed a case review system utilizing the Onsite Review Instrument (OSRI) to collect information on systemic factors which includes interviews with the parents, children and legal case participants. OCS is excited for the evaluation of the joint project with the Court Improvement Project on increasing parent engagement through the court process.

Alaska's new 1115 Behavioral Health Services Medicaid Waiver includes new family support services including peer support and peer navigation. OCS has historically partnered with the Alaska Youth and Family Network (AYFN) for their parent navigation services and plans to continue that relationship now through AYFN becoming a Medicaid provider.

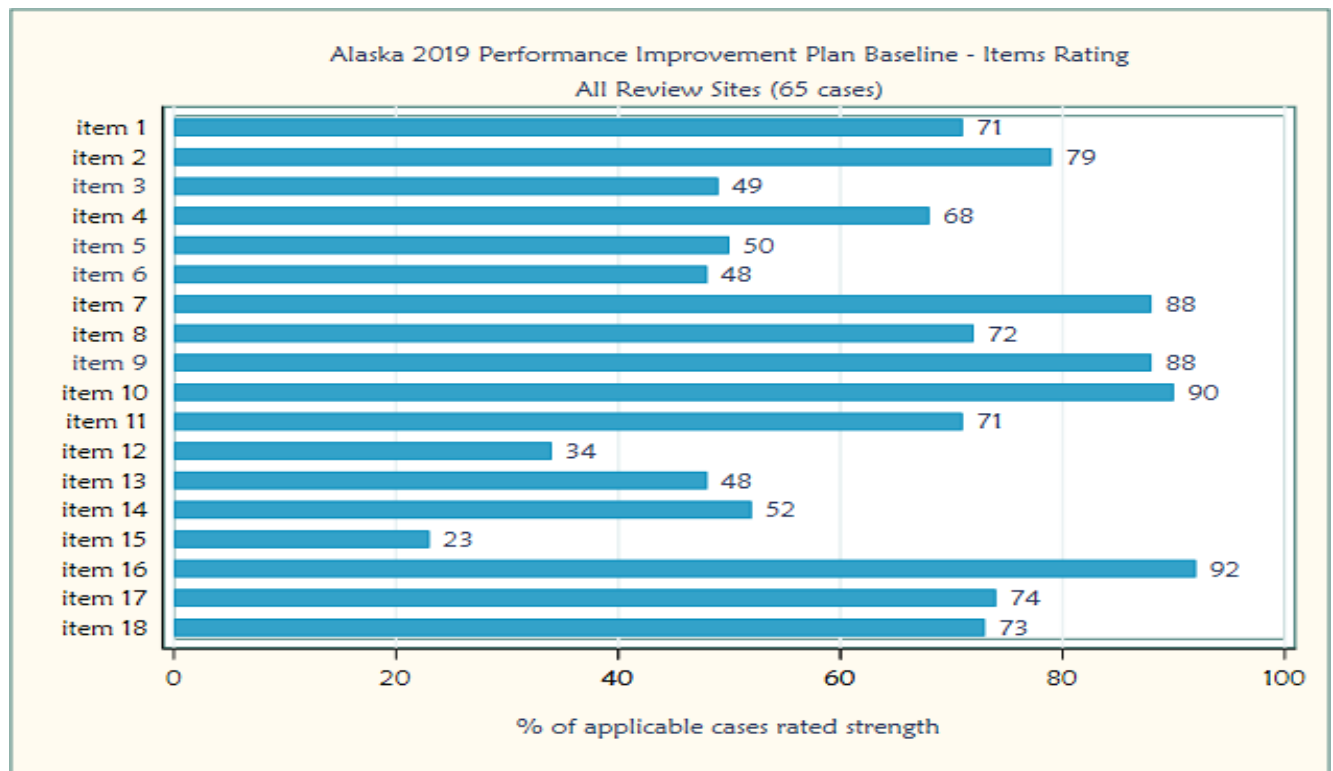
UPDATE TO THE ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT PERFORMANCE IN IMPROVING OUTCOMES

Alaska recently, in FY19 and 20, completed case reviews in three review sites to complete the Baseline for the measurement plan for the approved PIP. Alaska received the baseline calculation and improvement goals in March of 2020. In conjunction with contextual data, Alaska has determine practice areas of strength and concern for outcome areas with strategies for improvement identified in the PIP.

Alaska 2019 Performance Improvement Plan Baseline - Items Rating and PIP Goal (% of applicable cases rated strength)					
Item Description	Items Rating Anchorage	Items Rating Fairbanks	Items Rating Juneau	Items Rating All Review Sites	Round 3 PIP Goal
Item 1: Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment	63%	82%	73%	71%	77%

Item Description	Items Rating Anchorage	Items Rating Fairbanks	Items Rating Juneau	Items Rating All Review Sites	Round 3 PIP Goal
Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Child (ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry Into Foster Care	75%	83%	80%	79%	86%
Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management	45%	59%	47%	49%	55%
Item 4: Stability of Foster Care Placement	85%	50%	50%	68%	74%
Item 5: Permanency Goal for Child	45%	60%	50%	50%	57%
Item 6: Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement	40%	40%	70%	48%	55%
Item 7: Placement With Siblings	100%	100%	67%	88%	
Item 8: Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care	76%	67%	70%	72%	
Item 9: Preserving Connections	80%	100%	90%	88%	
Item 10: Relative Placement	95%	78%	90%	90%	
Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care With Parents	75%	56%	80%	71%	
Item 12: Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents	38%	19%	44%	34%	40%
Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning	48%	50%	47%	48%	54%
Item 14: Caseworker Visits With Child	45%	53%	65%	52%	58%
Item 15: Caseworker Visits With Parents	29%	0%	35%	23%	28%
Item 16: Educational Needs of the Child	84%	100%	100%	92%	
Item 17: Physical Health of the Child	67%	85%	78%	74%	

Item Description	Items Rating Anchorage	Items Rating Fairbanks	Items Rating Juneau	Items Rating All Review Sites	Round 3 PIP Goal
Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child	58%	93%	73%	73%	



SAFETY OUTCOME 1 AND 2:

Alaska has seen improvement of initiation of investigations within the assigned priority timeframes; however, there is a focus still needed on the initiation of priority 3 reports. Priority 1 and 2 investigations are initiated timely at a higher rate than priority 3, or high risk, protective services reports. Safety and risk assessment and monitoring is an area of concern for children remaining in their own home. Practice areas of concern include adequate safety assessment, creation of sufficient safety plans and the ongoing monitoring of risk and safety of all the children remaining in the home. An area that has seen some improvement is provision of services to parents and families to prevent removal of children to include substance abuse assessments, drug testing and support.

Alaska is currently implementing several strategies in the PIP to focus on areas of safety. A pilot project focusing on the management of assignment and protocol of the investigation process is underway and set to expand to other field offices. The early results of the pilot project show rates of more timely initiations and closures with the next evaluation step of assessing quality of investigations. In addition, a Trial Home Visit tool was created to help assess the risk and safety factors of a family to support through services and monitoring when children are returned home on trial home visits. Safety assessment, planning and monitoring is reinforced through the mentor program as a transfer of learning for new staff and Coaching Supervisors to Best Practice programs. In addition, Alaska engaged in focus groups and root cause analysis

regarding the prior models of in home services deemed not successful. These efforts will also be utilized for continued planning and implementation of in home services case management through FFPSA.

PERMANENCY OUTCOME 1 AND 2:

Placement with siblings and relatives is assessed as a practice area strength for Alaska. Efforts through Team Decision Making meetings and early relative searches support placement with relatives and creates opportunities for siblings to be placed together. Connections are generally maintained with parents, siblings and children while in foster care; however, visits may not be as frequent or quality as an area under consideration. Identification of permanency goals and achievement of permanency continues to be an area of struggle. Through contextual data and case reviews, Alaska demonstrates areas of strength in achieving adoption within 24 months but performs more poorly in reunification, guardianship and children in foster care over 24 months. Many cases reviewed showed children with permanency goals of reunification although parents were determined to not be making progress towards behavioral change or case plan goals after 12 months in foster care.

PIP strategies addressing permanency focus on earlier assessment and dialogue of case plan progress to determine appropriateness of permanency goals. Permanency Specialists will be engaged in education of AFSA timelines and provision of direction on case progress in relation to permanency. A pilot in the Fairbanks judicial district through joint effort with CIP is operating under a Theory of Change of engaging parents in the court and case process, providing tangible “to do lists” and holding administrative reviews and/or hearings every 6 months will provide earlier identification of barriers, transparency and progress in the case ultimately providing for timelier permanency.

WELL-BEING OUTCOME 1, 2 AND 3:

Alaska generally performs well in the assessment and provision of services to provide for the educational, physical and mental health well-being of children in foster care. Many of the efforts to support and engage in services is fostered through the Resource Families caring for children and the strength of ILP and IEP education programs. An area of great concern in practice is caseworker visits with children, parents and case planning. Alaska recognizes it struggles with engagement of parents and experiences many barriers due to remoteness, communication complexities and embodying the value of parental engagement.

Several strategies are identified to focus engagement of parents in the case planning process, needs assessment and through caseworker visitation. As mentioned earlier, the joint CIP pilot project is intended to provide support, engagement and clarity in the court and case process with parents. With hearings scheduled to occur every 6 months the intended outcome is active participation and involvement from parents in the case. Quarterly webinar trainings are scheduled focused on CQI needs of the agency and conducted by the Child Welfare Academy. The initial topics for training include case planning, family engagement and engagement of fathers. OCS has developed an internal monthly leadership team that reviews and discussing essential services data to develop strategies utilizing the PDSA CQI model. Essential services data discussed include rates of caseworker visits with children, parents and updated case plans.

Section C. Systemic Factors

SYSTEMIC FACTOR A.

ITEM 19: STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Alaska received a rating of Area Needing Improvement for this item in the 2017 CFSR due to data lags in timely entry of the data elements into ORCA and the difficulties with verifying the data accuracy on

demographic information against other data systems, such as the Bureau of Vital Statistics birth certificate records.

The most concerning data entry delays occur at case junctures where placement changes occur and are not timely documented within the ORCA system. Alaska recognizes that the lack of timely placement documentation in ORCA creates a significant safety risk to children in care. A monthly data report documenting the number of lag days to document placement change is sent to OCS supervisors, managers, program officers and administrators.

SYSTEMIC FACTOR B: CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

State's performance in Systemic Factor B was assessed using the State's performance on items 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24. Alaska is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. Two of the five items in this systemic factor were rated as a Strength.

ITEM 20: WRITTEN CASE PLAN.

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on information from the Statewide Assessment that children and families were included in case planning in 73% of the foster care cases and 45% of the in home cases. Case review data showed that case plans were established timely in 26.1% of the cases. Current OSRI case reviews in the measurement plan show similar rates of involvement and timely establishment. OCS leadership participates in a monthly Essential Services meeting to review data and outcomes essential to child protection. The written case plan for parents and for children are areas discussed and reported on regionally each month. Regional management members discuss barriers and solutions to improve this outcome for families. A statewide leadership focus is conducting regional analysis on case plan data to develop regionally based PDSA intervention to improve outcomes in this area.

ITEM 21: PERIODIC REVIEWS.

Data from the Statewide Assessment showed that Alaska has a fully functioning administrative case review system that ensures a periodic review for each child occurs no less frequently than every 6 months. Data from the 2017 assessment indicated that 99.9% of the periodic reviews for each child were occurring timely. In complement to this being an area of strength for Alaska, OCS is working on a joint pilot program with CIP to include administrative reviews as a part of court hearings to further engage parents in the court process and in turn hypothesis more timely permanency. The pilot is currently conducted in the Fairbanks judicial district and is being reported and evaluated on in the strategy section. While the pilot is being conducted, the QA review team is currently conducted Administrative Reviews for other judicial districts.

ITEM 22: PERMANENCY HEARING.

Alaska received an overall rating of Strength for Item 22 based on information from the Statewide Assessment and stakeholder interviews. Information gathered indicated that, on average, permanency hearings occur no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care, and subsequent permanency hearings occur on average every 169 days. Alaska does not anticipate any future changes that may negatively impact the strength rating and is also bolstered by the joint CIP pilot project to ensure a hearing occurs every six months in a court case.

ITEM 23: TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS.

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 23 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information indicated that Alaska does not have a standardized process to track or ensure that TPR petitions are filed timely or that compelling reasons not to file TPR are documented. The

Regional Permanency Planning Specialists are creating a tool to assist supervisors in asking key questions during staffing with PS Specialists that would trigger timely permanency decisions based on Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) timeframes. Alaska continues to experience a disparity among regional and judicial districts on the process and timeliness associated with filing a TPR petition and when the hearing is conducted. Root cause analysis in rural areas reveal difficulties in achieving active efforts for ICWA in some cases to move forward with TPR.

ITEM 24: NOTICE OF HEARINGS AND REVIEWS TO CAREGIVERS.

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 24 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that statewide, there is no standardized method in place to ensure that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care are consistently notified of and have a right to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child. The responsibility for the notification of caregivers of court hearings is still a task that the assigned PS Specialist must complete; and, due to their heavy caseloads and competing priorities it is not consistently achieved. OCS, in partnership with CIP, has implemented some strategies in the pilot project conducted in Fairbanks. Court parties are notified through the court system; however, caregivers are notified through the QA unit for any hearing conducted in alignment with the Administrative Review schedule. OCS will be evaluating the processes and determine if the current strategy would be feasible for long term noticing for relative caregivers and foster parents.

SYSTEMIC FACTOR C.

ITEM 25: QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 25 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that some elements of a functioning quality assurance system are in place through the state.

OCS has specifically selected CQI as a goal for the CFSP to identify needs and opportunities, research solutions, develop, modify, refine and better embed solid CQI at all levels of the agency with a focus on a CQI Implementation framework and improved outcomes for children and families. A CQI management process has been evolving with key decision changes influencing role designation for CQI activities. A decision was made to centralize all Regional Managers (PSM II's) into State Office to develop more of a systemic macro level purview of CQI. The move to centralization and discussion of roles began in FY20 and will continue into FY21. In addition, OCS has adopted and implemented a CQI framework using the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) model. The model is being utilized in forums such as the CMLT, Essential Services Meeting, and the Quarterly Permanency Meetings. The PDSA model and utilizing data, to include information system data, OSRI reviews, and contextual data, to drive decision making and practice changes is influencing a culture change and being ingrained in practice.

SYSTEMIC FACTOR D: STAFF AND PROVIDER TRAINING

This systemic factor of training incorporates an assessment of the State's performance in Items 26, 27, and 28. Alaska was not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Staff and Provider Training in the 2017 CSFR. None of the items in this systemic factor were rated as a Strength.

ITEM 26: INITIAL STAFF TRAINING.

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 26 based on information from the 2017 Statewide Assessment. Information showed that while the state provides initial training to state staff

who deliver services pursuant to the CFSP that includes the basic skills and knowledge required for their positions, the state is not adequately evaluating the training.

