



More Child Casualties of Alaska's Hidden War

*Real stories of the 203 child victims of abuse and neglect taken
into protective custody by the Division of Family and Youth
Services during a three-month period in 2002.*

Alaska's Children of a Hidden War

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This book is dedicated to:

Every child in Alaska who struggles with abuse and neglect.

*The social workers, police officers, and others who act directly to
protect children, and who must cope with the
day-to-day pain and terror they witness.*

*Parents who have had the courage to acknowledge and change the
behavior that caused their children to suffer abuse,
neglect or other harm.*

Alaska's quiet heroes: foster parents and residential care providers.

*Adoptive parents and guardians who provide safe and loving
permanent homes for hard-to-place children.*

Justice—for all child victims in Alaska.

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Dear Alaskan:

It has been four years since the first publication of "Alaska's Children of a Hidden War." That booklet detailed the horror stories of Alaska children who were abused, neglected, and sexually assaulted.

Those stories were our worst nightmares, but they were all too real. It is this reality that we must recognize and keep working to change. This is why our Administration and the Department of Health and Social Services decided to publish this second edition of "Alaska's Children of a Hidden War." We wanted to highlight the fact that although we have made great progress, there is still much to be done. All Alaskans, including our elected leaders, must continue this progress and put this issue at the very top of their agendas.

This Administration has continually worked to improve and invest more resources in Alaska's child protection system. With the recent recommendations of the Child Protection Commission and the requirements stemming from a federal review of the Division of Family and Youth Services, we have an updated, comprehensive road map to improve the system. There is no good excuse for not following through with these recommendations to protect Alaska's children.

Please read these stories and consider the role substance abuse has played in these cases. Remember that these abused children have a greater chance of abusing their own children. Know, too, that further abuse can and must be prevented.

These stories are painful to read, but they cannot be ignored. Please take the time to learn about current and future child protection efforts so you can lend your support to the fight against child abuse and neglect. We must all do our part in this important battle.

Sincerely,

Tony Knowles
Governor

Sincerely,

Fran Ulmer
Lieutenant Governor

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Alaska's Child Victims

The 125 reports of harm that follow were received over a three-month period in 2002. In response, the Division of Family and Youth Services placed a total of 203 children in protective custody.

A one-year-old bare-footed boy was found lying on the side of the road next to his comatose mother who was passed out from extreme alcohol abuse. After repeated attempts, the woman was awakened by the use of a shock stick.

Three children, ages 2, 8, and 10, were living in a house where, despite functioning plumbing, the toilet was overflowing with human waste, and the bathtub was being used as a toilet. The family was evicted from the home because of nuisance behaviors.

A 15-year-old girl reported that her adoptive father (her biological grandfather) had sexually abused her when she was younger, and that whenever he gets angry with her he threatens to kill her with a rifle he keeps ready for that purpose. He doesn't let her wash her clothes because he claimed he could not afford the expense.

A half-dressed six-year-old girl was found wandering down a highway; she said she was trying to find her brother. The little girl was so hungry she had tried to eat grass.

A woman resident left her four-year-old girl with friends because, the mother had told the friends, the people at her house were too high, and the house smelled bad, apparently because her boyfriend was manufacturing methamphetamine. The pit bull staked in the yard was a nice dog, and that was the only positive thing the neighbors had to say about the occupants of the house. The condition of the house was described as "nasty, nasty, nasty," with bottles and hypodermic needles scattered around. According to the friends who had taken custody of the child, the girl was very dirty and hungry, and had slept for 15 to 20 hours. The custodial adults said the girl humped her doll and told them that her mommy and "daddy" (not her biological father) did that to her. While pointing to her crotch, she said that her mommy and daddy hug her on her butt. The mother is a stripper, and the child said that when she grows up she too can shake her butt and boobies.

A 16-year-old girl reported ongoing sexual abuse by her stepfather. The child was safely placed in the custody of her grandmother.

The two-week old baby was taken into emergency custody after he and his comatose mother were brought to a hospital. The mother was admitted to the intensive care unit. She was unresponsive, and the hospital was unable to immediately determine what was wrong with her. The hospital would not release the child to the putative father. A hospital official said that the baby was seen at the hospital several days before because of a bloody stool.

A 16-year-old girl, under evaluation for drug and alcohol abuse at a hospital, reported that since the age of 9 she had been sexually abused by her older brother, now 19. The abuse included sexual penetration. The abuse stopped when she told a teacher, who called the State Troopers. Although the brother was not charged, she stated that by age 15 she was able to protect herself.

A mother called the local women's shelter to report she was too drunk to care for her twin seven-year-old daughters. The mother had called the alcohol recovery unit saying she needed someone to care for her children. There had been previous instances of neglect and physical abuse with the family.

Responding to a 911 call, the police found both parents deeply intoxicated and their nine-month-old boy with a laceration behind his left ear. While the parents' stories differed, it appeared that the mother had tried to pick the child up, but was so drunk that she fell and dropped the child on a TV stand. The family was taken to the emergency room, where it was determined the parents were too intoxicated to care for their child. Tested by a police officer, the mother blew a .25 (the legal limit is .08). She was glassy eyed and continually tried to nurse the child despite being told not to. The attending physician determined the safety of the child was at risk, but when the police tried to separate the woman from her child, she refused and held the child so tightly there was concern the child would be harmed. It took three people to separate the mother from the child. She was arrested and taken away strapped to a wheel chair.

A neighbor, the mother of a teenage girl, noticed two one-inch burn marks on the forearm of her daughter's friend, a 15-year-old girl. The 15-year-old explained that her mother had purposely burned her with a pair of tongs that had been placed in a vat of hot oil. The 15-year-old is home schooled, demonstrates unusual behaviors, and often is not seen by the neighbor for days at a time. The neighbor has long suspected abuse, but this was the first direct evidence. The neighbor said the 15-year-old's mother is unpredictable and scary, owns guns, and she does not want it known who reported the alleged abuse out of fear for her family's safety.

