

FACING FOSTER CARE IN ALASKA

POLICY AGENDA 2026



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<p>PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT</p>	<p>SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS</p>
<p>HOUSE BILL 36 Foster youth placed in hospitals for psychiatric treatment may linger up to 30 days before getting a court hearing. A 2024 opinion by the Alaska Supreme Court noted that this is far too long and the legislature should identify a solution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House Bill 36 gives foster youth the right to a hearing within 7 calendar days of placement in a hospital for psychiatric treatment to determine if they meet the criteria for such a high level of care. 	<p>HOUSE BILL 157 Sibling connections are imperative to the well-being of children and youth who experience foster care and are often separated. Current law requires the connection among siblings to be maintained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House Bill 157 allows siblings to remain legal siblings after an adoption by separate caregivers/parents of the youth.
<p>SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY</p>	<p>HOUSING</p>
<p>DRAFT LEGISLATION The Office of Children’s Services currently reimburses itself using foster youths’ Social Security Disability benefits. Many states have moved away from this practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft legislation proposes placing these benefits into a trust, similar to how a youth’s Permanent Fund Dividend is protected, ensuring the funds are used for the youth’s long-term stability. 	<p>FYI VOUCHER EXPANSION 45% of Alaskan Foster Youth report experiencing homelessness by age 21. Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Vouchers are available to youth aging out of foster care. In Alaska, FYI Voucher access is limited to only 12 communities served by the Alaska Housing Finance Corp.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding FYI vouchers statewide is essential to ensure all transitioning foster youth—regardless of location—have access to stable housing.
<p>HIGHER EDUCATION</p>	<p>COST OF CARE</p>
<p>RESTORE SUPPORT Alaska typically has 50+ foster youth enrolled in higher education each year. Recently, the Office of Children’s Services eliminated dedicated support for these students, shifting the burden to transition workers who already manage caseloads of 100+ youth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoring dedicated higher-education support is critical to ensuring foster youth can succeed in college and career pathways. 	<p>SUPPORT FOR DAILY LIVING Each year, an average of 100 youth ages 18–21 are in extended foster care in Alaska. Half live in non-foster home settings where no foster care reimbursement is provided to cover their cost of living.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCS should pay the cost of care for all youth in state care, regardless of placement type, ensuring access to housing, food, medical care, and other basic needs.