To address this need, during the last year an evaluation survey was created to be administered to all new front line protective services staff at 6 months and 12 months of employment to assess the effectiveness of training in relation to enhancing the competencies identified embodied by a successful child protection worker in Alaska. This evaluation is targeted to tie the training curriculum, schedule, and transfer of learning activities offered by CWA to competency enhancement. The survey was administered to the cohort who attended training in July 2019, marking 6 months of employment with the agency and sent each month after to the respective training cohort. Efforts are now focused on the process of survey administration and completion with no responses yet being compiled for evaluation. Aggregation of the survey data will be utilized to inform training needs or changes. In addition, the mentor program has been implemented since the 2017 statewide assessment to further enhance the transfer of learning for the first six months of new PSS employment that includes developing individualized training plans and real time feedback in the field to support competency and skill development.

ITEM 27: ONGOING STAFF TRAINING.

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 27 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that the state has no requirement for ongoing staff training hours or processes and tools to assess staff's ongoing training needs and evaluate the effectiveness of training offered.

In FY 20, a regional needs assessment occurred based on regional data, focus groups and leadership meetings to develop curricula for a sixth week of training to occur within the regions to specifically target regional training needs utilizing a CQI framework. The training was required for all PSS staff and management to comprehensively include all practice decision making positions to promote ongoing training and development.

During FY 20 OCS, in partnership with the mentor program and CWA, created a mandatory training webinar which provided practical application and training on utilizing protective factors in case planning. The webinar was presented at two different scheduled times and recorded to be placed on CWA's website for access. Future webinar topics are tentatively scheduled to cover engagement with fathers and case planning with incarcerated parents which have both been reflected as needs through the CSFR, case reviews and monthly Essential Services Scorecards.

The OCS mentors have been assigned on a rotation to draft and submit monthly frontline articles (the agency newsletter for staff) based on practice issues identified or key issues that are brought to the mentoring program through discussions with assigned new staff. The first article was authored by a mentor and issued in the February 2020 frontline with the topic on evidence collection supporting maltreatment determination and writing to justify substantiations.

In addition, supervisors may request limited mentorships for experienced staff to target specific practice competency areas. Since implementation, several staff have been mentored to target a competency area, such as identifying impending danger, for a limited time to enhance skills and knowledge.

ITEM 28: FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT TRAINING.

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 28 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that while Alaska has training requirements in place for foster parents, tracking and evaluation mechanisms, and opportunities for specialized training, the state does not

have training requirements for adoptive parents. Training requirements are in place for Residential Licensed Care Facilities, but there is no data on compliance with the requirements or the effectiveness of the training.

During FY20 the OCS Program Officer for Resource Families collaborated with Health Care Services to create a process for tracking compliance with training standards for Residential Licensed Care Facilities. Part of this process is tracking training specific to the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.

SYSTEMIC FACTOR E: SERVICE ARRAY

Systemic Factor E is assessed through the state's performance on Items 29 and 30. Alaska did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array during the 2017 CFSR.

ITEM 29: ARRAY OF SERVICES.

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 29 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed significant gaps in service array.

OCS has partnered with the Division of Behavioral Health to visit, statewide, communities and interviewing specifically related to services in the area and identification of needs. The Capacity Building Center collated all responses and provided OCS with an aggregated report detailing the themes and priority needs for areas around the state. OCS utilized this information to inform prevention planning services and also in review of grants provided and altering service needs and requests for proposals. It is anticipated the gap analysis report will continue to be utilized in moving forward with FFPSA efforts.

OCS continues to partner with DBH to improve service array to families through the 1115 Medicaid Waiver. DBH has contracted with an Administrative Service Organization, Optum, for provider management, provider maintenance, participant education, authorization, and utilization management. Optum is providing a child welfare liaison to further partner with OCS in provision of these services to the families serviced by the agency. OCS has also requested to use FFPSA transition funds to create a position within OCS that would partner with the ASO child welfare liaison to improve the linkage between families and appropriate services.

ITEM 30: INDIVIDUALIZING SERVICES.

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 30 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that the state is challenged to individualize services for several reasons.

Alaska continues the implementation efforts for the Cultural Resource Guide to meet the individualized service needs of families involved with the agency. The Cultural Resource Guide icon is now located on all computer desktops of OCS employees. Included in the guide is an appendix which provides a list of culturally appropriate services in each region of Alaska, as well as instructions for OCS workers on a process for securing and authorizing the purchase of cultural services through the use of state general funds. The icon is updated on a quarterly basis by the Regional ICWA Specialists and the Public Information Team for DHSS. The guide assists OCS staff in linking families to traditional healing/cultural services provided through traditional healers, tribal members/peer mentors and tribal elders.

In efforts to improve service array as a whole, OCS continues to provide staff training on parent and child engagement. Including parents in identifying services to meet their individual and family needs is key to strengthening families.

SYSTEMIC FACTOR F: AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Systemic Factor F is assessed by the state's performance in Items 31 and 32. The 2017 CFRS found that Alaska was in substantial conformity for this systemic factor as both Items 31 and 32 were rated as a strength.

ITEM 31: STATE ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS PURSUANT TO THE CFSP AND APSR.

Alaska received an overall rating of Strength for Item 31 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that Alaska effectively engages and consults with stakeholders pursuant to the goals and objectives of the CFSP and annual updates to the APSR.

OCS continues to have strong collaborations with regional, state, and national stakeholders and partners. OCS plans for improvement are developed with input and ongoing consultation with Tribal representatives, children and families, service providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies. OCS utilized focus group with stakeholders to gather information and feedback to assist in development of policies, programs and evaluations.

ITEM 32: COORDINATION OF CFSP SERVICES WITH OTHER FEDERAL PROGRAMS.

Alaska received an overall rating of Strength for Item 32 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that Alaska's services under the CFSP are conducted with services and benefits of other federal programs that assist the same service population.

Through memoranda of agreement, program coordination and improvements to technology for collaborative efforts, the state's services under the CFSP are being coordinated with services and benefits of other federal programs that assist the same service population. Alaska identified collaborations with the nine divisions of the State's Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Behavioral Health (former foster care youth Medicaid Eligibility), Division of Public Assistance, Department of Revenue, Department of Education, Bureau of Vital Information, Division of Health care Services (Medicaid), Department of Public Safety and 11 Tribes/Tribal entities

SYSTEMIC FACTOR G: FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION.

This Systemic Factor was assessed by the measurement of state performance on Items 33, 34, 35, and 36. Alaska was found to not be in substantial conformity with systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention as one of the four Items in this Systemic Factor was rated as a Strength.

ITEM 33: STANDARDS APPLIED EQUALLY.

Alaska received an overall rating of Strength for Item 33 based on information from the 2017 Statewide Assessment. Information showed that standards are applied equally to the licensed foster homes and residential child care institutions. Alaska does not anticipate any changes to this area that would negatively impact this rating.

ITEM 34: REQUIREMENTS FOR CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS.

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 34 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Alaska did not provide information to demonstrate that processes were in place for safety planning and monitoring when safety issues are identified in a child's placement, particularly in unlicensed relative homes.

To address this in FY 20, a protocol was developed and trained to outline practice and assessment needed when an APSIN flag hit occurs in an unlicensed relative home. A tool was also created as a quick reference guide to utilize when an APSIN flag occurs. The training was provided to each region in the latter part of FY 20 and evaluation will need to occur to determine if there is an improvement of assessing safety and monitoring when concerns arise in a child's placement.

ITEM 35: DILIGENT RECRUITMENT OF FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE HOMES.

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 35 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Information showed that the number of children who cannot be returned home exceed the number of available families.

Alaska utilizes regional data to develop recruitment and retention plans to target regional needs for foster care placements. Placements for large sibling groups, medically fragile children, teens and ICWA foster homes are identified as needed target areas for recruitment that Alaska will continue to identify strategies to strengthen placement options. There has been movement in collaboration more with the Division of Behavioral Health to identify appropriate placements for youth with behavioral and medical needs that cannot be met in foster homes and may not be appropriate for residential treatment facilities. Consultation of needs and placement options will continue to occur between OCS and other state partners for children and youth with challenging placement needs.

ITEM 36: STATE USE OF CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL RESOURCES FOR PERMANENT PLACEMENTS.

Alaska received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 36 based on information from the Statewide Assessment. Alaska reported it does not have a fully functioning system to ensure successful placement across regional or state lines. Adherence to processes to facilitate inter- and intra-jurisdictional placements are inconsistent. Information in the Statewide Assessment showed that Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children adoption home studies, licensure requests, and parent and relative requests are not completed timely.

OCS continues to make changes to the ICPC program to increase timeliness. A significant change was decreasing the amount of paperwork OCS staff needed to include in the ICPC packet. The ICPC Program Coordinator and Social Services Associate now have access to VacTrak, the OCS Legal Inbox and other resources to centralize the completion of the ICPC requests. This has created a streamlined process for getting ICPC requests to other states in a timely manner.

The ICPC Program Coordinator utilizes NEICE to track incoming and outgoing ICPC. The ICPC unit in state office maintains communication and relationships with other states to improve coordination across state lines.

In efforts to improve requests in state across regional lines, the ICPC Program Coordinator tracks Out of Town Requests (OTR) to ensure timely assignment and completion of requests. The Program Coordinator has on-going communication with regional OTR supervisors and managers to improve responsiveness to placement requests.

UPDATE TO THE PLAN FOR ENACTING THE STATE'S VISION AND PROGRESS MADE TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES

Alaska's 2020-2024 CFSP focuses on four primary goals that were identified during the creation of Alaska's vision for child welfare, which is to Empower Communities to Strengthen Families and Prevent Child Abuse. Each goal contains several strategies aimed to improve outcomes for children and families.

Goal #1: Develop a Skilled and Stable Child Protection Workforce				
Strategy 1.A: Recruitment and Retention Efforts				
Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By end of year 2017, the vacancy and turnover rate at OCS was at 49% • High turnover rates impacts all areas of case practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a five year staff recruitment and retention plan. • Develop and implement standardized and centralized recruitment. Strategies and tools including longevity bonuses, educational stipends and leave, well-being leave and staff recognition policies. • Update and embed agency vision, mission, and values through strategic communication plan. • Statewide Executive Team (SET) will work with Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Human Resources (HR) to create recruitment deliverables. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 year plan will be created by March 2020. • Full implementation of agency Mission, Vision, and Values by March 2020. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update and embed agency vision, mission, and values through strategic communication plan to include training and mentorship. • Coordination with DHSS HR on retention and recruitment strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease turnover rate to 35-40% within 5 years.
<p>2020 Update: OCS has created a 5 Year Staff Recruitment and Retention Plan in effort to reduce staff turnover rate to 35-40% within five years. Objectives on this plan that were implemented during 2019 were longevity bonuses for Protective Services Staff employed with the agency in good standing for two years or longer, educational stipends, and additional well-being leave. In other efforts to retain staff OCS refreshed the agency Mission, Vision and Values and are working to implement this during FY21. OCS has further partnered with DHSS Human Resources to update postings for OCS positions in effort to entice more applicants by indicating the benefits of state employment as well as rewards of working with children and families. Efforts to target new social work graduates from universities within and outside of the state have also occurred.</p>				

Strategy 1.B: New Staff Training, Transfer of Learning, and Case Assignment				
Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to evaluate and enhance existing training and extend to 6 weeks per House Bill (HB) 151. • High caseloads negatively impacting quality efforts and engagement. • Lack statewide consistency in how new staff are oriented to the agency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain quality staff through enhanced training and reduced caseloads. • Mentor program will be fully implemented, outlined in policy, with an evaluation component. • Implement HB 151 gradual case load requirements and case load average by June 2020. • Implement a statewide first year orientation program for new employees that includes required timelines for competency based evaluations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training through the Child Welfare Academy (CWA) will be extended to 6 weeks beginning July 2019. Training will occur in phases to enhance transfer of learning (TOL) through mentorship and field practice. • Workgroup through the Change Management Leadership Team (CMLT) will develop an implementation process for the competency based evaluation for PSS I/II staff by 2020. • Monitoring and reporting mechanism for new case load assignments will be developed by June 2020. • By November of 2019 OCS leadership will implement a required new employee orientation packet that outlines the first year of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Partnership with the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) develop measurement and feedback strategies to track the effectiveness of training and TOL. • Develop a case assignment protocol, to align with the HB 151 case load average requirements. Embed protocol in the Child Protective Services (CPS) manual • Create a quarterly all staff mandatory webinar training program. Topics will be identified by data from and Essential Services Scorecard and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI). • Training will be provided to supervisors and managers for utilization and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CWA evaluation and Annual staff survey will demonstrate that staff feel their training and orientation successfully prepared them for their position. • At least 50% of the frontline caseworkers in the state will have a caseload average of 13. • Staff will report feeling more competent in their practice after implementation of changes to new employee and on-going training.

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
		onboarding for a new employee.	purpose of the orientation packet and the onboarding process.	

2020 Update: Additional efforts to retain staff and develop a competent workforce include, increasing staff training from 5 weeks to 6 weeks with the sixth week being regionally focused. Policy and procedures have been put in place to implement the HB 151 gradual case load requirements. The mentor program has been fully implemented, and is currently being evaluated, to support staff in the transfer of learning from the classroom to the field. There is a process implemented for frontline protective services staff to receive competency based evaluations to enhance competencies improving practice in service to families and children.

Strategy 1.C: Improved, Consistent, Meaningful Supervision, on the Job Support, Case Guidance and Mentoring

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of consistent and quality supervision statewide. • Lack of standardized training for supervisors. • Lack of competency based evaluations for supervisors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisors consistently use data in supervisions with case carrying staff. • Standardized training plan for new and current supervisors • Develop and implement a supervisory competency based evaluation by July 2020. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement an the Online Resource for the Children of Alaska (ORCA) Desktop Feature to allow supervisors real time access to individual case worker data by January 2020. • Standards will be developed for all new and current supervisors to attend trainings including Academy for Supervisors through Department of Personnel and Labor Relations (DOP), CWA Supervisor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisory Leadership Council (SLC) and CMLT to develop a work plan to ensure consistent standards of supervision across the agency. Tools will be included to assist supervisors in data driven supervision to track and staff key decision points in a case, identify needs and provide areas of coaching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the annual Staff survey, staff will report they receive meaningful and consistent supervision. • On the annual Staff survey, supervisors will report they receive consistent training on coaching techniques, supervisory requirements, and use of data in supervision. • The implemented supervisor competency based evaluation will demonstrate enhanced

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
		training, and Coaching Supervisors to Best Practices (CSBP) at CWA by 2020.		competencies of supervisors and utilization of data, coaching and worker wellbeing in consistent staffing.

2020 Update: Efforts to retain staff include, enhanced supervision and on the job support. The Supervisory Leadership Council (SLC) is working on a standardized training plan for new and current supervisors. There are plans to implement this training plan during FY 2021. A workgroup through Change Management Leadership Team (CMLT) is progressing in the development of a supervisory competency based evaluation scheduled to be implemented early FY 2021. SLC has created a standardized tool for supervision to be data driven and track key decision points in a case. This is being piloted currently and will be implemented statewide as the pilot is evaluated. The Desktop feature has been developed within ORCA and is currently being utilized across the state to track, in real time, individual caseworker data.