A grandfather reported that his grandchildren, ages 7 and 8, were dirty, hungry and unsupervised by his son, and that the children's father was incapacitated by intoxication. Having just come from the family's house, the grandfather described it as an "absolute disaster," that the night before there had been a big fight and that someone had been beat up (not one of the children). The father won't buy food, and won't let the grandfather take food stamps to buy food for the kids.

The same drunken abusive father (see above) was again reported, this time for neglecting his eight-year-old boy and seven-year-old girl, both said to be at risk, dirty, hungry and under-supervised.

A six-year-old was helping a neighbor woman pull weeds in a garden. The girl asked the neighbor woman if she could keep a secret. First the girl said she felt bad because she had lied to her mother; that she had told her mother her father only drinks Pepsi while driving (the parents are separated), but that he really drinks beer. The child admitted to being uncomfortable with her father, that when she takes naps he lays on top of her, telling her they were playing a game. She said, "His snake gets real hard," then he goes into the living room and drinks beer. The child said the father had started to play the same game with her younger brother. She said that she was very scared of getting into trouble because her dad could hear everywhere. When asked if there was anything else, the child said no, then lowered her eyes and started to cry.

“These families and these children are part of our community. If we believe in our own rules and accept our own values, we must put our hearts and our souls and our political might into protecting these children. We must make Alaska a safe place for children now and for future generations of children.”

—Judge John Reese, Alaska Superior Court

A nine-year-old boy was taken into emergency foster care following his mother’s overdose of prescription medication. The boy contacted paramedics, who took the mother to the hospital. Police investigated and found the residence unsanitary, the floor covered with trash, excrement, and old food. There was no food in the refrigerator fit for consumption. There was a strong odor of animal feces in the residence. The mother reported that she was taking Oxycodone, Valium, and anti-inflammatories for back pain; she claimed that she had not used alcohol and that the overdose was accidental.

Three children, ages 4, 5 and 7, often observed by neighbors to be hungry and dirty, were living with their parents in a residence in which the utilities had been shut off. The family received financial assistance, but instead of using the money to reconnect the utilities,

they rented a hotel room for a few days. Additional public assistance paid off the past due electric bill, but further cash assistance was denied because the father is a fleeing felon from the state of California. The father is reported to be very abusive to his wife.

Five children, ages 2, 3, 6, 8, and 10, were staying with family members in another community. The three elder children admitted to a home environment that was very dirty, where they all had to sleep on one mattress, were not bathed regularly, and did not get enough to eat.

A special needs child, whose brain was damaged at the age of 1 1/2, was left in the care of a neighbor. The mother has a pattern of neglecting the child. The child needs physical and speech therapy, but the mother discontinued the services. It is believed the child is the victim of sexual abuse—her vagina is distended, and she screams when her diaper is changed. The child is very restless at night, and frequently wakes up screaming and crying.

Two boys, ages 9 and 10, were left by their mother with neighbors, who refused to care for the children any longer.

A mother of two children was living with her boyfriend who had been named by the daughter as the perpetrator of sexual abuse. The mother had been told her children could not live in the same house as her boyfriend.

Police notified DFYS that six children from one family needed custody arrangements due to the arrest of both parents. The father had become involved in a physical confrontation with a teenage neighbor. The mother came out armed with a loaded shotgun to confront the teenager. The father and mother then struggled over control of the shotgun, which discharged striking another neighbor. Both parents were charged with assault and arrested.

An intoxicated mother gave birth to a full term baby that weighed only four pounds two ounces. The baby had an alcohol level of .82 and tested positive for cocaine and methamphetamine.

Responding to a report of domestic disturbance, the police could hear yelling and thumping from outside the apartment, the residence of a mother and daughter. Witnesses had seen a young girl twice pulled away and down from an upstairs window. Kicking in the door, the officers found the house in disarray, and a very drunk mother who was found to have a blood alcohol content reading of .190 (more than twice the legal limit). Since no relatives could be found, the 11-year-old girl was taken into custody.

An intoxicated mother was admitted to a hospital, and was unable to care for her three children, ages six-weeks, 13 and 10. The family had previously been admitted to a women's shelter.

A newborn, delivered by Cesarean birth, was taken into custody the next day because the father, who apparently still resided with the mother, had been charged with sexual abuse of one of his children. The parent's other children were in custody.

A fellow resident in a women's shelter reported a mother with mental health issues refer to her child, a four-year-old boy, as "Satan." The mother had reported to a worker at the shelter that voices in her head told her not to feed the boy. Although the four-year-old was showing developmental delays, the mother refused to acknowledge the possibility. There was a fear that the mother and her son would be leaving the shelter soon.

An 11-year-old child was left with her aunt while the child's mother went to fill out a job application. Later, the mother called from a bar and made threats to the child over the phone. Both of the child's parents remained in the bar drinking. The aunt called DFYS to report she could no longer care for the child and could not locate the parents, who both have a history of neglecting the child.

The father of two children, ages 4 and 2, dropped them off with friends as he left the state. The caregivers could not keep the children, but were unwilling to turn them over to the mother, who was returning to the state the next day. They called her "unfit" because, on three different occasions, the mother had held a gun to her head and threatened to shoot herself.

A developmentally delayed 15-year-old was found wandering about the community complaining of hunger. His parents could not be located.

Ongoing domestic violence has advanced to incidents in which the mother is beaten by the father while she is holding in her arms their one-year-old daughter.

A four-year-old girl told her mother that a man who was residing in the home touched her vaginal area with a knife, and complained of "hurting down below." She told her mother that it hurts when she goes to the bathroom. The alleged perpetrator apparently left town.

One of two seven-year-old girls, neighbors in a small apartment complex, disclosed they had been sexually abused several times by an adult male, which included oral and vaginal sexual contact as well as digital and penile penetration. The adult male made both girls touch each other, and showed the children a video of him doing sexual things to his girlfriend with a "toy."

