



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Health
and Social Services

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Dear Ms. Johnson, Ms. Tobuk, Ms. McGarry, Ms. Lindley, and Ms. Johnson,

Thank you for the invitation to participate and join you at the Tribal State Collaboration Group virtual convening. I appreciate the additional time you added to the meeting to allow the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) to present and engage in a very important dialogue on Alaska's child welfare system. The department greatly values our partnership with Tribal Child Welfare providers, and we remain committed to that partnership. This is a complex system, and your expertise and insight are helpful as we navigate ways to improve outcomes for the families and children we serve.

My leadership team and I were glad to have the opportunity to discuss the Governor's Executive Order to reorganize DHSS into two departments, as well as the separate vision around a potential bifurcation of the Office of Children's Services (OCS) into two divisions. The department realizes that we will need more time working with partners to come up with solutions to make meaningful improvements across the child welfare system. We have removed the proposed July 1, 2020 timeline to complete the potential bifurcation of OCS and seek further input from our partners as we reimagine the child welfare system. We are committed to making the child welfare system better for all Alaskans but acknowledge that we cannot do it

alone and need the help and expertise of the Tribal Partners.

It is the desire of the department to move forward and engage in Tribal consultation on the proposed changes to OCS, with the full understanding that changes of this magnitude affect all of our child welfare partnerships. We agree that a formal Tribal consultation process is necessary in considering the following: the vision of bifurcating OCS into two divisions, elevating the Tribal compact to the Commissioner's office, the consideration of moving from five regions to four regions, and exploring any additional ideas you may have to improve outcomes. The department will not move to implement any proposed changes on these topics prior to consultation. The department has already provided the detail it has as the foundation for these proposals. To the extent any additional data or documentation becomes available prior to future consultations, the department will share that as well.

Accordingly, we will be submitting a formal request for Tribal consultation as outlined in the Department of Health and Social Services Tribal Consultation Policy the following issues (1) bifurcation of OCS, (2) realignment of the OCS regional offices, and (3) elevating the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact to the Commissioner's office. Throughout this process, we will be open to any other ideas for improved outcomes for the children and families we serve. It is the desire of the department to start this consultation in the beginning of February 2021, if a schedule can be agreed upon with our Tribal partners.

We have been successful utilizing consultation with our Tribal partners in reaching agreement on important issues, such as, such as the Tribal Child Welfare Compact. The department is optimistic that we can reach common ground through a consultative process that will lead to improvements for our children, our families, and our incredible front-line workers.

Finally, the department would like to reaffirm our commitment to the Tribal Child Welfare Compact. This is an important tool aimed at improving outcomes for our children and our families. The department stands ready to assist and support the implementation of additional Scopes of Work by our Tribal partners under the Compact.

I look forward to your response on a formal consultation meeting schedule. If you have immediate questions, please feel free to reach out to Emily Palmer, Special Assistant to Deputy Commissioner Lasley at emily.palmer@alaska.gov.

Sincerely,



Adam Crum
Commissioner

cc: Clinton Lasley, Deputy Commissioner, Family, Community & Integrated Services
Kim Guay, Acting Director, Office of Children's Services
John Moller, Policy Advisor on Rural Affairs, Office of Governor Mike Dunleavy