Goal #2: Prioritize Identified Essential Child Protection Services

Strategy 2.A: Improved Timeliness, Accuracy, and Consistency of Protective Services Reports (PSR) and Initial Assessments (IA)

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intake is not currently staffed on the weekends and after standard work hours. • Not timely initiating cases, especially Priority 3s (P-3), lack of timely and accurate case closures. • Inaccurate identification of safety threats and ineffective monitoring of safety plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine and continue efforts to standardize Centralized intake. • Increase timely initiations to Priority 3 reports. • Require supervisory staffing note in ORCA if initiation is not going to occur within timeframes. • Improve the timely and accurate completion of initial assessments. • Cases determined to need on-going safety management will have their needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By August of 2019, Intake Specialists will be in the office extended hours on weekends and from 7am until midnight during the weekdays. • ORCA and Case Review data monitoring will indicate timely initiation of P-3 reports in 75% of cases by July 2021. • Initial Assessment initiations will be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued CQI efforts to improve quality of reports and a PSR Dispute Process are being developed. • Centralized Intake Manager conducts training with regional staff and outreach to solicit feedback. • IA workgroup will develop and implement a webinar training and competency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely and accurate assessment of safety for children as evidenced by ORCA and Quality Assurance (QA) outcome data. • The Onsite Review Instrument (OSRI) reviews will indicate that children are safely maintained in the parent home when appropriate.

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of process for assessing risk and child safety when a concern is reported in a Resource Family Home. 	<p>safety managed in the parent's home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement clear process for assessing risk and child safety timely when an Alaska Public Safety Information Network (APSIN) flag hit reveals a new safety concern to the child in the unlicensed Resource Family Home. 	<p>included in the Essential Services Scorecard by July 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By July 2020 monitor the supervisor staffing report in ORCA to ensure compliance with documented reasons why an IA is not being initiated timely. • By March 2020 develop CQI system with measurements, progress timeframes and a feedback loop with staff, regional managers and leadership to track and monitor priority response times. • ORCA and Case Review data monitoring will indicate timely completion and accurate assessments in 75% of cases by July 2024. • By September 2020 CQI, Research Unit, and QA, in addition to stakeholder feedback will conduct a root 	<p>based test for priority response times.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision guidance developed by SLC and CMLT for supervisors to utilize ORCA reports/desktop feature to track initiation rates for Priority 3 reports. • IA workgroup will develop a guide for practice strategies to better manage workload adjustments when turnover occurs. • Develop and implement policy for supervisory oversight requiring the use of ORCA reports/desktop features to identify open Initial Assessments, and staff these with the PSS to clarify steps needed to complete accurate and quality assessment of all open reports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisory staffing ORCA report will demonstrate that supervisors are entering a supervisory staffing note for delayed initiations 90% of the time by end of CFSP. • Policy and procedure defines process for assessing safety of children when a new concern is received on an unlicensed Resource Family Home.

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
		<p>cause analysis to identify systemic issues and/or practice model issues that cause initial assessments to not be completed timely and accurately.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By June of 2024 identify and implement appropriate interventions based on the root cause analysis for the IA process. Including evaluation of the intervention. • Develop policy and procedure for response to APSIN flag hits in unlicensed Resource Family Homes by June 2020. 	<p>Measured through OSRI case review.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisory training and mentorship related to accurate assessment of risk and intervention decisions. 	

2020 Update: The Program Officer for the Resource Family Section created a clear strategy and process for assessing when an APSIN flag hit is received in a Resource Family home. A training was created to reinforce the expectation that each APSIN flag hit alert must be responded to and sent to the APSIN unit. Training has been provided in 2 of the five regions. OCS has experienced delays in the training due to COVID-19. Root cause problem analysis, data collection, and case reviews were conducted in coordination with the PIP goal number 2. The activity was expanded to hold statewide leadership focus groups to discuss issues with the quality and timeliness of Initial Assessments. Through the problem analysis work two direct links were identified (1) the volume of initial assessments that need to be conducted and (2) accountability. Alaska submitted a revision strategy that was approved by CB in March of 2020. Efforts are underway to achieve the new strategies based on the Investigations and Initial Assessment pilot.

Strategy 2.B: Build Infrastructure and Implement Statewide In Home Services and Increase Service Array Linkage

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alaska is lacking an in-home services model. Families are not adequately linked to services. Families will be connected with culturally appropriate services. Competencies to identify when children can be returned to the family home and appropriate safety planning and monitoring are lacking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement an in-home services model. A system for collecting qualitative/case review data on in-home cases established. Enhance supervisory competency and oversight of safety planning and assessment Develop CQI process for Service Array. Cultural Resource Guide will be fully implemented for use by staff. The mentor program will reinforce training and transfer of learning regarding assessment of parental behavioral change, safety planning and monitoring during a trial home visit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By November 2019 review promising practices, existing policy, and outcomes for in home cases in Alaska to assist in needs assessment and CQI. By June of 2022 implement in-home model pilot in selected region and evaluate effectiveness prior to scaling up statewide. In-home model will be fully implemented with In Home Services Policy and Procedures by June of 2024. By February 2020 develop a targeted staffing process, that includes safety measurement tools, to plan for when children can safely return home for a trial home visit and on-going safety monitoring. Partner with Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training to staff and community partners. OCS and CWA will ensure that all supervisory staff complete the coaching program to ensure enhanced competency to safety plan, assess parents' behavior change, level of engagement and sustainability of child safety in the parents' home. Develop and implement supervisory strategies and timeframes for meeting with workers specific to monitoring safety, parent progress and continued assessment of need and engagement. Follow up training and feedback loop regarding implementation and usefulness of the Cultural 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development and implementation of an in-home services model. OSRI reviews will indicate an increase in compliance for Safety Outcome 2 and Well-Being Outcome 1. Outcomes from OSRI reviews will demonstrate that children remain safely in their own homes whenever possible.

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
		and contractor to conduct Behavioral Health Services Gap Analysis by July 2019. • By September 2020 develop online tools and other resources for staff to stay informed about new and current services and referral procedures in their communities. • By March 2021 develop a measurement plan to assess improved service accessibility, availability, and delivery of new Home-Based Family Treatment and Traditional Healing services.	Resource Guide. • Mentors provide training and transfer of learning to new OCS front line protective services specialists on assessment of parental behavioral change, safety planning and monitoring of safety. • Train staff on the new policy and procedure for assessing unlicensed Resource Families when an APSIN flag hit occurs.	

2020 Update: OCS is currently evaluating in home programs and policies within Alaska and other states. The department is in the process of finalizing the Family First Prevention Services Plan which will serve families with their children remaining in the home. OCS has also created a grant opportunity for Title IV-E Tribes and Tribal Organizations to serve a caseload of families who would benefit from services with safety managed in the home environment. OCS has partnered with CWA to provide technical support and training for the Tribal partners. The Cultural Resource Guide has been fully implemented. Training has occurred and all OCS staff have the Cultural Resource Guide icon on their desktop. The Guide is routinely updated by the Regional ICWA Specialists in coordination with the DHSS Public Information Team. The Mentor Program developed a transfer of learning tool to provide a guide of pertinent topics that need to be trained and mentored to new staff which includes the assessment of safety of children in the home through safety planning and assessment of parental behavioral change for trial home visits.

Strategy 2.C: Improve Engagement with Parents and Relatives				
Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earlier identification and engagement of relatives. • Lack of engagement with parents through case worker visits and case planning. • Family Contact is inconsistently administered statewide and lacks meaningful family engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase engagement with relatives and parents. • Clear direction will be provided, to each level of the agency, on what reports they are required to use during supervision to ensure early identification and engagement of parents and relatives. • Partner with Tribes through Tribal State Compacting to continue efforts on Relative Search and engagement. • Partner with community agencies to enhance the quality and frequency of family contact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed supervisory certification of relative search required by HB 151 by September 2019. • ORCA Research Unit will review reports required to ensure data is clear, easily accessible, and quick launch time by January 2021. • A pilot of community engaged family contact to include training will occur in the Mat Su Valley in November 2019. • The family contact pilot will be evaluated for impact to family engagement and permanency outcomes until June 2022. • If family contact pilot evaluation is positive, scaling up incrementally statewide will occur by June 2024. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisors will receive training on elements of a case including, relative search and notification, parent engagement and timely initial referral for services, and case worker visits (CWV), that are required to be staffed at point of removal. • Protective Services Managers will be required to review CWV data, relative search data, and case plan data during each supervision with PSS IV. • Establish evaluation of successful activities and method for modification, compared to existing OCS processes for relative search. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORCA reports will reflect an increased number of children in care in a relative placement. • Noticing data will reflect relatives are identified and noticed of their right to request placement at the earliest need of out of home placement. • OSRI reviews will indicate improvements to Permanency Outcome 2.
2020 Update: Training on the required supervisory certification of relative search was provided to all supervisors and managers in FY19. Further evaluation demonstrated the need for a more thoughtful				

implementation plan other than the additionally administrative task of entering a supervisory staffing note. Some regions have been very thorough in their certification and there is potential this could be embedded statewide due to the new IA pilot. OCS continues to collaborate with Tribes and Tribal Organizations through the Compact for the relative search scope of work. Co-signers of the compact are currently completing initial and on-going relative searches for cases referred. The family contact scope of work will be implemented in early FY20. A Request for Proposal for family contact (grant) services in the urban areas of the State. Services will be aligned for consistency in the quality and frequency of family contact. ORCA has reviewed reports and made updates to the Essential Services Scorecard, Permanency Scorecard, and the Desktop feature to maintain that reports are easily accessible with quick launch times.

Strategy 2.D: Increase Parental Engagement and Reduce Time to Permanency through OCS Strategies and Joint OCS/CIP Strategies

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alaska does not achieve timely permanency. Lack of accountability and progress due to length of time between court hearings following the 12 month permanency hearing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Court Improvement Project (CIP) and OCS will develop several new strategies to increase timeliness to permanency. OCS will implement strategies for supervisory oversight of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) timeframes to reduce time to permanency. Permanency Planning Specialists will track potential barriers to permanency and find ways to remove barriers to permanency. Develop 3-4 required supervisory staffing questions for cases at 9 months which are nearing the 12 months ASFA decision, and monthly thereafter, and expectations to identify activities to achieve permanency. Targeted staffing process will be created for individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benchcards will be updated to focus on permanency and parental engagement to include Judiciary oversight of case plans, family contact, and tasks to be completed for the next hearing by September 2019. Institute additional court hearings to occur every 6 months after a permanency hearing to support continued parental engagement and increased judicial oversight of deadlines at a pilot site by September 2019. Create a training video for parents related to the Child In Need of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judges will be trained on the importance of permanency and use of the updated bench cards. Pre-and Post-Test will be utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of the training. Develop and implement a mechanism for data collection and reporting on the pilot strategies quarterly and OCS/CIP meetings. Implement a process for all new parents in CINA court to view the video. Training and mentorship to all staff and supervisors on ASFA timeframes and compelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ORCA and Court Data will reflect decreased time to permanency for children in care at the pilot location. Court parties will report Increased parental engagement in court process and case planning through CIP evaluation Court parties will report transparency of case progress in court hearings through CIP evaluation Evaluation of the pilot site will inform decisions on scaling out statewide with associated implementation timeframe planning.

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
	cases where the child(ren) have been in care for more than 12 months and continue with a primary goal of reunification, children in care more than 24 months and are placed with a relative for 6 months or longer, legally free children who are not placed in a permanent home, and children in Trial Home Visit (THV) longer than 180 days.	<p>Aid (CINA) process, narrated from a parent's perspective by June 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a template designed to give parents at the conclusion of hearings clarifying case plan activities, next hearing dates, and follow up items to be piloted by September 2019. • Evaluation of the pilot will inform scaling out to other judicial districts by June 2022. • If the evaluation deems that the pilot is successful, the strategies will be rolled out statewide by June 2024. 	<p>reasons, to include supervisory guidance, court report process and CQI feedback loop.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for Permanency Specialists and their supervisors. 	

2020 Update: OCS continues to partner with the Court Improvement Project to improve engagement of parents and relatives. Case review hearing were successfully scheduled and heard at six month intervals in the Fairbanks district. The Case Review benchcard was completed and is being piloted during hearings. The Case Review Findings court order was also created and initial piloting resulted in revisions being required. During FY20 CIP and Casey Family Programs hosted a legal training on permanency that was attended by multi-disciplinary CINA practitioners including judges, GALs, OCS staff, Tribal Representatives, CASAs, agency and parent attorneys. A training is being created that will include pre and posttests. OCS staff are currently using the "To Do" form and providing it to parents at the conclusion of the hearing. OCS has implemented a Statewide Quarterly Permanency Meeting to review permanency related regional data and discuss root issues and strategies.

Goal 3: Partner with Tribes and Community Agencies to Provide Supports and Services to Families.				
Strategy 3.A: Plans of Safe Care				
Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alaska has a lack of community engagement and meaningful multi-disciplinary engagement for Plans of Safe Care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Babies with pre-natal substance exposure and the affected family or caregivers receive the treatment and support needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an action plan for a pilot testing community based Plans of Safe Care in the Mat-Su Valley by January 2020. Utilize CQI to evaluate pilot implementation to inform statewide rollout and timeframe planning by January 2021. If evaluation is positive rollout Plans of Safe Care Statewide by June 2024. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with other divisions within DHSS, non-state entities and national consultants to create a pilot and roll out Statewide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All substance affected babies will have a Plan for Safe Care. Support will be provided to babies, and their families, who are affected by substance use and prenatal substance exposure. OCS will accurately report all instances of substance affected babies and the number of Plans of Safe Care.
2020 Update: OCS continues to develop Plans of Safe Care (POSC) in collaboration with service providers, local medical providers, other divisions of DHSS, Tribes, and the faith based community. Pilot sites are identified in Juneau and the Mat-Su Valley. OCS intends to utilize a portion of the FFPSA transition funds to support a service provider in hiring a position to do the hands on work with families for POSC. OCS is also making changes to the Circles of Support grant for those agencies to also turn their focus to POSC. An RSA with the Child Welfare Academy is being developed to provide training and technical assistance to the specialists working with families on POSC.				
Strategy 3.B: Link at risk families identified in screened out reports to Tribal and Community Services				
Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support is not provided to families reported to, but screened out by OCS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a system for which families receive services following a screened out report in efforts to prevent additional reports and potential screen ins. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage key stakeholders in the exploration stage, including parents and youth by June 2020. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide for dedicated state and local staff to implement the early intervention program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in repeat screen outs for families in the piloted locations through PSR data.

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore statutory support, including fiscal allocations, and contractual authority for data sharing by FY 2021. • Initiate a demonstration pilot for Mat-Su by January 2021. • Utilize CQI to evaluate pilot implementation to inform statewide rollout and timeframe planning by January 2023. • If evaluation is positive rollout Plans of Safe Care Statewide by June 2024. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with Tribes to maintain specific strategies are integrated into program development, including linkages with culturally specific community providers. • Provide training and application of learning opportunities for CQI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piloted community based agencies report families being served through screen out reports.

2020 Update: OCS has developed a process for sending screened out Protective Services Reports to tribes. A position has been identified within Intake to e-mail the screened out reports through a secure e-mail system. Through Tribal State Collaboration meetings as well as Tribal Compacting, OCS is encouraging Tribes and Tribal Organizations to make contact with the families of these screened out reports.