Two girls, ages 2 1/2 and 11 months, were left unattended in a filthy apartment.

A 16-year-old girl reported that her step-father came into her room and tried to touch her body sexually.

A 12-year-old child was taken into emergency custody following her mother's arrest and subsequent booking for driving while intoxicated.

A single mother of two children, ages 9 and 11/2, is frequently out of her mind, and has a pattern of abusing pain medications and alcohol. When not passed out she is usually dazed and confused. An adult male shared lodging with the mother until that morning when the woman accused him of taking her drugs and forced him to leave.

After being given a choice between 30 days in jail or 30 days in treatment, the mother of two children, ages 9 and 10, chose treatment. The biological father was incarcerated in another state. After treatment the mother returned to her home community and, with her children, moved in with a boyfriend. A few days later, saying she'd be right back, she left town. Weeks went by without a word from her, then the boyfriend received a call from the woman's mother in Anchorage to say the woman had showed up in bad shape, that she had probably been drinking and shooting speedballs (a combination of heroin and cocaine), a repeating pattern. The woman's mother expected that if the pattern held, she would be asleep for 24 to 48 hours.

A mother left her child with relatives and went out to drink. The relatives, tired of babysitting, requested assistance. The mother could not be located.

A couple took guardianship of a nine-year-old girl and her 12-year-old sister in 1994. The two girls had been seriously abused and neglected by their biological parents. After several placements, the couple took them in. The older girl, now 20, did reasonably well and graduated from high school. The younger girl acted out, and became unmanageable. She was finally placed in an out-of-state residential treatment facility. When she returned to the care of her guardians, the girl, who is now 17, threatened she would accuse them of physical abuse. At the guardians' request, the court terminated guardianship and DFYS assumed custody.

An 11-year-old girl was left to fend for herself while her alcoholic mother and friend engaged in drinking bouts. The father works two jobs and is unable to assure the safety of his daughter while the mother drinks with her friend. Following a recent admission to a hospital, the mother was told her condition was so bad she would die soon if she did not stop drinking.

Four children, ages 6, 9, 11, and 12, were left by their single mother with their 14-year-old cousin. Early in the morning, the cousin went looking for the children's mother, who was suspected of being drunk. The cousin was detained for breaking curfew, at which time the police became aware of the abandoned children, who were then turned over to their aunt for supervision until the mother could be located.

The mother of an 8-week-old left her child with a friend, saying she was entering a treatment facility. The mother never showed up for treatment or contacted the friend, apparently abandoning the child.

A nine-year-old child was in the company of his very intoxicated mother next to the community jetty. She was arrested for prior violations.

While carrying their two-month-old child, a husband and wife were arrested for felony shoplifting. With no friends or relatives in the area to care for the child, DFYS assumed custody.

During an unannounced visit, a case worker entered the filthy home of an eight-year-old girl and her single father. A mattress lay in the middle of a room littered with debris and opened bottles of alcohol, in such disarray it was difficult to enter the room. The father, wearing only underwear, was very agitated. The eight-year-old girl had a large bruise on her forearm, and reported that her father had bit her, and that he throws their puppy at her. The child was taken into custody by her grandmother. The father's file indicates that in another state he was reported to have assaulted his other young daughters, had covered their mouths so that they could not breathe, and beat his nephew.

To go on drug runs, a mother reportedly had left her four-month-old baby several times with drug users and family members. She had dropped off the breast feeding child with her brother, then with her mother, a chronic alcoholic. Previously, she lost custody of two other children due to drugs, and appears unable to care for this child.

A newborn tested positive for cocaine at birth. The next day, both mother and child were well enough to go home, but the mother had no interest in the baby.

A caregiver of a three-year-old girl had to go to work, but could not locate the child's mother. The mother abandoned the child.

A village council made good on a threat to turn a custody case involving a ten-month-old child over to the state if the mother continued to drink.

A 14-year-old boy, on a fishing vacation with his parent's friends, was taken into custody when the man he was with was arrested for driving while intoxicated. Transportation out-of-state was arranged so the boy could be returned home.

A 16-year-old girl said she had run away from her mother's home after her mother hit her in the face and cut her lip. The mother, the mother's boyfriend, and the girl were all intoxicated. With not enough evidence to arrest the mother, a temporary residence had to be found for the girl.

An intoxicated mother of two was involved in a motor vehicle accident while driving her children, ages 12 and 9. The nine-year-old boy suffered an abdominal injury, and was kept overnight for observation. The mother, who was also under the influence of prescription medication, was too drowsy to respond to questions about her son's possible surgery, nor could she name an alternative caretaker for her children.





An eight-year-old boy was found to have fresh and old welts and bruises that he said were from whippings administered by his mother with a belt and an extension cord. The boy's sister, who also reported being whipped in the same manner, said the mother had thrown a table at the boy the night before. There appears to be a prior history in Texas, before they moved to Alaska. The children are fearful of their mother.

A mother left her child with a friend. Later the friend took the child to its grandfather, who then called the police department, saying he was in no condition to care for the child.

A ten-month-old child was twice struck by its drunken father. The father was attacking his equally drunk wife who was holding the baby.

While staying at a motel a couple from out of town, the parents of a two-year-old child became too drunk to care for the child or to even recommend placement for the child. The father was arrested and incarcerated.

A custodial father reported that his daughter had called her nine-year-old brother, who was staying with the children's mother in another community, and that the boy was crying because his mother was drunk. The father called police to have the boy returned by airplane.

An 11-year-old girl was left alone while her father was out of town. The girl told a neighbor that when her father is home, he swears at her and throws things. The father has a prior history of violence. The girl's uncle later called from the lower 48 to say she had called him, complaining she was alone and afraid.

A babysitter left several children unattended, then returned with friends and proceeded to get drunk along with at least one child who was in her care. The children's mother was informed, but failed to return home.

