

# STATE OF ALASKA

**DEPT. OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES**  
OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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February 27, 2012

Representative Cathy Munoz  
Alaska State Capitol  
Room 403  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Munoz:

Thank you for sponsoring House Bill 343 Disclosure of Children's Records.

The Office of Children's Services supports this bill because it will allow improvements in our ability to exchange necessary, important information with our sister agency, the Division of Juvenile Justice. While throughout most of Alaska it is understood that our agencies can share information regarding our clients to ensure efficient use of resources and the best approaches to working with their families, occasional misunderstanding about this relationship among Departmental staff, attorneys, families, and judges can lead to confusion, withholding of information, and even court action to suppress sharing of information when actually the exchange can lead to better case management and more appropriate services for the child.

Many national organizations, including the Child Welfare League of America, have noted the benefits and importance of improved coordination between juvenile justice and child protection agencies.

The bill also includes provisions recommended by our Office that will facilitate better information sharing between child protection and juvenile justice agencies and Alaska's child placement agencies. These agencies license foster homes and place children in them. Both Juvenile Justice and Children's Services rely on child placement agencies to provide services for youth under our jurisdiction; better coordination with these agencies will only improve our ability to serve them.

Please contact me if I can answer any questions or be of other assistance.

Sincerely,



Christy Lawton  
Director