Strategy 3.C: Develop and implement an approved Title IV-E Prevention Program Plan

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize new opportunities under the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) to support the prevention of families from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alaska will consult and coordinate with Tribal, State and private entities in the development of a prevention program to ensure a continuum of care for children, parents and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCS will submit a Title IV-E Prevention plan to the Children's Bureau by December 2019. • OCS will implement prevention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child welfare workforce will be trained on the development of family prevention plan. • Identify evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORCA reports will demonstrate that more children are being served in their home and safely decrease the number of

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
entering the child welfare system.	caregivers receiving prevention services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify eligibility for candidates for care population. Identify and rate prevention services to be included in the prevention program. 	services by October 2021. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a method for implementing and monitoring prevention services with fidelity. 	strategy for prevention services.	children in out of home care.

2020 Update: OCS began planning for the Family First Prevention Services Act by engaging four main stakeholder groups; community-based services, Tribal IV-E, child welfare workforce, and Medicaid. The OCS Director developed a master FFPSA power point and started holding several webinars for stakeholders all across the state, as is standard operating procedure due to the vastness and cost of doing business in Alaska. OCS also brought together leaders within the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) to explore deepening relationships to enhance services for joint interventions with families involved in the child welfare system. Child and family eligibility for the Title IV-E Prevention Program is based on a child being at imminent risk of entry into the foster care, but able to safely remain at home or in a kinship placement with receipt of approved well supported evidence-based services in conjunction with other relevant services under the child's prevention plan. A child exiting foster care to a trial home visit with their caregiver, or a child in foster care who is a pregnant or parenting foster youth are also eligible for prevention services under the Title IV-E Prevention Program. Alaska's initial Title IV-E service array will be limited to the select services that are currently approved through the Title IV-E Clearinghouse and services deemed to be culturally appropriate and provided through a Title IV-E Tribe or Tribal organization to Alaska Native families with a Prevention Plan. OCS submitted a draft of the Title IV-E Prevention Plan in January of 2020. Feedback was received for improvement of the plan which will be submitted in late summer of 2020.

Goal 4: Build a Culture Dedicated to Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Informed Data Driven Decision Making.

Strategy 4.A: Create a CQI System that Engages the Entire Child Welfare System

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No common guiding principles, values, or processes for CQI that is sustainable across the agency. Differing values and expectations on what CQI is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a CQI Organizational Structure, and management process that clearly defines the leadership role in CQI, embeds CQI processes with all programing efforts and modifications to that program changes are made based on CQI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restructuring Executive Steering Committee (ESC) to CMLT to be completed by September 2020. Identify and utilize a CQI implementation framework to be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize the Center for States in evaluating and consultation for redesign, formalize and implement a CQI work plan. Utilize Center for States to assist in the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include data elements as a standing agenda item in the restructured CMLT to support data driven decision making. Evaluate and document implemented

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<p>and should be for the agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCS implements new programs but is lacking on the necessary focused follow-through for implementation that allows for changes to new initiatives along the way. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reorganization of the CQI functions into one statewide unit, whereby, all data, quality assurance, reporting, data analysis, evaluation, and findings are centralized. 	<p>completed by September 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralization of CQI staff functions into one centralized unit by September 2020. • Imbed a CQI culture throughout the agency across organizational units and all staffing levels by June 2024. 	<p>evaluation of the capacity of the ESC and restructure to implement CQI processes to support strategies and outcomes.</p>	<p>program improvement measures and the decision to continue, adapt or discard improvement interventions based on the evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The annual staff survey will reflect staff of all levels feeling included in CQI activities by the end of the CFSP.

2020 Update: A CQI management process is evolving and being infused in the management culture at OCS. All key practice decision changes are made with a lens of incorporating a plan for CQI. OCS made the decision to centralize Regional Managers (PSM II) into State Office to develop more of a systemic macro level purview of CQI. In addition OCS has adopted a CQI framework using the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) model. This model has been trained and utilized in all change management forums such as the CMLT, Essential Services Meeting, and Quarterly Statewide Permanency Meetings. Cultivation of CQI culture will be on-going throughout the five year plan. In addition, OCS has partnered with the Capacity Building Center to provide targeted CQI training to leadership staff members to embed CQI practices within the regions.

Strategy 4.B: Integration of Internal and External Stakeholder's Data Sources in the OCS CQI process

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No formal process to solicit internal and external stakeholder input feedback at all levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of internal and external stakeholder's data sources in the OCS CQI process for robust assessment and evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement formalized ingrained processes for inclusion of key internal and external stakeholders including roles and data sources by the completion of the CFSP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a feedback loop as a part of the CQI process involving internal and external key stakeholders. • Utilize the Center for States in evaluating and consultation for redesign, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an institutionalized method and process for providing feedback to stakeholders and adjusting programs and processes that will be reflected in reporting of agency activities

Concern/ Focus	Objectives:	Measure of Progress and Timeline:	Staff Training, Technical Assistance, Implementation Supports	Projected Outcomes
			formalize and implement a CQI work plan.	

QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

FOUNDATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Alaska administers the Quality Assurance system and CQI framework through its state office to provide oversight and consistency in implementation. The Quality Assurance unit is centralized and is responsible for qualitative case reviews, critical incident case reviews and Administrative Reviews. The makeup of the unit is six Program Coordinators and a Research Analyst with management from a Program Officer.

In 2019, Alaska adopted a CQI framework necessitating a re-organization of the structure for CQI implementation and activities. Alaska uses the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) model to reinforce the utilization of CQI in practice analysis, system change and implementation. The re-organization included re-branding of a statewide leadership team focused on CQI and named the Change Management Leadership Team (CMLT). CMLT meets on a monthly basis to discuss and assess PDSA implementation activities.

Also, in 2019, Alaska launched the Essential Services Meeting to occur on a monthly basis. The participants include leadership positions in State Office and all Protective Services Managers I and II's from each region. The focus is to review and discuss data on identified essential services on the regional level. A quarterly Permanency Meeting was also re-designed to distribute permanency data and creation of PDSA's to impact permanency on a regional level.

Alaska partnered with the Capacity Building Center to assess capacity for CQI and identified gaps in the CQI structure and training. Through this the PDSA model was adopted and training was provided to members of CMLT and Essential Services. In FY 2021, targeted training on CQI with the Capacity Building Center will occur with leadership positions and members of these statewide structures.

The Quality Assurance unit is highly trained and experienced in the use of the Federal OSRI tool and Alaska's practice model. This enables the unit to independently review cases and reliability is checked through group case review trainings. In 2019, technical assistance was provided by Region 10 and the Children's Bureau regarding the OSRI and defining criteria of case items.

QUALITY DATA COLLECTION

Alaska has several mechanisms for collection of qualitative and quantitative data and assurances of data accuracy. Through the CQI assessment process, Alaska conducted a thorough review of the information gathered and data output from the CCWIS system. The assessment verified that there is procedures in place to review data accuracy, provision of data dictionaries and multiple live access reports managed by the Research Unit. Data collected and further reported is aligned with requirements and guidelines provided by the Children's Bureau. Data tests are completed to verify accuracy of data reported from the CCWIS system and issues resolved prior to submission. Alaska is confident in its submission of AFCARS and NCANDS data in relation to issued requirements and memorandums.

Qualitative data is collected through various means of case reviews, surveys and focus groups. Currently, Alaska is under a measurement plan for the PIP therefore case reviews are conducted under the measurement plan structure of the QA unit with a secondary review prior to submission for Federal review in the OSRI. Internal reliability testing is conducted with QA staff conducting reviews on a single case for training and item application. QA staff are trained and follow the written procedures developed for case review and completion of the OSRI instrument.

Surveys are analyzed and provided through the Research Analyst, which provides statistical analysis of some data and enhanced visual of qualitative narratives.

CASE RECORD REVIEW DATA AND PROCESSING

For FY 20 and FY 21, Alaska is conducting case reviews as identified in the approved measurement plan for the PIP. The sample is extracted from the Research Analyst aligned with the requirements of the sample for the review period. Cases are sampled from the targeted review sites of the PIP and conducted as prescribed in the Federal OSRI tool. Alaska follows all of the case review requirements to include interviews where applicable with caseworkers, children, youth, parents, foster parents, GAL's and tribal staff to support the ratings of items in the areas of safety, permanency and well-being.

Cases are reviewed by a QA program coordinator with a secondary review conducted by another QA member. A sample of cases is provided for oversight review by the Children's Bureau contractors. After approval of cases and a field site visit is completed, statistical analysis is completed on each item area. A field report is completed by the QA unit, which includes the statistical analysis of the items along with a narrative describing the practice seen for each item as demonstrated in the case reviews. Debrief meetings are scheduled with the field office to discuss item ratings and facilitating dialogue regarding practice strengths and areas needed improvement.

ANALYSIS AND DISSEMINATION OF QUALITY DATA

Dissemination of quality data is centralized through the Research Unit and the Quality Assurance Unit. This provides consistency in the data analyzation and format for dissemination. Alaska's SACWIS system houses several reports that can be accessed on demand by OCS staff to aid in case management, supervision and systemic review of essential services for internal need of quality data. Public or stakeholder inquiries of data is filtered through the Research Unit, providing consistency in data production and presentation.

Within the Quality Assurance Unit, the Research Analyst analyzes all surveys and case record review reports. This allows specific training to the items and related narrative that provides consistency in analysis and data consumption. The Quality Assurance Unit also produces critical incident reports that is disseminated to state and regional leadership for debriefing and understanding. An annual report is being developed for FY 21 that will collate all fatality reviews to provide a systemic overview of fatalities to better discern improvement for prevention.

FEEDBACK TO STAKEHOLDERS AND DECISION MAKERS AND ADJUSTMENT OF PROGRAMS AND PROCESS

OCS utilizes several vehicles in providing feedback internally and externally. The main vein of program and process information is generated through CMLT. CMLT is comprised of OCS leadership staff, program coordinators and external stakeholders such as the Child Welfare Academy. Within CMLT, all points of PDSA are discussed and report out of barriers, successes and implementation completion. This functions as a centralized information sharing point that filters updates internally through regions, other state office staff, and stakeholders through the representatives on CMLT. All program improvement plan strategies are coordinated and implemented through CMLT.

Program updates and progress are presented through several partnership forums that OCS collaborates in with stakeholders. These data information sharing collectives include Tribal State Collaboration, Tribal Compacting, Citizen Review Panel, Court Improvement Project, Foster Parent Advisory Board, Child Welfare Academy/School of Social Work and the youth advisory group Facing Foster Care in Alaska. Feedback to these organized collectives include PIP progress and strategies as well as essential services data to include safety and permanency measures.

UPDATE ON THE SERVICE DESCRIPTIONS

STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES CHILD WELFARE SERVICES PROGRAM (TITLE IV-B, SUBPART 1)

All title IV-B I funding received is awarded to community-based family services grants. The FFY19 allocation of IV-B I funding was \$100,500, which provided a limited amount of funding for family preservation in the communities of Wasilla, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Nome and Ketchikan. In SFY 2019, 155 families and 305 children were served by this program. These services are designed to serve families and children who have been determined by OCS to be at risk of out-of-home placement and/or children who are transitioning to or recently placed back in the home with their families after an out of home placement. The services funded through the family preservation grant are service coordination, service plan implementation and monitoring, assessment of family progress, parent education and support; and transportation services.

Services for Children Adopted from Other Countries (section 422(b)(11) of the Act)

OCS awards a grant to The Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF) to provide training and support to adoptive families in order to promote safe and strong homes for adoptive children. Families can access the grant services regardless of if they adopted domestically or internationally. ACRF reports that in the past year they provided support for approximately 10 families who are adopting or have already adopted a child from another country. In the past year, no children were identified as entering foster care after being adopted from other countries.

Services for Children Under the Age of Five (section 422(b)(18) of the Act)

Through Alaska's Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC), the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) partners with other state organizations and non-government entities to ensure the integration and alignment of services to address the developmental needs of all vulnerable children under the age of five in Alaska. The AECCC was created in 2010 to promote positive development, improve health and mental health outcomes and school readiness for Alaska's children prenatal through age eight. Members of AECCC include the Commissioners of the Department of Health and Social Services, the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), the Department of Labor, and the Department of Public Safety; a representative from the Governor's Office; the DEED Partnership Liaison; the Child Care Program Manager; the Part C/Early Intervention Manager; the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Manager; Alaska Infant Learning Program Association, Alaska Head Start Association, Alaska child care resource & referral network (thread), Alaska Native Health, the Children's Trust, Chamber of Commerce, and mental health providers.

DHSS is the state government agency under which the Office of Children's Services is administered and it is also the agency that houses many other divisions with programs that fund and address the developmental needs of all vulnerable children under five years of age. These activities and programs include:

- **Denali KidCare.** Administered through the Division of Health Care Services, Alaska's Federal Children's Health Insurance Program is known as Denali KidCare. The program offers comprehensive health insurance coverage for children and teens. Additionally, the CHIP program is required to partner with the Public Health, Maternal Child Health, OCS and DJJ to ensure child and adolescent access to Medicaid services and delivery of quality health care, including children with special health care needs to all Alaskan children.

- **Early Periodic Screening Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT).** The EPSDT program provides coverage of all medically necessary Medicaid services to correct or ameliorate a child's physical or mental condition, regardless of whether such services are covered under a State's Medicaid State Plan. All children in state custody receive an EPSDT screening within 30 days from removal.
- **The Infant Learning Program (ILP).** Housed in the Division of Senior and Disability Services ensures that all infants and toddlers with disabilities in the State who are eligible for early intervention services are identified, located, evaluated and provided appropriate services. As required by federal law, this program utilizes a Child Find System that is coordinated with:
 - Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV)
 - Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT)
 - Programs under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000
 - Head Start and Early Head Start
 - SSI program under Title XVI of the SS Act
 - Child protection and child welfare programs under the state agency responsible for administering the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)
 - Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI)
 - Child care programs in the state

In accordance with CAPTA, ILP complies with federally required referrals from the State agency (OCS) responsible to substantiated allegations of child abuse. These electronic referral records are automatically retrieved from the ORCA data system every night. These referrals are sent to database that interfaces with all of the ILP providers throughout the State. Approximately 23% of all referrals to the program come from OCS.

- **Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS).** The Women's Children's and Family Health (WCFH) section, housed in the Division of Public Health, administers the federally-funded Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant for Alaska. This grant aims to integrate and coordinate services for the early childhood population and to improve outcomes in children's developmental health and family well-being indicators. This work is community-based in nature. The focus of this grant is to increase the use of evidence-based developmental screening. Often, developmental concerns aren't identified until a child enters school. This project aims to identify those concerns early and connect families with needed supports.

ECCS focuses on five critical components:

- Collective impact;
 - Continuous Quality Improvement;
 - Help Me Grow;
 - Strengthening Families; and
 - Technical assistance.
- **Complex Behavioral Collaborative (CBC).** Housed within the DBH the CBC helps providers meet the needs of Medicaid clients with complex needs who are often aggressive, assaultive and difficult to support. The CBC program offers consultation and training to providers and clients' natural supports, including family members.

Efforts to Track and Prevent Child Maltreatment Deaths

Over the past year, OCS has collaborated with DPH to develop criteria for inclusion. An OCS leadership member has served on a multi-disciplinary workgroup that began a couple of years ago and ended during FY19. This group was led by DPH to develop a child death classification system that could be used to

consistently classify all child deaths. This method is currently being tested by DPH as part of the Child Death Review committee. OCS has also been exploring how other states publish child maltreatment deaths and most recently reviewed the Arizona web site and are considering replicating a version of that.