Four children, ages 5, 7, 9 and 12, were present and witnessed their very drunk parents fighting. The father was incarcerated for domestic violence.

Upon the arrest of her live-in boyfriend for parole violation because of intoxication, a very drunken woman threatened to kill herself and her six children, ages 5, 6, 10, 11, 12 and 13. She was placed with the health center for evaluation.

For a full week, the mother of a four-year-old boy was drunk and violent. Her live-in boyfriend, with visible scratches, sought the help of a mutual friend to contain the woman. Upon entering the dwelling, the friend was approached by the boy. The drunken mother reached out and struck the boy, who fell against a coffee table and began to cry. His mother screamed at him not to cry and told him he was stupid. Early the next morning, the friend was again called to assist the live-in boyfriend in handling the woman who, by then, was so drunk that she began having a seizure. An ambulance was called, but the woman was not taken to the hospital. Earlier reports had been received that the mother routinely slapped and screamed at her boy. She had been heard to say she knew the boy was hungry, but she was too tired and had to sleep.

Upon arrival at a hospital to deliver a baby, the mother-to-be stated that she wished her baby was born dead.

A five-year-old unattended child crossing a busy road was nearly hit by a car. The driver picked up the child and called the police.

A three-year-old child was found wandering outdoors without parental supervision. Parents were found after a door-to-door search and charged with reckless endangerment.

The custodial aunt of a 16-year-old boy left the state without her nephew, locking him out of the house.

Two children, ages 3 and 4, were in the family trailer when assailants came after their stepfather, called him a "nigger," fired shots from guns and spray-painted racial slurs on the driveway. The next day, the children's parents were in court due to an eviction noticed they had received.

A mother dropped off her two children with their grandmother, then the mother and her boyfriend apparently tried to commit vehicular suicide. They were unsuccessful, and refused medical attention. The five-year-old boy reported that his mother's boyfriend beat him.

A baby was born to drug addicted mother who had used cocaine throughout her pregnancy.

A mother and her four-year-old child were videotaped leaving their residence on a four-wheeler. Grasping a half empty bottle of whiskey, the mother was slumping backward, then forward onto the boy who was sitting in front of her hanging on to the handlebars. As the mother fell forward, looking as if she had fallen asleep, the boy would attempt to push her off him. She then slumped so far sideways she seemed about to fall off the four-wheeler. A responding officer described the mother as smelling strongly of alcohol, having blood shot eyes, slurred speech, and off balance while standing and walking. Failing a field sobriety test, the mother was arrested for driving while intoxicated and reckless endangerment. The State Troopers had received eight prior referrals of neglect since August 1999.

An eight-year-old boy was seen fleeing from his apartment, short of breath and holding his neck, which was very red. The boy said his father had choked him. The day before, the boy's sister, a seven-year-old, was observed outside the apartment screaming and crying. The father came out and verbally abused the child, forcing her back to the apartment. This is a frequent occurrence; the father drinks heavily and has been very abusive to the children. From 1995 to 1997, the children were in state custody until released to their biological mother.

A police officer, while on patrol, observed a very drunk man walking down a street while holding a two-year-old child in his arms. The officer, in his vehicle, approached the man who then lurched in front of the patrol car. The drunken man told the officer the child's mother was in a nearby store. Handing the child to the officer, the man went into the store, seeking the mother, but did not return. The officer attempted to page the mother in the store, but there was no response. He took the child to the emergency room to have its diaper changed. The boy was suffering from serious diaper rash.

A four-year-old girl was observed in a car driven by her intoxicated mother. The child had come to a neighbor's house earlier that day hungry, filthy, her hair uncombed and wearing dirty, oversized clothes. The neighbor said that the child's mother had been intoxicated nearly every day for the past month.

Four children, ages 5, 9, 10 and 13, were at home when their parents became intoxicated and began fighting. The 13-year-old attempted to intervene to protect her mother, and was beaten about the head and back by her father. The father was arrested, and a social worker visited the family to arrange for placement of the children with relatives. While discussing options, the mother got up, went to the kitchen, returned a few minutes later, sat next to her daughter and began talking with her. The 13-year-old noticed blood on her mother's wrist. The mother was then taken under protective custody. According to the child, this was not the first suicide attempt by her mother.

A three-year-old boy was in a home while parents were intoxicated. No sober relative could be located and the child was taken into custody.

An intoxicated woman with an infant who had disembarked from a passenger jet and was met at the airport terminal by two social workers. The mother, loosely holding the child, was slumped forward and appeared to be nodding off. Reeking of alcohol, the mother explained that the child, who smelled of vomit and a soiled diaper, was sick from a dessert it had eaten. An airlines employee reported that the mother had wandered about the terminal leaving the child on the floor for several minutes at a time. The employee also witnessed the mother attempting to console the crying child, and failing to do so the woman began cussing at her baby in a loud voice.

A 14-year-old girl was picked up by the police and lodged at a youth facility. Relatives could not be located to take custody of the girl.

A 15-month-old child was removed from a home in which everyone, babysitter included, were intoxicated and fighting. The father was arrested for domestic violence assault.

Two children, ages 2 and 4, were home without supervision. The mother was out and the baby sitter had left the children alone. Police found the door unlocked, and upon entering found the children asleep on the living room floor. The baby's diaper was very wet. The children were taken into custody and a notice was left at the home. Several hours later the mother contacted the police. When police officers arrived at her home, the mother was extremely intoxicated. At least 16 prior reports had been received about the family.

In the early morning hours a very intoxicated woman arrived at a friend's house by car with her infant child. When the mother attempted to leave the home, the friend would not allow her to take the child and called 911. The woman left without the baby, but began calling later that morning to get her child back. There were two prior reports of neglect, one confirmed. The child's father is incarcerated.