An OCS representative participates in the monthly Maternal and Child Death Review Team. This opportunity provides collaboration between medical, law enforcement and OCS to discuss each case and review areas that partners may learn from or identify needs for protocol or practice change. Participation in this meeting has identified cases in which OCS was not notified through the intake process, but concerns of safety of children are present, allowing OCS to proceed with reports to intake for investigation.

In FY 20, each child maltreatment death or suspicion of maltreatment with OCS history received a child fatality review. The review report, once finished, is disseminated to Regional leadership in which the death occurred, the Director, Division Operations Manager and Administrator at OCS. A debrief and discussion is scheduled with regional management to address any concerns or opportunity for learning. An annual report is being created that will be published in FY 21 to provide an overview of child fatalities to better inform practices or improvement changes needed that may prevent child maltreatment deaths.

MARYLEE ALLEN PROMOTING SAFE AND STABLE FAMILIES (PSSF) (TITLE IV-B, SUBPART 2)

Alaska's FFY19 allocation of PSSF (IV-B II) was \$541,200. Alaska blends Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) PSSF funding with other sources of funding in order to ensure the provision of the four categories of services through funding grants to non-profit and Tribal organizations or agencies.

1. Family Reunification:

OCS continues to prioritize funding family reunification services with PSSF funding due to the high numbers of children in out of home care. OCS provides family reunification grants in Anchorage, Southcentral and Northern regions, to the specific communities of Anchorage, Wasilla/Palmer, Nome, Fairbanks, Ketchikan, Prince of Wales Island and Utqiagvik. While the grant services are available to support parents in meeting their case plan goals, the grants have been primarily used by OCS field offices to provide the valuable service of facilitating family contact. Field office staff do not have sufficient resources to provide the frequency of family contact necessary to promote family reunification. Therefore, grant services have been integral in making family contact available. In SFY 2019, 282 families and 522 children were served by the family reunification program. As the number of children in out-of-home placement has continued to increase, the demand for this service remains high.

2. Adoption Support and Promotion:

OCS is currently funding Adoption Support and Promotion services with title IV-E adoption program savings. The adoption support services are delivered through a grant awarded to the ACRF. The grant was established to provide seamless continuation of support for adoptive and guardianship families through pre- and post- adoption/guardianship services. This ongoing collaboration with ACRF provides for improved outcomes for children and families through the provision of services, including family preparation services, information and referral, crisis intervention, and case management. The population served through this grant includes all families in Alaska who have adopted children through public and private adoptions. Services are available statewide to include training, self-study courses and telephonic services.

ACRF provides a series of classes called "The Adoption Learning Path" geared toward preparing families to adopt special needs children from foster care. When the family completes the series of classes, ACRF helps the family generate a "family profile," which is shared with OCS staff throughout the state. This process has assisted in matching children needing permanent homes with families who understand the needs of children in care and are ready to care for them.

In addition to these adoption support services, ACRF also provides intensive education and preparation as well as matching support and post-adoption support to a limited number of families per year in the regions of Southcentral and Anchorage as part of the Resource Family Training grant. This is an effort to match legally-free children in care with trained adoptive families and to promote placement stability for these children who may have a high level of special needs and who have been difficult to match.

3. Service Decision-Making Process for Family Support Services:

Family Support Services (FSS) grants are currently funded with Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) funds. In recent years, these funds have been adequate to fund these primary prevention grants located in the communities where Alaska's families live. They are awarded to community-based providers that have services that increase the strength and stability of families, increase the parents' competence in their parenting skills, afford children a safe, stable and supportive family environment, and otherwise enhance child development. Programs are selected that will serve families that do not have an open child protection case. The target population of this grant is children ages 0-12 years of age, with special consideration given to children ages birth to three years. Other targeted populations are families experiencing disability of a family member and/or homeless youth.

The core services of FSS include in-home support, parent education, facilitated access to resources, transportation services and service coordination. The programs promote participation in early childhood services, medical services, educational and employment services. FSS works with families who need support for basic needs, skill acquisition and crisis stabilization. All three of the current grantees utilize evidence-based curriculums, including Nurturing Families and Parents as Teachers. In SFY 2019, 120 families and 202 children were reached by family support services. In addition, Alaska has implemented a new CBCAP funded prevention grant with the intent to provide more primary prevention services to Alaskans in rural areas. The prevention grant was awarded to the Alaska Children's Trust (ACT). In SFY19, ACT provided mini-grants for parent education in rural communities around the state. The communities which received the grants to provide parenting education programs included Juneau, Kenai, Sitka, Kodiak, North Slope, Ketchikan, Homer, King Salmon, Kotzebue and Nome.

OCS awards grants to community-based family services providers for Family Preservation services. OCS blends PSSF, IV-B I and other sources of funding to support these grants. In SFY 2019, 155 families and 305 children in the communities of Wasilla, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Nome and Ketchikan were served by this program. These services are designed to serve families and children who have been determined by OCS to be at risk of out-of-home placement and/or children who are transitioning to or recently placed back in the home with their families after an out of home placement. The services funded through the grant are service coordination, service plan implementation and monitoring, assessment of family progress, parent education and support, and transportation services. A referral must be made to the family preservation programs by the OCS worker. The child protection case may or may not remain open, depending on risk and safety factors. The grant continues the integration of the Strengthening Families protective factors and trauma-informed practices to serve the existing target population.

Populations at Greatest Risk of Maltreatment (section 432(a)(10) of the Act)

Alaska Native children, age birth to five years, continue to be the population at greatest risk of maltreatment. This group of children makes up 6.5% of the general population of children in Alaska, but makes up 27% of the substantiated protective services reports. Further, 7% of Alaska Native children in this age group experienced substantiated maltreatment.

The "Transforming Child Welfare Outcomes for Alaska Native Children 2016-2020 Strategic Plan" concluded with a final report and summary issued in August 2019. This report acknowledged the many goals and objectives that were accomplished and identified remaining priorities to be incorporated into ongoing workgroups and initiatives. The Culturally Specific Services and Supports Workgroup and the Embracing & Implementing the Spirit of ICWA Workgroup merged as one to work on key tasks, including ongoing

implementation of the *Cultural Resources for Alaska Families Traditional Health and Wellness Guide* and reviewing interview questions for new hires.

OCS continues to put a focus on High-Risk Infants and includes this data in the Essential Services Scorecard utilized to track outcomes.

2019 Substantiation Year				
Age Range	Child Race	% Of AK Ages 0-17	% Of Total Children Ages 0 to 17 With a Substantiation	% Of Age Group Maltreated
Ages 0-5	Native	6.5%	26.9%	6.8%
	Non Native	26.5%	16.3%	1.0%
Ages 6-10	Native	5.9%	18.7%	5.2%
	Non Native	23.0%	10.3%	0.7%
Ages 11-15	Native	5.2%	13.7%	4.3%
	Non Native	22.3%	8.1%	0.6%
Ages 16-17	Native	2.0%	3.5%	2.8%
	Non Native	8.5%	2.4%	0.5%

Sources: SOA Online Resources for Children in Alaska (ORCA) 5/25/20 and SOA Department of Labor Population Estimates 2018

Kinship Navigator Funding (title IV-B, subpart 2)

OCS was awarded Kinship Navigator funding for 2018 and 2019. OCS has partnered with the Division of Senior and Disability Services (DSDS) in an effort to maximize existing funding available to support relative caregivers in caring for children. DSDS awards a grant for the National Family Caregiver Support (NFCS) program to the Volunteers of America (VOA) organization. The purpose of the NFCS grant is to provide information to caregivers about, available services, assistance to caregivers in gaining access to services and individual counseling, organization of support groups and caregiver training. The target population of VOA's grant is grandparents and individuals 55 and older, who are related to the child(ren) in their care. This SDS grant is amended with Kinship Navigator funding to expand services for all kin who are caring for children, regardless of age. While the majority of services are occurring in the city of Anchorage, Volunteers of America is using the kinship navigator funding to expand kinship navigation services to underserved parts of the state, particularly in rural areas. VOA's *Support for Alaskans Raising Their Kin* [website](#).

Caregivers can enroll in a network that provides statewide support for Alaskans raising their kin. The program provides ongoing support groups, informational campaigns, case management, financial assistance, a lending library, a statewide newsletter and a toll-free hotline for counseling and referrals. VOA also promotes the use of Alaska 2-1-1, as a one-stop resource for finding help in the local community. They also provide a number for currently enrolled VOA youth or families, and a separate number for families who may need to access services and supports.

- Support for Kinship Families:
 - VOA has provided family support statewide and has enrolled families in new communities such as Juneau, Sitka, and Bethel.
 - The enrollment process and materials have been developed to standardize family needs. New assessment tools include the Family Needs Scale and eco mapping, which helps staff learn more about what support families need, regardless of what community they are in.
 - Although the VOA staff is located in Anchorage, the goal of the program is to set the same standard and quality of services in other communities. In order to achieve this, VOA has moved some services online (i.e., support group) and instituted standardized assessment tools.

- Education for Service Providers and Community Partners:
 - A presentation has been developed about the kinship program, as well as updated educational materials for our community partners.
 - VOA has been providing outreach to build new partnerships with agencies like the Anchorage School District, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Stone Soup Group, and Thread.
- Marketing for Program Development and Sustainability:
 - The service model has been modified to rely more on partner agencies for core services such as support groups. It has made more sense to develop formal MOAs with partner agencies to ensure core services and activities do not slow down due to staff turnover. This effort has led to brand new partnerships.
 - Outreach materials have been updated to reflect emphasis on statewide services.
- Resources for Service Providers:
 - VOA program staff have participated in the Strengthening Families training and are enthusiastic about using this model.
 - New program materials have been developed to provide partners as we enhance this area.

Challenges to the expansion of kinship navigation services in Alaska include staff turnover in the program as well as turnover in partner agencies, which results in ongoing need for training and outreach. A “pilot site” was not designated this year, due to the above challenge, however, progress was made in enrolling families from communities outside of Anchorage. As of March of 2020, COVID-19 has dampened expansion plans. Please see the attached VOA 2019 Final report, which describes expansion plans. OCS plans to continue this partnership with the DSDS grantee for the next state fiscal year.

The Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF) provides resources for families interested in caring for children who are in foster care, as well as adoptive and guardianship families. Their [website](#) provides a [resource listing](#) for relatives. ACRF and VOA have a formalized Memorandum of Agreement to partner together for the provision of family support services for kin raising children.

Additionally, Alaska OCS has developed a [guide](#) for kin who are interested in becoming guardians to children placed with them in foster care

MONTHLY CASEWORKER VISIT FORMULA GRANTS AND STANDARDS FOR CASEWORKER VISITS

Alaska received \$34,726.00 in title IV-B, subpart 2 funding for FFY 2019. This money was used to offset the cost for travel required to make monthly case worker visits. States are required to report data on monthly case worker visits with children in foster care by December 15 of each year. OCS submitted the following data on December 12, 2019:

- **STANDARD #1:** The total number of visits made by caseworkers on a monthly basis to children in foster care during a fiscal year must not be less than **95** percent of the total number of such visits that would occur if each child were visited once every month while in care.

FFY 2018 OCS DATA: the total number of visits made by OCS caseworkers on a monthly basis to children in foster care was **68%**; this is a slight increase from FFY 2017.

- **STANDARD #2:** At least 50 percent of the total number of monthly visits made by caseworkers to children in foster care during a fiscal year must occur in the child’s residence.

FFY 2018 OCS DATA: 64% of the monthly visits by OCS caseworkers to children in foster care occurred in the child's residence; this is a slight increase from FFY 2017.

2018 Data						
Data					Measures	
Region	Item 1: Total Children	Item 2: Total Monthly Visits	Item 3: Total Months in Care	Item 4: Total Visits in Child's Residence	% of visits made on a monthly basis by caseworkers to children in foster car	% of visits that occurred in the residence of the child
Anchorage	1,523	9,193	12,496	5,644	73%	61%
Northern	734	3,721	6,265	2,229	59%	59%
Southcentral	1,012	5,443	8,435	4,027	64%	73%
Southeast	231	1,658	1,827	1,079	90%	65%
Western	254	1,311	2,225	668	58%	50%
Statewide	3,758	21,342	31,282	13,663	68%	64%

OCS received notice from the Children's Bureau in March of 2020 that based on Alaska's failure to meet the FFY 2019 monthly caseworker visit performance standard, the FFP rate for the Title IV-B, subpart 1, Child Welfare Services program funding for FFY 2020 is now reduced by 5 percent.

Engaging children and youth during caseworker visits supports an accurate assessment of safety, permanency and well-being. OCS continues to focus the essential services of caseworker visits during monthly leadership meetings. Regions share ideas and challenges to completing and documenting caseworker visits in efforts to improve outcomes for children. During the COVID-19 pandemic Essential Services meetings focused on how to continue this vital efforts using virtual platforms when possible.

ADDITIONAL SERVICES INFORMATION

Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payments (section 473A of the Act)

Alaska is using the ALGI payments to fund, in part, a statewide grant that promotes the achievement of timely permanency through the provision of adoption and guardianship home studies. These are provided for families adopting or becoming guardians to children in foster care who cannot be reunified with their family of origin.

The state has not encountered any challenges with timely expenditure of the funds. The amount of incentive funding to Alaska has been decreasing from year to year. The ALGI funds will continue to be used to fund a statewide grant for the provision of adoption and guardianship homestudies.

Adoption Savings (section 473(a)(8) of the Act)

Adoption Savings:

Alaska calculates its Adoption Savings using an 'actual' calculation method. For FFY 2019, Alaska had a savings of \$2,058,193.

How Adoption Savings Were Spent:

Adoption Savings were spent on activities such as brief case management, crisis intervention, services and supports for post-adoption/guardianship families. Savings were also used for resource family training, mental health services not covered by Medicaid, one-time expenditures to maintain placement, and family support

services. Alaska does not have any unused savings from the previous year. All savings have been spent within the year accrued.

How Adoption Savings Will be Spent:

There are no anticipated changes in how OCS utilizes the Adoption Savings in the coming year. Currently, Alaska is able to access and spend the funds without difficulties.

JOHN H. CHAFEE FOSTER CARE PROGRAM FOR SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD (THE CHAFEE PROGRAM) (SECTION 477 OF THE ACT)

OCS administers the Chafee Program through its Services Array Unit. A program coordinator is assigned to manage seven statewide staff who provide Chafee services directly to youth. The IL Program Coordinator manages grants and contracts awarded to providers of Chafee Services, as well as coordinates and collaborates with community partners who deliver services to IL eligible youth. These services focus on mentorship, youth retreats and housing support. Each OCS region has a Regional Independent Living Specialist (RILS) designated to work with youth, with an additional RILS in both Anchorage and Southcentral, Alaska's two most populous regions. Although the larger regions have more community resources available for foster youth and alumni, the IL Program makes every effort to provide equitable distribution of services and funding statewide. The IL program provides a multitude of diverse opportunities for IL eligible youth to engage with caring adults, experience positive relationships with their peers, learn healthy behaviors, and identify values, morals and skills that will serve them in a positive manner for their future. The RILS work directly with individual youth in their region to assess needs and to assist the youth with their individualized goals.

Region	# of staff	# of IL Eligible Youth	# of IL youth receiving services
Northern	1	152	39
Anchorage	2	322	177
Western	1	61	12
South Central	2	190	83
Southeast	1	123	30

The Independent Living (IL) Program supports the transition into adulthood for eligible youth, which is defined as youth ages 16-21 in out-of-home care or youth who were in out of home care on or after their 16th birthday and are no longer in foster care. This includes youth who are or have been in Tribal foster care. The IL program currently serves foster youth ages 14 and 15 in a limited fashion, focusing on credit reports and transition planning. The IL Program offers regularly scheduled life skills activities, classes and training opportunities for youth and alumni. Youth are sometimes transported from rural areas to participate. In response to the COVID19 pandemic, the IL program delivery model has been modified in order to engage youth in services online, virtually and at social distances. These changes allow for realignment of service delivery statewide and developing distance learning models. Life Skills classes are now delivered via online video conferencing and through social media, allowing the IL program to expand its correspondence opportunities from mail-out skill-building packets to online activities youth can access from across the state.

When pandemic emergencies and shutdown orders were declared, the IL program responded to help ensure the safety and well-being of youth. The IL program response to the COVID19 crisis included immediate relocation of college and residential school students, contacting every eligible IL youth and verifying internet and telephone connection capabilities, and issuing devices to ensure continued connections to school, work and families. In the last few months of FY20, and in direct response to the Covid19 pandemic, the Governor of Alaska amended AS.47.05.065(c)(1)(B) to suspend the age requirement for foster care placement to allow

youth turning 21, a choice of remaining in foster care through June 30, 2020. This option is critical during a time of significant societal changes and heightened health risks.

The IL program utilizes the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) to survey youth in efforts to assess their education levels, employment, housing and homelessness, completing high school, attending advanced classes, if they've had children and whether they've been incarcerated or engaged in substance abuse treatment. The information gathered is used to guide programmatic activities. Currently, the IL program has a dedicated staff member to complete the cohort of 17 year olds surveyed. Timely and successful completion of the surveys and data entry are essential to maintain compliance with federal reporting. Maintaining a centralized contact with an experienced staff person has proven to be essential to consistently complete surveys and increase the number and quality of responses.

The IL program makes diligent efforts to develop strong community partnerships, creating a network of services to support eligible IL youth. Partnerships continue with Facing Foster Care in Alaska (FFCA), Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, the Child Welfare Academy, Covenant House, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Nine Star Education and Employment Services, Division of Healthcare Services, Division of Senior and Disability Services, Division of Public Assistance, and Tribal Partners across the state. IL participates in the state's Court improvement Project and Regional Tribal/State Collaboration meetings. This network of partnerships enhance service delivery for youth and provides opportunities to learn about independently accessing services after exit from custody.

FFCA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the foster care system, developing leadership skills among current and former foster youth ages 16-24, and creating a network of peer support for foster youth throughout the state. FFCA's Youth Leadership Board meets quarterly with OCS leadership to discuss agency agendas, legislation, policy development and areas needing improvement and to develop retreat agendas and supportive planning. In the past year, FFCA and the Youth Board have organized and led three retreats focusing on skills necessary to become a healthy adult. During those retreats, 74 participating youth learned everything from healthy relationships to banking and developed future planning skills. This past fall, FFCA held a vocational and training focused retreat which introduced 27 youth to employment and training institutions, military recruiters, and Job Corps. Planning is underway to creatively provide the same level of skill and relationship building opportunities while remaining safe and healthy during this time of social distancing.

Retreat dates	# of attendees	Services delivered
August 2018	42	FFCA Youth board developed the training agenda, themed "Adulthood," which included training and information about banking and credit, healthy relationships and privacy on the internet, and getting and keeping a job
October 2018	27	This was the career conference focused on exposing attendees to various career and vocational training options, such as: cosmetology, Job Corp, Northern Industrial Training (which includes welding, truck driving and heavy equipment), and military recruiters.
April 2019	32	FFCA Youth board developed the training agenda, themed "Healthy Adulthood." The youth board restructured this retreat to support more subgroup activities with greater selection of breakout sessions for youth to choose.

OCS partners with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Alaska (BBBS) to provide enhanced mentorship opportunities in Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley. In the past fiscal year, 15 youth were referred to the mentoring program

and 5 have been matched with an adult mentor. Since COVID-19, BBBS has gone virtual, interviewing volunteers and youth via videoconference. Matches have been encouraged to meet and connect virtually while in-person meetings were prohibited, due to state and local mandates. With Phase 2 of the Reopen Alaska Responsibly Plan, matches have the option of meeting in-person again, with appropriate precautions being taken. BBBS also has the option to facilitate match meetings in-person, if all parties are comfortable with it, otherwise they can be facilitated via videoconference. BBBS staff have also started attending the virtual IL classes in an effort to connect youth to the mentorship program.

In 2012, OCS and the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) executed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in which AHFC agreed to provide rental assistance to youth aging out of foster care referred by the OCS creating the Making A Home Program. Through this Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) program the IL program has reliably filled all 15 vouchers every year, and supported youth in their own homes.

In 2019, AHFC received an award of 21 Foster Youth to Independence Initiative (FYI) vouchers, which targets a similar population as the Making A Home program. This has deepened the partnership between AHFC and OCS. Availability of the FYI vouchers is currently centralized to the urban areas of Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Mat-Su, and Soldotna. OCS continues to secure commitments from supportive services throughout Alaska which will lead to FYI vouchers becoming available in additional communities. As with the Making a Home Program, OCS verifies household eligibility and maintains the current referral and operational processes observed by the program. This program provides youth-specific vouchers, in which names of eligible youth are included in the application to HUD, who then issues vouchers via AHFC. This program has proven to be a bit more cumbersome than TBRA, in that there is a significant time lag from providing names of youth to HUD to issue vouchers. OCS has referred 32 eligible youth to the FYI housing program, of which six have secured leases and five are shopping for apartments.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHERS (ETV) PROGRAM (SECTION 477(I) OF THE ACT)

The IL program continues to observe a close business agreement with the University of Alaska's, Child Welfare Academy (CWA), to administer ETV programming to former foster youth up to age 23. Notably, over the past five years, Alaska has been able to expend all funds to ETV applicants to date. Youth engaged in the ETV program receive more direct, on-campus support and have a caring adult to assist with the struggles of attending college and securing resources for their education.

Since the submission of the 2020-2024 CFSP, the ETV program has had to make significant changes to program delivery. The end of the 2020 academic year aligned with pandemic related emergency mandates and shutdown orders. This emergency was first felt by our college and residential school students as campuses were closed and students received 48 hour notice to vacate their educational and campus based homes. Working closely together, ETV and the IL program staff were able to rehouse youth within 24 hours and insure each youth had the ability to connect with their teachers and classes remotely.

The ETV program continues to provide an annual Education Conference for eligible current and former foster youth that are interested in exploring post-secondary education opportunities. This event is scheduled to take place in June 2020 but has been canceled due to Covid-19 pandemic. The IL and ETV program are working to restructure this event quickly to connect youth to distance and remote learning available to them for the academic year 20-21.

In the past year, CWA and the OCS IL Program Coordinator have developed a new partnership with Alaska Pacific University to provide ten Promise Tuition Grants. If youth meet qualifications, funds are sent to the qualified post-secondary education and training center to cover the cost of tuition, fees, books, room and board.

To ensure the total amount of educational assistance does not exceed to total cost of attendance, University of Alaska campuses monitor student enrollment, the number of credits involved, and estimates the cost of attendance. The CWA Youth Education Coordinator can view financial aid awards including any grants, loans, and scholarships beyond ETV. The CWA Youth Education Coordinator determines their award up to the \$5000 limit and provides that information to the school's Financial Aid Department. Financial aid has further layers of review and will hold ETV assistance until all other aid has been applied to a student's account. If a student has been over awarded, or doesn't show a financial need, they will return the funds. For students at non-UA Campuses, the CWA Youth Education Coordinator reviews the student's overall costs as determined by that school, completes a college funding worksheet and determines the student's level of financial need. The CWA Youth Education Coordinator provides this information to the OCS RILS who then submit the request to the IL Coordinator to have a check sent directly to the school along with an award letter from the CWA Youth Education Coordinator outlining eligibility. Financial Aid provides a further layer of review. If a student withdraws or fails, has too much aid or drops some credits, financial aid notifies the CWA Youth Education Coordinator and funds are returned.

Post-Secondary Education and Vocational Participation					
Academic Year	# Youth attending Post- Secondary (Under Age 23)	Number of Youth Who Received ETV Funds	Number of Youth Who Received Presidential Tuition Waiver	Number of Youth who Received an OCS Tuition Scholarship	College Graduates
2017-2018	60	60 (36 new)	28 (14 new)	27	6
2018-2019	53	53 (25 new)	28 (15 new)	13	10
2019-2020	52	52 (26 new)	30 (15 new)	22	6

CHAFEE TRAINING

The RILS continue to provide training to OCS staff in their region, and recruit youth and alumni to participate in the training events. New agency staff orientation includes training on the needs of IL youth and the resources available to youth within their region as well as statewide. The IL Program works with the Resource Family Training grantee to further incorporate independent living components into their training curriculum. The RILS partner with FFCA to recruit youth panels to assist in training foster parents in their regions. The IL Program offers training to legal partners, CASA volunteers, Guardians ad Litem, Tribes, community mental health programs, as well as hold trainings as requested by the community and regional offices. In the past reporting period, the IL staff have provided training to the regional Tribal/State group in all five regions.

CONSULTATION WITH TRIBES (SECTION 477(B)(3)(G) OF THE ACT)

In effort to consult, collaborate and coordinate with all federally recognized tribes within Alaska, and ensure Chafee and ETV benefits, program development and service delivery are available to children in Tribal custody, quarterly teleconference meetings are facilitated by the IL Program Coordinator. Consistency has built stronger connections and increased attendance between the IL program and Alaska's Tribes. Recently, all 229 federally recognized Tribes in Alaska were emailed or mailed out information about the Chafee program and invited to attend the scheduled teleconferences. Tribal and ICWA representatives were provided both hardcopy and electronic links to all required forms to access Chafee services, resources and funding; information which is regularly updated and available on the OCS ICWA webpage. Tribes that participate have reported a stronger connection with the RILS and increased understanding of the services provided and how to access them. The RILS across the state have developed deeper connections to support youth in Tribal custody, partnering to provide a wealth of expertise for youth transitioning from foster care to adulthood. IL and ETV program eligibility for Tribal youth is determined identically to youth in state's custody which

includes verification of a court order with the date of custody of the youth from both state caseworkers and Tribal caseworkers. There have been no requests by Tribes to develop an agreement with OCS or to build a Tribal Chafee or ETV program. In the Southeast region the IL program has partnered with Tlingit and Haida Youth Healing to Wellness Court. The Youth Healing to Wellness Court provides referrals to the Tribal navigator program that supports youth and families engaged in child protection services and educational support and includes the OCS IL program and specialists as referral and supportive agents.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION BETWEEN STATES AND TRIBES

GATHERING INPUT FROM TRIBES

OCS continues to work closely with Tribes in Alaska in numerous ways including the Tribal State Collaboration Group, Tribal State Advisory Team, Regional Tribal State teams, Tribal Title IV-E, and the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact. Input from Tribes was also gathered as the State drafted its proposal to implement Title IV-E Prevention Services under the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). The State met with Tribal Partners in July 2019 to find out what qualifying services exist within their Tribes and what potential promising practices are being utilized by Tribes in Alaska. An in-person follow-up meeting occurred in November 2019 prior to the State submitting their Title IV-E Prevention Plan proposal to the Children's Bureau in January 2020.

Additionally, the State has collaborated with Tribal Title IV-E partners during the revision process of the existing Title IV-E Provider Agreements, making opportunities to provide input in person in November 2019 and during scheduled audios throughout the year. Provider Agreements are scheduled to be completed by FY2021, July 1, 2020.

On May 26, 2020 the annual OCS Tribal Survey was distributed to Tribes throughout Alaska. This year, several new questions were added. These include asking Tribes how helpful the distribution of screened out Protective Services Reports has been in reducing maltreatment, what prevention services are being provided, and what supports are needed to increase Tribal interventions.

On May 29, 2020 OCS convened a Tribal Consultation to discuss the safe resumption of in-person family contact services. During the hunker down phase of COVID-19, OCS stopped all face to face contacts between parents and their children and promoted electronic based visitations. This Tribal Consultation provided OCS with the opportunity to hear Tribal partner's ideas on how increase the number of family contacts while maintaining optimal safety precautions for all of the individuals involved.

ONGOING COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION WITH TRIBES

OCS continues with its numerous collaborative efforts with Tribes. The OCS Director meets every other month, privately, with Tribal Co-Chairs, representing every region of the state. This meeting is focused on providing mutual program updates, problem-solving Tribal-State initiatives or barriers to ICWA implementation. The Tribal State Advisory Team, comprised of the Tribal-State Co-Chairs, OCS ICWA Specialists and Regional/OCS Statewide & Regional Managers meet every other month to discuss similar issues.

In February 2020 negotiations occurred to determine what new services would be implemented through the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact. In addition to the Initial Diligent Relative Search and Ongoing Placement Search Scopes of Work, Co-Signers now have the option to sign three additional Scopes of Work for FY 21. These three services are Family Contact, Licensing Assist, and Safety Evaluation of Unlicensed Relative Homes. Workgroups have formed to establish implementation processes and to create training materials for Tribal Co-Signers to ensure effective delivery of services to families regardless of turnover that may take place.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many Tribal communities closed down travel to and from their community to protect the health of local citizens. On March 31, 2020, OCS issued a Program Instruction regarding coordinating with Tribal communities prior to conducting an initial assessment. When OCS receives a Protective Services Report involving a child residing in a Tribal community, OCS notifies the Tribe of the report and requests their support to enter the village. If the Tribe is not comfortable with OCS traveling into their community due to risk of exposure to COVID-19, OCS inquires if the Tribe or law enforcement representative is willing and able to video conference or audio conference the OCS staff member during an initial face to face contact with the alleged victims and other household members. If possible, this would meet the criteria for an initial face to face with victims, thus initiating the IA and assessing for safety. OCS continues to partner with Tribes to establish creative ways to assure child safety and coordinate services, this also leads to increased collaboration and strengthens partnerships.

The “Transforming Child Welfare Outcomes for Alaska Native Children 2016-2020 Strategic Plan” concluded with a final report and summary issued in August 2019. This report acknowledged the many goals and objectives that were accomplished and identified remaining priorities to be incorporated into ongoing workgroups and initiatives. The Culturally Specific Services and Supports Workgroup and the Embracing & Implementing the Spirit of ICWA Workgroup merged as one to work on key tasks including ongoing implementation of the *Cultural Resources for Alaska Families Traditional Health and Wellness Guide* and reviewing interview questions for new hires.

An additional workgroup that emerged as a result of the Strategic Plan is the Tribal Participation on OCS Hiring Panels workgroup. This group includes Tribal partners from various regions throughout the state and is working to establish OCS processes for including Tribal members on hiring panels, maintaining a current list of Tribal contacts for interview panels, and establishing questions that speak to a candidate’s values and knowledge of local cultures, and their willingness to partner with Tribes and Tribal Organizations to support families who are in need. Tribal partners continue to voice their desire to be involved in hiring panels for OCS staff. Efforts to develop a statewide directory of Tribal Partners who are interested in being a part of hiring panels is ongoing along with the statewide utilization of an interview question bank to ensure OCS is hiring staff who are committed to embracing the values of ICWA.