A 13-year-old girl reported to police that her mother and stepfather had beaten her with a belt, boots and shoes the previous evening. The numerous welts, bruises, bumps and abrasions on her arms were consistent with being hit with such objects. She was in fear of returning home.

Two children, ages 3 and 7, were found wandering through a large retail store without supervision. When asked by a store employee, one child said his mother was home sleeping. During this process, the parents called in a report about their missing children. When the police took the two children home, they found the house to be very dirty. Four prior reports of neglect had been received, none confirmed.

A six-year-old girl was stranded at school awaiting her mother. The police went to the mother's residence and found her asleep and hard to wake. The mother admitted to smoking marijuana and also had taken three prescription pain medications. The house was filthy. In an attempt to avoid taking custody of the young girl, the police tried to contact relatives. A grandmother was found, but had a history of DWI and assault. An aunt stated she had to work and was unable to care for the child. Another aunt was found to have had her driving license suspended for DWI. At least 13 prior reports of harm were on file for the family.

A seven-month-old child was assessed at a hospital and found to have bruises and scrapes from having her head hit against the side of a baby crib by her mother. The mother was arrested and advised that her infant and two other children, ages 3 and 8, were being placed in state custody by the police.

A two-year-old boy was taken into emergency custody after his mother was arrested and charged with child neglect for passing out with the child in a taxicab. The mother's blood alcohol content level was determined to be .250 at the time (.08 is the legal limit).

Two sisters, ages 14 and 15, called 911 to report an incident of domestic violence in which their mother attacked the 15-year-old and smacked the 14-year-old in the face for trying to interfere. The phone was ripped off the wall terminating the 911 call. The mother's live-in boyfriend got involved, and was threatened with a knife by the 15-year-old until he allowed her to leave the apartment. The mother was arrested, and the sisters found lodging with friends. Records indicate at least 34 prior reports including prior placements in custody.

Grandparents reported that their grandchildren, ages 8 and 9, were in their custody because the children's parents are "druggies and the father violent." The eight-year-old boy had told his grandparents that his father, a construction worker, had attacked the boy's mother and when the boy's sister tried to help she was thrown across the room, injuring her shoulder. The mother was in jail on other charges, the father out of town on work. The grandparents are trying to get custody of the children and prevent the father from visiting.

Three children, ages 2, 4, and 7, were placed in emergency foster care after police seized crack cocaine and a gun from their home. The children's grandmother was arrested for firing shots at the children's father.

A newborn and a two-year-old were taken into custody following the felony arrest of both parents.

A newborn tested positive for cocaine by urine drug screen. On admission to the hospital the mother tested positive for cocaine and alcohol by urine drug screen. The mother had missed four out of eight scheduled prenatal care appointments.

A newborn, full term at 5 lbs. 12 oz., tested positive for cocaine by urine drug screen. The mother indicated she wants to enter treatment.

Two children, ages 9-months and 2, were present during a domestic violence incident in which their father, intoxicated, attacked their mother with a broom stick. He missed. The woman went to a neighbor's apartment, leaving her children alone with the drunken father. The mother returned for a cigarette and got into another argument, at which point her husband again attacked her, this time biting her on the cheek. The mother again left the residence to find the phone by which she called the police.

Three children, ages 2-weeks, 2 and 4, were taken into custody following the arrest of both parents for felony theft.

A mentally retarded seven-year-old boy was placed in emergency protective custody after police found him walking down a busy city street without shoes or socks. The boy was taken to his residence but nobody was home. Previously, police had picked the boy up when he was found wandering around his neighborhood in the winter wearing only his underwear.

Custody had to be arranged for a developmentally disabled 15-year-old boy whose drunken single mother was arrested for assault on her equally intoxicated brother.

A 13-year-old boy was in a vehicle driven by his relative, a 22-year-old man who was arrested for driving while intoxicated and reckless endangerment.

A child was born to a woman with untreated crack cocaine, alcohol and other substance abuse problems. She has two other children, ages 21-months and 2. Charges of abuse of the two-year-old had been substantiated—she allegedly hit and tossed the boy across a room. The boy was taken into temporary custody until released to his father and grandparents, but the mother is now back in the home.

Police were called to the residence of a woman who found an unidentified, barefoot and partly clothed three-year-old boy on her porch in the morning. Police were unable to determine where the child belongs and had received no calls from anyone trying to locate the child.

A crack-using alcoholic mother of ten minor children was attempting to reclaim her youngest child, a nine-week-old baby, from her adult daughter. The baby has been with its adult sister since shortly after birth. The mother had the baby the day before this report, and returned the child with an unchanged diaper. The father of perhaps six of the children also uses crack cocaine and abuses alcohol. At least 32 prior reports are on file, including custody terminations and reports of domestic violence.

A six-year-old girl reported that her 13-year-old sister beat her that day before school.

A two-year-old boy was found walking in the street about two houses down from the family residence. The police responded to the report of an unsupervised child, but were unable to get anyone to respond at the family home. After attempting for over an hour to locate a caretaker or the parent, the child was placed in emergency foster care.



Responding to a complaint, police found a four-year-old child dirty and unkempt, and the mother smelling of alcohol. The mother's boyfriend was arrested for an outstanding warrant.

Three children, six-year-old twins and a 12-year-old were taken into temporary custody until their father could drive to Alaska and pick them up. The children's mother was involved in a custodial interference case with the father.

Four children, ages 6-weeks, 4, 8 and 9, were placed in emergency foster care when their mother was arrested for driving while intoxicated. An aunt was attempting to travel from another city to take custody of the children. The mother told the aunt she had blacked out and woke up in a jail cell.

Following a police investigation of a reported disturbance, four children, a two-month-old child, a three-year-old and five-year-old twins, were placed in emergency custody. Police found the mother intoxicated and attempting to nurse her baby, with one child asleep in the middle of the floor. Police prevented the mother from nursing the baby due to her intoxication. The police determined she was unable to care for the children. The maternal aunt, present, refused to care for the children, and the mother refused to allow neighbors to care for her children. The mother was taken to jail. At least two prior reports of neglect, unconfirmed, had been received.