Ongoing implementation of the *Cultural Resources for Alaska Families Traditional Health and Wellness Guide* provides an enhanced opportunity for OCS staff to coordinate services with Tribes. OCS staff now have the ability to pay for culturally relevant services and activities for parents. Elders and other natural supports within the home community can be added as providers into the OCS payment system, and a request for funds can be issued for compensation. Updates to the Cultural Resource Guide are being made by the Regional ICWA Specialists and with the assistance of the DHSS Public Information Team, the hope is that this valuable resource can be made more user friendly so the utilization of it will increase.

Tribal representatives from each region continue to participate on the Regional General Variance Committee for OCS foster care licensing. Tribal Partners also serve on the OCS policy development workgroup where their feedback and suggestions are incorporated into policy changes.

UPDATE ON COLLABORATIVE WORK EFFORTS WITH TRIBES WHO PROVIDE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

Services provided through the Alaska Child Tribal Welfare Compact continue to expand. As a result of Co-Signer Initial Diligent Relatives Searches, 207 children were placed with a relative subsequent to a completed diligent relative search by a Co-Signer between 5/15/18 to 1/10/20. The 207 children placed with relatives represent 118 cases.

When the State provided verbal notice during the May 2019 negotiations of their desire to amend the Compact, the issues around insurance, indemnification requirements, and waiver of sovereign immunity

stalled implementation of additional Scopes of Work. Luckily, these issues were able to be resolved when negotiations resumed in February 2020 and work is underway to implement three additional Scopes of Work by July 1, 2020.

OCS continues to work on the expansion of the Tribal Title IV-E Pass-Through Program, which involves 11 Tribes/Tribal Organizations who collectively represent 146 of the 229 federally recognized Tribes in Alaska. Tribal Title IV-E partners have utilized reimbursements on allowable expenses to leverage limited resources, further enhancing their child welfare programs. An in-person meeting occurred in November 2019 to review the draft of the updated agreement due to it being out-of-date. This initial draft was later updated to include the negotiated language from the Tribal Child Welfare Compact, eliminating the requirement for Tribes to fully waive their sovereign immunity. The final draft of the agreement was sent to the State's Department of Law in May 2020 in hopes of getting a final agreement in place by July 1, 2020. OCS has also been negotiating with Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (Tlingit & Haida) to amend their existing Title IV-E Maintenance Agreement to more accurately reflect the work that is currently taking place in addition to the plans they have to expand their program infrastructure. The amended Title IV-E Maintenance Agreement also includes Compact Waterfall Waiver of Sovereign Immunity language and should be finalized by FY2021, July 1, 2020.

Prevention services are an area that Tribes have been interested in providing for a long time. With the distribution of Protective Services Reports that began January of 2018, 168 Tribes/Tribal Organizations have signed up to receive both the screened-in and screened-out reports regarding their Tribal citizens. Some of these Tribes are using the screened-out reports to provide prevention services to families and Tribes are eager to expand the delivery of prevention services through the Family First Prevention Services Act. As of January 2, 2020 a total of 9,807 protective services reports have been distributed to Tribes. This represents a total of 4,943 screened-in reports and 4,864 screened-out reports.

Tribal partners have been providing Rural Child Welfare (RCW) services for several years, however beginning FY2021, the RCW Grant will transition to become the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Grant. This was a non-competitive solicitation that was sent to existing Tribal Title IV-E partners who have an established child welfare infrastructure to begin piloting prevention services. FFPSA Grantees will receive 1FTE to help identify candidates for foster care by participating in Initial Assessments (IA's) with OCS and developing family prevention plans that utilize the Strengthening Families approach to enhance the five protective factors: parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete supports in times of need, and social and emotional competence of children. OCS has selected the following populations as having priority in terms of candidacy: substance exposed newborns and their parents; parents of children under the age of five; and parents or caregivers who were in foster care as a child. While participating in the IA is not reimbursable via Title IV-E, developing the prevention plan and providing prevention services will be once Alaska's FFPSA Prevention Plan is approved by the federal government, which will allow Title IV-E partners/FFPSA Grantees to further leverage IV-E. OCS is hosting internal meetings in the upcoming months to respond to feedback related to the first draft of the State's FFPSA plan.

MONITORING COMPLIANCE WITH ICWA

In partnership with Casey Family Programs, OCS and Tribal partners worked closely this past year through the Tribal State Collaboration Data Workgroup to carefully review, analyze and discuss what system trends were impacting the Tribal State Data Indicators. At the September 2019 Data Workgroup meeting, requests from Tribal partners were made that resulted in the development of two new reports. The new Protective Services Report Data Report provides cumulative data for Tribes regarding the volume of reports for their Tribal citizens within a selected timeframe of their choosing. The new Initial Assessment Data Report shows Tribes how many investigations and assessments have been opened, closed, and the finding of those reports regarding their Tribal members. These two new data reports were reviewed at the October 2019 Data

Workgroup meeting and started being utilized by Tribal Partner Data Workgroup members in a variety of ways. By being able to identify the volume of OCS reports and initial assessments in a Tribal Organizations service area, Tribes can demonstrate the need for additional positions to meet the needs of families in communities that have a high volume.

A challenge the TSCG Data Workgroup was faced with was how to share these new reports with other Tribes outside of the workgroup members. A Train the Trainer event was held in December 2019 in which Tribal Partner Data Workgroup members brought a super user from their Tribe/Tribal Organization to learn about the reports and discuss what is motivating the trends. Following this meeting, concerns regarding distribution of cumulative aggregate data lead to the development of a data sharing agreement, which was reviewed at the May 2020 Data Workgroup meeting. With the support of Casey Family Programs, the hope is for additional Tribal Partners to be receive data training as discussions continue regarding how to provide Tribes with direct access to their data securely.

In June 2020, the 2019 Tribal State Data Indicators were published that shows several positive trends. In 2014, 42% of Alaska Native/American Indian children were placed with extended family. Now, 52% of AN/AI children were with extended family in 2019. There has also been a decrease in AN/AI children placed in out-of-preference placements from 35% in 2014 to 31% in 2019. The number of reunifications have increased from 48% in 2014 to 51% in 2019 and the number of adoptions or guardianships to ICWA preference placements have also increased from 92 in 2014 to 123 in 2019. A new indicator for Re-Entry into Care has been added that shows the number of children removed from their home during the reporting period who have a discharge within the 12 months prior to their most recent reporting period removal date.

Through Regional ICWA Specialists conducting out-of-preference placement meetings and Compact Co-Signers conducting relative searches, a lot of work continues on identifying and placing children in ICWA preference placements. This diligence has led to an increase in Alaska Native/American Indian children being placed in first preference placement with extended family. As of May 28, 2020, 51% of all AN/AI children in out of home placement were placed in first preference placement with extended family. Another 16% were placed in ICWA preference 2, 3, and 4 placements.

It is the goal for Tribes and OCS to have a respectful government-to-government relationship and for OCS staff to understand the importance of ICWA in protecting the best interests of Indian children. In July 2015, a process was developed to address contested ICWA issues to ensure that OCS leadership was made aware of any disagreement with Tribal governments. While this “Contested ICWA Matter Memo Process” has been a way to monitor compliance with ICWA, a new process has been drafted through meetings with each OCS Region in hopes of identifying and resolving these matters sooner, thus further shifting from a compliance driven approach to a values driven approach.

DISCUSSIONS WITH TRIBAL PARTNERS SPECIFIC TO CFCIP

The OCS Independent Living Program Coordinator facilitates quarterly teleconferences to provide Tribes with information about Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. The goal of these teleconferences is to consult, collaborate and coordinate with all federally recognized Tribes within Alaska, and insure Chafee and ETV benefits, program development and service delivery are available to children in Tribal custody. Consistency has built stronger connections and increased attendance between the IL program and Alaska’s Tribes. Recently, all 229 federally recognized Tribes in Alaska were emailed or mailed out information about the Chafee program and invited to attend the scheduled teleconferences. Tribal and ICWA representatives were provided both hardcopy and electronic links to all required forms to access Chafee services, resources and funding. The IL program will continue to host quarterly Tribal teleconferences to provide IL and Chafee technical assistance for Tribes and youth in Tribal Foster care. The Chafee eligibility requirements are the same for youth in state custody as for youth in Tribal custody, youth in Tribal custody are eligible for all IL and ETV program services and resources. The IL Specialists across the state have developed deeper

connections to support youth in Tribal custody, partnering to provide a wealth of expertise for youth transitioning from foster care to adulthood in Tribal areas. IL and ETV program eligibility for Tribal youth is determined identically to youth in state's custody, verification of a court order with the date of custody of the youth from both state caseworkers and Tribal caseworkers alike. There have been no requests by Tribes to develop an agreement with OCS or to build a Tribal Chafee or ETV program. Tribal partnerships have developed to work both ways as well, in the Southeast region the IL program has partnered with Tlingit and Haida Youth Healing to Wellness Court. The Youth Healing to Wellness Court provides referrals to the Tribal navigator program that supports youth and families engaged in child protection services and educational support and includes the OCS IL program and specialists.

SHARING 2020 APSR WITH TRIBES

OCS will provide a copy of the submitted 2020 APSR to Gloria Gorman with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The report will be disseminated to Tribal partners through the Tribal State Collaboration Group Tribal Caucus list serve. Additionally, the submitted report will be posted on the public-facing State of Alaska OCS website.

Section D. CAPTA State Plan Requirements and Updates

DESCRIBE SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES, IF ANY, TO STATE LAW OR REGULATIONS, INCLUDING LAWS AND REGULATIONS RELATING TO THE PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

There have been no substantive 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. The requirements for mandated reporters changed in Alaska for allegations for sexual abuse. Effective September 1, 2020 State law (A.S. 47.17.020(a)) will require all mandated reporters, who make a report of suspected sex offenses to OCS, to additionally report the harm to the nearest law enforcement agency.

DESCRIBE ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FROM THE STATE'S PREVIOUSLY APPROVED CAPTA PLAN IN HOW THE STATE PROPOSES TO USE FUNDS TO SUPPORT THE 14 PROGRAM AREAS ENUMERATED IN SECTION 106(A) OF CAPTA

There have been no significant changes in the states approved CAPTA plan related to how funds are used to support the program areas.

DESCRIBE HOW CAPTA STATE GRANT FUNDS WERE USED, ALONE OR IN COMBINATION WITH OTHER FEDERAL FUNDS IN SUPPORT OF THE STATE'S APPROVED CAPTA PLAN TO MEET THE PURPOSES OF THE PROGRAM SINCE THE STATE SUBMITTED ITS LAST UPDATE ON JUNE 30, 2019

CAPTA funds continued to support a variety of training and technical assistance efforts with OCS community partner agencies, grantees, and staff. Training offered during this reporting period included: Childfirst® Alaska Forensic Interviewing; maintenance and updating of a web-based training on child abuse and neglect, including mandatory reporter training; and an outreach campaign to notify mandatory reporters of changes to the Alaska child abuse reporting Statute. In addition, OCS grantees were provided individualized technical assistance as requested as well as program development guidance. Here is a list of specific projects and activities funded by CAPTA during this reporting period:

Childfirst® Alaska Coordination: The Child Welfare Academy (CWA) continued providing assistance with coordination of trainings statewide. One 5-day Childfirst® Forensic Interviewer Training was Provided in September-October in Anchorage. In addition a 3-day Understanding the Forensic Interview Training was provided in Nome as well as a one day training for First Responders. CWA coordinated a 2-day Strategic

Planning meeting for the Alaska Childfirst® Leadership Team and Instructors in July 2019 in Anchorage. CWA coordinated quarterly meetings of the Alaska Childfirst® Leadership Team, usually by teleconference, distributed minutes and created agendas. Two ChildFirst trainers attended the Annual Violence Intervention and Prevention Summit in June of 2020 which is the National Conference for ChildFirst® states. The Childfirst® Alaska website was also maintained and updated.

Training and Technical Assistance to OCS Grantees and Community Partners: Training and technical assistance is delivered through a business agreement with CWA. This project continues to support direct training and technical assistance for Alaska's CACs and community based family support programs as well as other OCS partners. This year both onsite and remote technical assistance was provided to a new CAC Program being developed in Sitka and to a new multidisciplinary child protection team (MDT) in Ketchikan. Various levels of onsite and remote program support were also provided to CAC Programs in Bethel, Galena, Fairbanks and Dillingham.

CAPTA funds were used to maintain and update the Mandated Reporter training in 2020. This training is for the general public, but also serves as a training for Alaska's mandatory reporters. This year the entire training was thoroughly reviewed and updated throughout in a collaborative effort by the Alaska CJA Task Force, OCS, and the CWA. The training was updated in both locations where it resides on the web and a new interactive map feature was developed to assist reporters in contacting the correct law enforcement agency when making a report about an allegation of sexual abuse (Alaska law will require reporting of sexual abuse allegations to both OCS and law enforcement starting in September 2020).

CAPTA funds were also utilized to create additional posters, refrigerator magnets, business cards and USB Drives as part of a continuing statewide media campaign that advertises the availability of the online training, changes to Alaska State law effecting mandatory reporters, as well as the toll-free number and e-mail for the Centralized OCS Intake.

OCS anticipates that these efforts will continue in the next fiscal year.

PROVIDE AN UPDATE ON THE STATE'S CONTINUED EFFORTS TO SUPPORT AND ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF INFANTS BORN AND IDENTIFIED AS BEING AFFECTED BY SUBSTANCE ABUSE OR WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS RESULTING FROM PRENATAL DRUG EXPOSURE, OR A FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER

OCS co-hosted a Statewide Kick-Off Meeting for Alaska's POSC Initiative in May 2019. This meeting was well received, and helped to form a strong cross-collaborative interest and commitment to pursue a comprehensive approach to serving substance affected infants and their families in our state. Since that date, a statewide POSC steering committee and policy subcommittee have formed to begin the work of developing statewide screening, notification/reporting procedures and tools needed to implement POSC.

Alaska plans to utilize both CAPTA funding and FFPSA transition funding to fund direct services positions within community-based agencies in pilot sites of Wasilla and Juneau. These sites will be instrumental in implementing Plans of Safe Care for non-child welfare involved families in those areas. In addition, OCS plans to provide training and technical assistance to existing family preservation grantees in order to assist them in developing plans of safe care in the communities where those grants exist. Those communities include, Anchorage, Wasilla, Kenai, Fairbanks, Nome and Juneau.

In addition, the State of Alaska, Division of Public Health (DPH), Section of Women's, Children's and Family Health (WCFH) launched the Alaska 4P's Plus project. This is a collaborative project between Alaska Division of Behavioral Health, Office of Children's Services (OCS), health care workers, and birthing centers, this program helps to address the needs of substance-exposed infants and their mothers, including requirements to make appropriate referrals to OCS and other essential services. The project's primary goal is

to provide health care workers, especially those in perinatal care settings, with evidence-based tools, skills and processes designed for early detection of infants at risk of or having been exposed to, substances, including alcohol, used by their mothers during pregnancy. Earliest identification of these infants optimizes opportunities for health care workers to plan and provide for immediate and ongoing medical care and interventions for both the infant and their affected family and/or caregivers. The state has committed to maintain funding for and support expansion of the 4Ps Plus© screening to include all delivering facilities, and expand to prenatal care visits. Some tribal health organizations are assessing their current prenatal care processes for best approaches of integrating the APSP's 4Ps Plus© screening, brief intervention and referral to care (SBIRT).