A newborn baby and her homeless mother tested positive for cocaine and marijuana. The mother denied using cocaine. She stated that perhaps the marijuana was laced in cocaine. The mother plans to either go to treatment or a homeless shelter. The 20-year-old mother has a long history with DFYS from childhood.

A child was born to a drug addicted mother whose prenatal screenings revealed the abuse of cocaine and opiates (including morphine). The mother had rejected her doctor's advice of total bed rest due to concerns over intra-uterine growth retardation and low amniotic fluid. The mother also rejected her physician's suggestion that the birth be induced to avoid further risks.

An eight-year-old girl reported that she is left alone day and night when her mom goes out on "outcalls." The girl became guarded and refused further comment when questioned.

A female prisoner gave birth to a child, father unknown. No adequate arrangements had been made for the newborn.

An 18-month-old child was taken into emergency custody after police responded to a domestic violence dispute and arrested the mother's boyfriend. The mother was taken to a shelter.

A mother gave birth to a baby boy who tested cocaine-positive by urine. The mother initially denied cocaine usage, but when advised she too had tested positive she admitted to having "messed up." Seven years previously, the mother's parental rights to her twin children had been terminated because of cocaine abuse.

The pregnant mother of four children, ages 5, 6, 8 and 12, was admitted to a hospital to give birth. The other children are in foster homes. The mother has a history of mental health issues and substance abuse problems with alcohol & cocaine.

A 20-year-old homeless mother and her newborn were kept on extended stay in a hospital until it was determined that they could be safely discharged. Three months earlier, the mother had lost parental rights to her two children due to chronic neglect by both parents and mental health issues with the previous children's father. The mother claims to be divorced and that the newborn's father is her boyfriend, but he denied paternity. Both the mother and the boyfriend have the DFYS case histories as children.

The mother of three children, ages 6-months, 2 and 4, was suspected by the family's physician of not properly feeding the infant, who was admitted to the hospital for vomiting and weight loss. The baby gained weight while in the hospital, and its doctor was unable to find anything medically that would cause the baby to vomit or lose weight. The baby had been admitted to the hospital three months previous for the same concerns. The mother has a history of problems with depression, and had recently been seen by a mental health professional. The doctor expressed concern that this may be a case of Munchausen by proxy syndrome (a condition in which a person exaggerates or creates a medical condition to attract sympathy).

The parents of a nine-month-old child, apparently drug shooting junkies, allowed their child to crawl about an unsanitary home, with dirty laundry piled up, dishes left unwashed, and baby feces found on floors and counters. The baby was filthy from crawling on the floor. Domestic violence has been reported but unconfirmed.

A four-month-old baby boy was left by his parents with neighbors for over two weeks. During this time they visited their son once. The mother recently came back to retrieve the baby, but appeared to be under the influence of some type of drug and was in the company of a known perpetrator of physical abuse against another child in protective custody. The neighbors refused to give up the child and contacted DFYS.

Police broke up a brawl at a recreation center and all the children involved in the fight left except for a seven-year-old, who would not tell the police how he got to the center, where he lived, or the names of his parents. The police dispatcher had received a call from the boy's parents asking for his whereabouts. They were told where they could pick up their boy, but never showed up. The boy was placed in custody. At least 16 previous reports of harm had been received on the family, including several for neglect and physical abuse, and one for sexual abuse.

A 15-year-old boy reported that his father had hit him numerous times with a rake, until the rake broke into several pieces. The boy had red marks on his left forearm, back of the leg and across the left temple area. When asked what he wanted to happen, he volunteered for foster care and was taken into emergency custody.

A 14-year-old girl told hospital personnel that she was afraid to go home because of her mother's verbal abuse ("you're stupid, you retard!"), and her father's physical abuse that includes punching, hitting, and slapping. The young girl said that verbal and physical abuse occurs when parents are drunk or sober.

A volunteer of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program went to pick up her eight-year-old “little sister.” The girl’s father, who works nights, was sleeping. His three-year-old nephew was crying because of a wet diaper and likely diaper rash. Three children live in the home, the man’s two daughters and his nephew. The children’s mothers are believed to be incarcerated. He is known to be a good father with very good parenting skills—both daughters clearly adore him—but with the school year ending, the children’s safety is a concern since he sleeps during the day.

A father, exercising visitation rights with his ten-month old baby, noticed that the boy had several bruises on his back, and bruises on each shoulder. X-rays confirmed that the child had three rib fractures. Medical examination also revealed the child to be colicky and underweight. The mother also has another child, 20-months of age, fathered by another man. Both children were placed in temporary emergency custody.

A two-year-old boy was found wandering alone in a trailer court. Police cared for the child for an hour while investigating child neglect. They canvassed the area looking for a caretaker without success. The boy was unable to tell the police his age, name, who was caring for him, where he lived, or who or where his parents were. Police requested placement in emergency foster care. Custody was assumed and the boy was placed.

Relatives reported a mother had left her child with them and went off to drink. No one knows where the mother is drinking.

An aunt of a seven-year-old girl contacted the staff at the child’s school to report that the girl had been caught performing oral sex on a 12-year-old boy. The aunt said the mothers of both children caught in the act knew of the incident, and that the seven-year-old had been observed watching porn movies at home. Another aunt who had had custody of the seven-year-old girl was called up for military duty and had returned her to the child’s crack-using birth mother. The birth mother had lost custody because she is wanted on federal charges of crack cocaine trafficking and credit card fraud.



What are child protective services?

The purpose of the State of Alaska's child protection system is to identify, treat, and reduce child abuse and neglect, and to ensure that reasonable efforts are made to keep children in their own homes.

Effective child protection requires a team effort. Government agencies, community groups and families must work together, especially in a state as vast as ours. The Division of Family and Youth Services (DFYS), with help from law enforcement and other agencies, provides protective services for children living in communities throughout the entire state—approximately 586,412 square miles. The 2000 census reported 190,717 children under the age of 18 living in Alaska.

DFYS staff provides protective services for children in the following ways:

- Investigating reports of harm.
- Assisting families in diagnosing and resolving problems.
- Referring families to community resources.
- Initiating legal intervention if children are not safe in their own homes.
- Providing out-of-home placements and planning for permanent homes when necessary.

Removal of a child from his or her home is warranted if the child is at risk of immediate harm, and conditions cannot be immediately remedied. When a child is removed from his or her home, subsequent casework services are focused on resolving the problems that led the child into state custody.

Family reunification is the top priority. However, if a parent is unable or unwilling to provide security, affection, and continuing care for a child, an alternate permanency plan is developed and implemented.

Protect children, prevent crime

More and more law enforcement officials across the nation are pushing child protection as an effective tool for reducing crime rates.

Numerous studies have found that children who are hurt are more likely to hurt others, that children who are abused or neglected are much more likely to be arrested as teens. Prisons are filled with the victims of child abuse and neglect.

The same studies have shown that children who receive early interventions such as *Head Start* and *Healthy Families* are less likely to become criminals later in life.

What are child abuse and neglect?

State law defines child abuse or neglect to include the following actions by those responsible for a child's welfare:

- Physical injury: harm or behavior that may cause physical pain or an impairment of the child's physical condition.
- Neglect: failure to provide necessary food, care, clothing, shelter or medical attention for a child.
- Sexual abuse: rape, incest or molestation.
- Sexual exploitation: permitting a child to be used for sexual purposes in exchange for cash or other benefits.
- Mental injury: serious injury to the child as evidenced by an observable and substantial impairment in the child's ability to function in a developmentally appropriate manner.
- Maltreatment: causing a child to suffer substantial harm due to an act or omission not necessarily committed by the child's parent, custodian or guardian.

The number of reports of harm for all types of abuse to Alaska's children has increased dramatically since 1989. The highest category of harm is neglect, followed by physical abuse, sexual abuse, mental injury and abandonment. In the 12 years that elapsed since FY 1989, when 7,876 reports of harm were received, the volume more than doubled: in FY 2001 there were 17,475 reports of harm to children received by Alaskan authorities.

The sheer volume of reports requires a screening process to determine the appropriate response. Reports of children in immediate danger are a top priority.

“My heart goes out to families in crisis, and to the public servants who must step into often terrible situations for the protection of children. All children deserve safe and permanent homes, and parents have the right to correct a bad situation. There is constant work to help both parents and children.”

—Theresa Tanoury, Director, Division of Family & Youth Services

What does it mean for a child to be placed in foster care?

When a child who is reported to be a victim of abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse cannot be maintained safely within the child's own home, a foster care home is always preferred.

Foster care homes generally are of two types—homes of close relatives and licensed foster care homes.

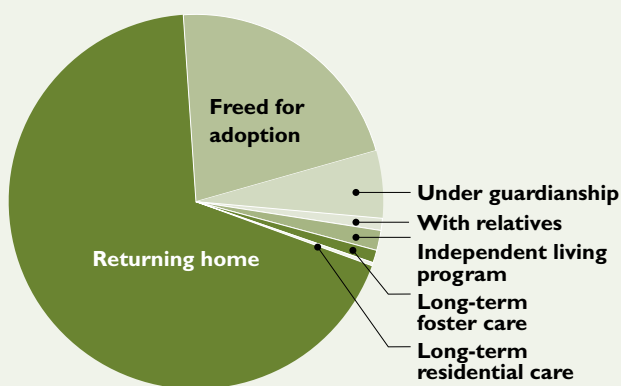
The first choice in foster placements is in the home of a close relative. This can include extended family members—not necessarily blood relatives—who are interested in caring for children related to them while DFYS is trying to reunite a family.

A "licensed foster care home" means a foster home that is agency approved and meets basic standards of safety set by law in the foster care regulations. These standards reduce the physical risk that children may face in an unfamiliar home. These homes are also regularly monitored.

Licensed foster homes are eligible for payments to help with the cost of caring for a child. Payment is not a salary, but is designed to be a reimbursement of the child's expenses and costs of items that are normal in the care of a child.

The goal of foster care is to provide temporary care until families can again care for their children or until permanent homes are found for the children. On October 1, 2002, there were 1,901 children in out-of-home placement; of those, 792 (41.7%) had been in custody two years or more.

According to DFYS records 2,232 children were in state custody on October 1, 2002.



- 1,535 were returning home
- 478 were being freed for adoption*
- 128 will go into guardianship
- 23 will be or are permanently cared for by relatives
- 38 will be or are in long-term foster care
- 24 will live independently
- 6 are in long-term residential care.

*A legal termination of parental rights is the usual procedure

Why do DFYS and these children need you?

In FY 01, 54% of the children who were adopted out of foster care were adopted by their foster families. By becoming a licensed foster parent, you make your home available for children, many of whom are in desperate need of the love, attention and stability your care can provide.

Good foster homes are always needed. According to the report filed by the Governor's Commission on Child Protection, Alaska needs to generate a significantly larger pool of foster families to provide appropriate placement and relieve the strain on existing foster families. On October 1, 2002 there were 1,216 licensed foster care homes in Alaska.

To find out more about providing licensed foster care, call the Alaska Foster Parent Training Center at 1-800-478-7307.

What about adoption and guardianships?