Other Alaska resources for addressing maternal opioid use and Neonatal Opioid Withdrawn Syndrome include:

- The All Alaska Pediatric Partnership (AAPP) has created Help Me Grow Alaska, a program that will provide active case management to link families to needed services, including addiction services.
- Alaska DHSS, Office of Substance Misuse and Addiction Prevention, provides technical assistance to opioid response community coalitions across the state and is coordinating the opioid response across departments in state government.
- MAT by obstetrics providers, in addition to community methadone and buprenorphine programs, expands the treatment options for mothers.
- Alaska DHSS, Infant Learning Program coordinates services for infants with disabilities.
- Alaska DHSS, Office of Children's Services (OCS) serves as Alaska's child welfare agency. OCS is the lead agency tasked with developing a system and policy to support the implementation of Plans of Safe Care as required under CAPTA. Plans of Safe Care encompass family support, interventions that build the capacity for communities to support substance-affected babies and their families, and includes comprehensive care for the baby, mother, family and community.
- Alaska DHSS Division of Behavioral Health funds APSP and SBIRT efforts.
- The Alaska Perinatal Quality Collaborative was launched in January 2019 to promote high quality maternal and newborn care across Alaska.
- Alaska DHSS Public Health Centers in 22 communities perform SBIRT on pregnant women.
- Alaska Regional Hospital 180 Program provides an Inpatient Behavioral Health Treatment Program for Substance Abuse with 1-year case management.
- Stone Soup Group provides support to families of children with disabilities.

NAME, ADDRESS, AND EMAIL FOR THE STATE CAPTA COORDINATOR (STATE LIAISON OFFICER)

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Section E. Updates to Targeted Plans within the 2020-2024 CFSP

FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT DILIGENT RECRUITMENT PLAN

As part of the SFY 2020 Statewide Plan for Recruitment and Retention of Resource Families, each of the five OCS Regional Offices submitted Fiscal Year Resource Family Recruitment and Retention Plans. The recruitment and retention plans are developed by regional team members comprised of OCS Licensing staff,

community agencies, resource families and tribal partners. The regional recruitment and retention teams meet each per quarter to review and assess the overall effectiveness of their plans in regards to the recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive resource families. Each of the regional plans have specific goals, objectives, interventions, and base line measurements.

The Licensing management team met at the end of the third quarter to review data outcomes from the regional recruitment and retentions plans. The review identified the following achievement and identified next steps:

- Alaska created an Out of Home Child and Home Provider Race and Ethnicity report to provide data on the race/ethnicity of children in out of home placement and on licensed foster parents to ensure there are licensed foster homes that meet the diverse needs of Alaska's children in care. For SFY21 licensing management would like to improve the use of this report and increase consistency documentation of provider race information.
- Alaska has increased the number of licensed foster homes able to care for children with complex medical needs.
- Alaska continues to support the Resource Family Advisory Board with its initiatives and statewide representation.
- Alaska has continued to implement and support the Emergency Relief Support Program.
- Identify process for tracking data on the retention of foster homes and implementing the Foster Care Licensing Exit Survey.

The OCS Foster Care Licensing management team will meet with the Regional Recruitment and Retention Committees to address the goals identified.

HEALTH CARE OVERSIGHT AND COORDINATION PLAN

OCS updated the Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan in FY19. There are no additional updates or changes to the plan since that time. OCS has been working closely with Health Care Services in effort to maintain children in state custody are up-to-date on Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) appointments. Medicaid reports are shared on a monthly basis to inform the agency on children in care that are not current on their screening appointments.

OCS policy (CPS manual 6.3.2) details that procedure and requirements for administration of psychotropic medications with oversight from the OCS Nurse Consultants. OCS nurses continue to review all prescriptions of psychotropic medication, with additional monitoring required for children age five or younger receiving psychotropic medications, children of any age who are receiving four or more psychotropic medications, and children of any age receiving two or more atypical antipsychotic medications.

During FY19 OCS hired a Nurse Consultant Manager to provide direct supervision to the nurse consultants. This has provided additional oversight and coordination amongst the consultants across the state. With this statewide oversight, the Nurse Consultant Manager is working on strategies for additional improvements to the administration and oversight of psychotropic medications.

DISASTER PLAN

OCS experienced large changes in leadership, which required some changes to the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). The updated statewide COOP is attached to the 2020 APSR.

On November 30, 2018 a magnitude 7.1 earthquake hit South Central Alaska. The quake's epicenter was near Point Mackenzie, about 10 miles from Anchorage. The earthquake was felt as far away as Fairbanks. It was followed six minutes later by a magnitude 5.7 aftershock centered 2.5 miles northwest of the municipality of Anchorage. The COOP was utilized to set up a central location for communication and coordination of efforts. A team of OCS staff contacted all resource families with current placements of children in state custody. Creative supports were put in place for displaced families due to damage to their homes. This experience showed the need for regional COOPs to be updated for ease of use during emergencies. Additionally our Gov Delivery emergency notification system was reviewed and training was provided to ensure effective use in the future. The emergency also highlighted the need for the Centralized Intake Unit to create its own disaster plan. Regional COOPs are being updated by regional safety teams with the support of an OCS state office Program Coordinator.

TRAINING PLAN

There have been no changes or updates to the training plan during FY20. The sixth week of SKILLS training was incorporated into the training plan submitted with the 2019 APSR and 2020-2024 CFSP. OCS and CWA continue to work on evaluating the sixth week of training.

Section F. Statistical and Supporting Information

CAPTA ANNUAL STATE DATA REPORT

INFORMATION ON CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICE WORKFORCE

Education, Qualifications, and Training Requirements for CPS Professionals: The requirement regarding new staff qualifications have not changed in the last year. The minimum qualifications for a Protective Services Specialist I/II is a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution with a major in a social, behavioral or health science, law, or a related field. Alaska allows applicants to substitute post-secondary education with paraprofessional experience providing assistance, information or referrals to the public related to social services, health care, or legal services. OCS does not have a minimum number of continuing education requirements for staff, but trainings are provided throughout the year for ongoing staff development. In the past year the training for new employees increased to 6 weeks, which now includes regionally focused staff development. The mentor program has been anecdotally successfully in assisting new staff with the transfer of learning from the classroom to the field setting. A full evaluation of the mentor program is under development with the University of Alaska. Due to COVID 19 Alaska is also working diligently to transition from an in person classroom format to a virtual training platform.

Demographic Information on Personnel:

Job Class	Female	Male	Total	Average Pay Rate
PSM I	8	2	10	\$4,249.15
PSM II	4	1	5	\$4,321.03
PS Specialist I	49	18	67	\$2,107.49
PS Specialist II	110	46	156	\$2,594.03
PS Specialist III	12	6	18	\$3,177.77
PS Specialist IV	43	4	47	\$3,783.78
Total	226	77	303	\$2,788.80

Job Class	AK Native/ Amer. Ind.	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Pacific Is./ Hawaiian	Two or More Races	White	Total
PSM I							10	10
PSM II							5	5
PS Specialist I	4	3	5	5	1	3	46	67
PS Specialist II	11	2	17	9	2	6	109	156
PS Specialist III	6	1					11	18
PS Specialist IV	5	2	3	1	1	1	34	47
Total	26	8	25	15	4	10	215	303

Job Class	AK Native/ Amer. Ind. Female	AK Native/ Amer. Ind. Male	Asian Female	Asian Male	Black Female	Black Male	Hispanic Female	Hispanic Male	Pacific Is./ Hawaiian Female	Two or More Races Female	Two or More Races Male	White Female	White Male	Total
PSM I												8	2	10
PSM II												4	1	5
PS Specialist I	4		2	1	2	3	5		1	1	2	34	12	67
PS Specialist II	9	2	1	1	8	9	5	4	2	5	1	80	29	156
PS Specialist III	5	1		1								7	4	18
PS Specialist IV	5		1	1	3		1		1	1		31	3	47
Total	23	3	4	4	13	12	11	4	4	7	3	164	51	303

Age Groups						
Job Class	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 and over	Total
PSM I		5	3	2		10
PSM II		2	1	2		5
PS Specialist I	20	21	19	7		67
PS Specialist II	24	45	41	39	7	156
PS Specialist III	1	6	4	5	2	18
PS Specialist IV		18	15	11	3	47
Total	45	97	83	66	12	303

Caseload/Workload Information for PS Specialists: The Alaska's Children Deserve a Loving Home Act, new average caseload requirements go into effect in June, 2020. OCS is currently creating a policy and process to align with the new caseload assignment requirements. During the last months of 2019 several IA units were preparing to pilot the new Investigation and Assessment process. In efforts to be prepared for the pilot, several supervisors and leadership members worked with staff to close their backlog cases. Due to COVID-19 OCS IA staff were able to close a high number of cases due to 1) a 43% reduction in the number of PSRs received during March and April 2020 (compared to 2019); and 2), an interim agency Program

Instruction that triaged assignment of new investigations to P1 and P2's . This contributed to a large decrease in the number of total open cases at the time the report was run.

On 6/1/2020, there were 3,251 open cases with 45 supervisors providing direct supervision to 234 caseworkers. According to this point in time data:

- Supervisors support 5.2 caseworkers
- Supervisors provide oversight for 73 cases
- Caseload is 14 cases per caseworker

*Source: RU determined open CPS and PTPR cases. Supervisors and workers are determined from DHSS OCS Protective Services EE. Counts by Gender Ethnicity and Age as of 12/31/2017 – 180412; Intake staff is subtracted from the report to achieve the total for this update.

JUVENILE JUSTICE TRANSFERS

Three youth transferred from the care of Alaska's child protection system to the State's juvenile justice system. See the table below for previous year transfers.

OCS Discharges to DJJ		
Discharge Year	Discharge Reason	Discharges
SFY16	Transfer to DJJ	2
SFY17	Transfer to DJJ	1
SFY18	Transfer to DJJ	1
SFY 19	Transfer to DJJ	3
SFY 20	Transfer to DJJ	3

EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHERS:

School Year	Total ETVs Awarded	Number of New ETVs
Final Number: 2018-2019 School Year (July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019)	53	25
2019-2020 School Year* (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020)	63	30

**in some cases this might be an estimated number since the APSR is due on June 30, the last day of the school year.*

INTER-COUNTRY ADOPTIONS:

During FFY 2019, no children were identified as having been adopted from other countries and entering OCS custody as a result of abuse or neglect. ACRF, who holds a grant for post adoption support services, continues to provide brief case management, crisis intervention, training, and education to adoptive families in order to promote safe and strong homes for adoptive children, regardless of if they were adopted domestically or internationally.

MONTHLY CASEWORKER VISIT DATA:

OCS will submit required data on monthly caseworker visits with children in foster care no later than December 15, 2020, 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% as OCS achieved 68%. This is an

increase from the previous year's data. The percent of children visited in their home was 64%, which exceeds the 50% federal standard.

*Source: RR00124 Federal Monthly Caseworker Visits Measure, FFY2019

Section G. Financial Information

PAYMENT LIMITATIONS

A. TITLE IV-B, SUBPART 1

States may not spend more title IV-B, subpart 1 funds for child care, foster care maintenance and adoption assistance payments than the state expended for those purposes in FY2005 (section 424 © of the Act). Alaska spent \$0 of title IV-B, subpart 1 funds for administrative costs. Alaska does not utilize title IV-B I/II funds for administrative costs.

B. TITLE IV-B, SUBPART 2

States are required to spend a significant portion of the title IV-B, subpart 2 PSSF grant for each of the four service categories of PSSF: family preservation, community-based family support, time-limited family reunification, and adoption promotion and support services.

Per the CVS-101, Part III, Alaska received \$538,442 in FFY 2018 funds from title IV-B, subpart 2 and spent those funds as follows:

- \$94,938 or 18% of its FFY2018 award on family preservation services.
- \$71,440 or 13% of its FFY2018 award on community-based family support services.
- \$343,272 or 64% of its FFY2018 award on time-limited family reunification services.
- \$25,671 or 5% of its FFY2018 award on adoption promotion and support services.

Per the attached CFS-101, Part III, Alaska spent \$0 or 0% of its FFY2018 award on administrative costs. In addition, Title IV-B, subpart 2 funds were not spent on administrative costs for the Monthly Caseworker Visit fund, either.

In FFY 2018, OCS did not expend approximately 20% of the grant on each of the four PSSF service categories. Funds were spent disproportionately during FFY 2018, because of continuing changes in utilization rate of grant services. Family Reunification services were again prioritized for funding because the capacity of service providers needed to be increased to meet the demand for the services in the urban areas. Family Preservation services were partially funded by other sources.

C. CHAFEE PROGRAM

States are required to certify that no more than 30 percent of their allotment of federal Chafee funds will be expended for room and board for youth who left foster care after the age of 18 years of age and have not yet attained age 21. For states that operate an extended foster care program and that choose to exercise the Chafee option to serve youth up to age 23, the limitation applies to providing room and board to youth who left foster care after attaining ages 18 and have not yet attained age 23.

In FFY2018, OCS expended 9 percent of its allotment of federal Chafee funds on room and board for youth who left foster care after the age of 18 years of age who had not yet turned 21. The funds were utilized for Tenant-Based Rental Assistance coupons.

CURRENT YEAR FUNDING—FY 2020 REALLOTMENTS, REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING AND SUBMITTING A REVISED CFS-101 BUDGET REQUEST

A. REALLOTMENTS

OCS did not receive any allotments in the current year.

B. REVISIONS – SUBMITTING A REVISED PART I

Submitting a Revised Part I: There were no revisions in the current year.

FY 2021 BUDGET REQUEST—CFS-101, PARTS I AND II

Alaska submitted Part I of the CFS-101 form to request Title IV-B, subpart I (CWS) and Title IV-B, subpart II (PSSF and Monthly Caseworker Visit funds), CAPTA, CFCIP and ETV funds. In addition, Alaska 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. Required financial reporting forms are located in Appendix H.

FY 2018 TITLE IV-B EXPENDITURE REPORT—CFS-101, PART III

Alaska has completed the CFS-101, Part III to report 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. Required financial reporting forms are located in Appendix H.

EXPENDITURE PERIODS AND SUBMISSION OF STANDARD FORM 425 (SF-425) FEDERAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Alaska reports expenditures under Title IV-B, subparts 1 and 2, CAPTA, CFCIP and ETV programs on the Financial Status Report, SF-425 typically by December 31 of each year, which is 90 days after federal fiscal year end.

Section H. Supporting Documents

Attachment A. Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan.

Attachment B. Alaska Health Care Oversight Plan.

Attachment C. Alaska Disaster Plan

Attachment D. APSR ETV Awards 2019-2020

Attachment E. Alaska Training Plan FY 2020

Attachment F. CFS101 Part 1 Reallotment signed

Attachment F. CFS-101 Part 1 Reallotment

Attachment F. CFS-101 Part 1 thru Part 3 FY2021

Attachment F. CFS101 Part 3 signed

Attachment G. Final Kin Nav Report