When it has been determined that a child in the custody of the state cannot be safely reunited with parents, a comprehensive permanency planning process begins which includes the following:

- Identifying the best alternative permanency plan for the child
- Identifying an appropriate family
- Preparing the child and family for new permanency
- Providing subsidies where necessary

Generally, when adoption is discussed, what most often comes to mind is healthy infants and toddlers needing homes. The reality is that most children eligible for adoption and guardianship are often hard to place because they have special needs. These children can be more difficult to care for and are hard to place because of the following:

- Physical or mental disability
- Emotional disturbance
- Recognized high risk of physical or mental disease
- Age
- Membership in a sibling group
- Any combination of these conditions

Financial and medical subsidies are established based on the children's needs, and the circumstances of the families who become their parents or guardians. Often, the subsidy program helps relatives who otherwise could not provide for these children.

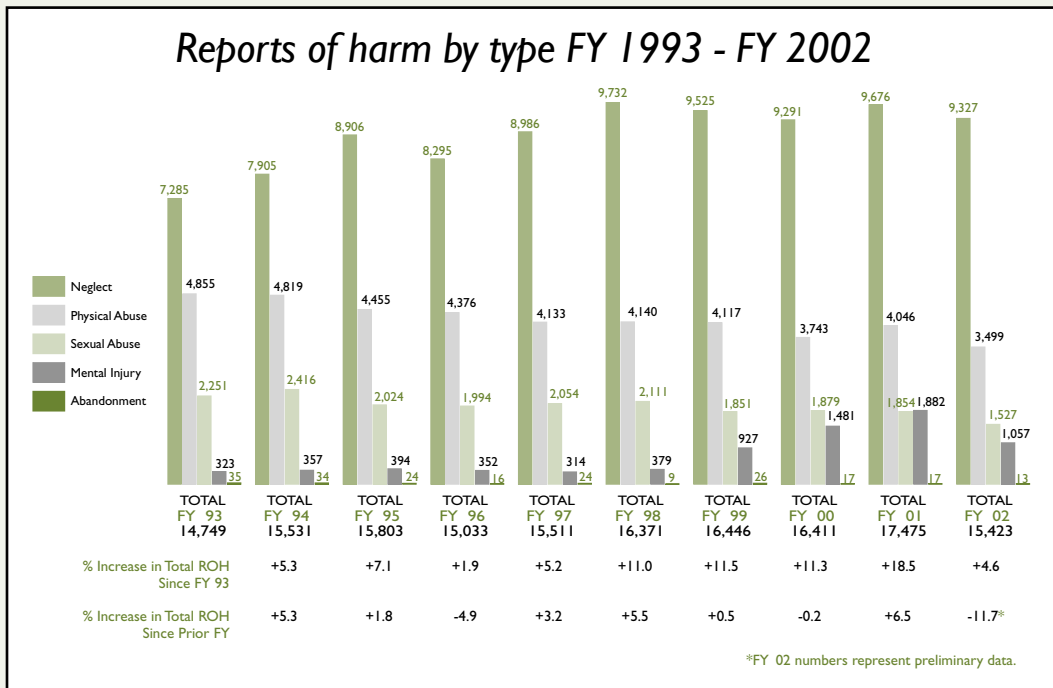
Adoption and guardianship subsidies are critical services DFYS provides in order to facilitate the permanent placement of hard-to-place children.

The number of children in subsidized adoption and guardianship homes has increased. It is in the best long-term interest of these children for the state to provide them financial and medical assistance so they can be placed in permanent homes rather than for the state to retain legal custody with the attendant higher financial and emotional costs of foster care.

Additional adoption support services may be available through private agencies. These include:

- Bristol Bay Native Association • (907) 842-4139
- Alaska Family Resource Center • (907) 746-4080
- Catholic Social Services • (907) 276-5590
- Wrangell Community Services • (907) 874-2373
- Fairbanks Counseling and Adoption Services • (907) 456-4729

Update of “Children of a Hidden War” statistics



Unduplicated Children with Reports of Harm

1993	10,556
1994	11,052
1995	10,894
1996	10,672
1997	10,547
1998	11,122
1999	11,291
2000	11,821
2001	12,562
2002	11,121*

* FY 02 numbers are preliminary

Children in State Custody Awaiting Adoption on 10/01/2002

One Parent's Rights Terminated:	109
Both Parents' Rights Terminated:	391

Number of Licensed Foster Care Homes, 10/01/2002: 1,216

Total Children in Custody & Placed in Out of Home Care on 10/01/2002: 1,901

Total Children in Custody & Placed in Their Own Home on 10/01/2002: 331

Protecting More of Alaska's Children

Five years ago, the Knowles-Ulmer Administration launched "Smart Start for Alaska's Children," a three-pronged approach to child protection: basic health care for Alaska's children, swift intervention when children are in danger, and prevention programs to break ongoing cycles of family violence.

This unprecedented commitment to children is getting results: Nearly 26,000 children enrolled in Denali KidCare; 6,000 families off welfare; millions in welfare savings invested in childcare and other family friendly programs. More specifics:

Tougher child protection law. A 1998 rewrite of state law better protects Alaska's children by swiftly moving those who are abused and neglected into safe, permanent homes when family problems become insurmountable. The 1998 law also provides for "real-time" access to criminal history records (APSIN) and requires criminal background checks of child service providers.

More adoptions, faster action. Adoptions of children in state custody have doubled, providing loving homes to more children. The administration convinced lawmakers to hire more child protection professionals. Today, more than 1,300 children have been helped. A new pilot—the Simple New Adoption Process (SNAP)—is further reducing adoption timelines.

Calls for help answered. Six years ago, because of a crippling lack of resources, the state could only respond to 73 percent of reports of harm. Today, the response is 92 percent statewide, and 100 percent in many areas.

Alaska Children's Trust activated. The Trust was created in 1988, but not funded until the Knowles-Ulmer Administration, the Children's Cabinet, and some lawmakers made it a priority. The Trust received its only legislative appropriation in 1996 for \$6 million. Through community and business support and effective fund-raising, its principal now totals \$9.2 million. Yearly earnings go to community programs fighting child abuse and neglect. So far, 48 local organizations have received more than \$1.8 million.





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