

Senate Family and Community Services Finance Subcommittee

Office of Children's Services

Kim Guay
Director of Office of Children's Services

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OFFICE OF
CHILDREN'S
SERVICES

Implementation of Foster Care Reform Laws Audit – Part 3

Recommendations:

1. OCS's director should implement procedures to ensure the annual staffing report is accurate.
2. OCS's director should implement procedures to ensure the annual recruitment and retention report is accurate and prepared in compliance with state law.
3. OCS's director should consider implementing a more comprehensive training program that is grounded in practical applications.
4. OCS's director should continue to implement hiring best practices.
5. OCS's director should consider enhancing data to align with best practices and make recruitment and retention efforts more meaningful.
6. OCS's director should develop a forward-looking plan for addressing recruitment and retention challenges.
7. Department of Health's assistant commissioner of finance and management services should liquidate an unsupported \$10 million encumbrance.

Implementation of Foster Care Reform Laws Audit – Part 3 (Continued)

Implementation:

Recommendation 1 Response:

- OCS corrected vacancy and turnover report.
- OCS implemented a new tracking system with new technology.

Recommendation 2 Response:

- OCS clarified the separate reporting timeframes and requirements written in the law.
- OCS created a new annual recruitment and retention report template with the correct report dates.

Recommendation 3 Response:

- OCS is routinely evaluating and improving our training curriculum.
- Latest updates to our training program include an in-person skill-based week in addition to the 6 weeks of classroom and mentor-guided transfer of learning model.

Recommendation 4 Response:

- Public Consulting Group (PCG) recommended 4 Hiring Best Practices.

Implementation of Foster Care Reform Laws Audit – Part 3 (Continued)

Implementation:

Recommendation 5 Response:

- The Talent Acquisition (TA) Team tracks data to inform the hiring and recruitment process.

Recommendation 6 Response:

- OCS has updated our 5-year forward-looking recruitment and retention plan.

Recommendation 7 Response:

- This is a recommendation for Department of Health (DOH). Please see DOH letter in audit and supplemental packet.

The PCG Hiring Best Practice Recommendations

PCG Interviewed staff in October and November of 2023
The final report was completed March 12, 2024

To recruit the right people who have the " unique combination of core skills and mindset " that child welfare needs, PCG recommended the following:	Increase pay
	Reconsider Tier 4 retirement and defined benefit retirement
	Review equity between unions
	Improve technology for frontline workers
	Expand the use of Letters of Agreement (LOAs)*
	Use more traveling workers*
	Secure State provided housing in rural areas*
	Provide promotional opportunities for support staff*
	Offer more flexible hiring and conditional hiring
	Offer flexible schedules and telework*
Dramatically decrease the steps to process recruitments and the hiring process	
Decrease burden to applicants by streamlining the application process	

* item within OCS control

What does OCS need?

We need our current staff to stay

We need qualified applicants to fill vacancies

We need an expedited hiring process

We need a targeted recruitment strategy

We need better technology

Alaska needs a strong continuum of care

Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)

Capacity & Administrative Barriers

- OCS must resolve recruitment shortages and meet current in-care needs.
- Heavy reporting and data system modification requirements.
- Significant evaluation obligations; OCS lacks staff, funding, and capacity.
- Alaska's geography makes fidelity monitoring even more difficult.
- Requires upfront state investment; new federal dollars requires general funds be spent.
- Additional staffing needed for in-home services; participation is voluntary.
- Administrative burden could divert funds away from direct services.

Funding & Service Availability Issues

- FFPSA is reimbursement only; state must fund operations with general funds.
- Title IV-E is payor of last resort—Medicaid billed first when eligible.
- Alaska lacks sufficient FFPSA-eligible, evidence-based programs, especially in rural areas.
- State-funded similar services have struggled with parent engagement; court involvement may be necessary.
- Nationally, 60% of states with approved plans have never submitted a claim.
- FFPSA represents only 2% of national IV-E spending, reflecting administrative complexity.

Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact

December 15, 2017

Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact signed between Alaska Native Tribes, Tribal Organizations, and the State of Alaska.

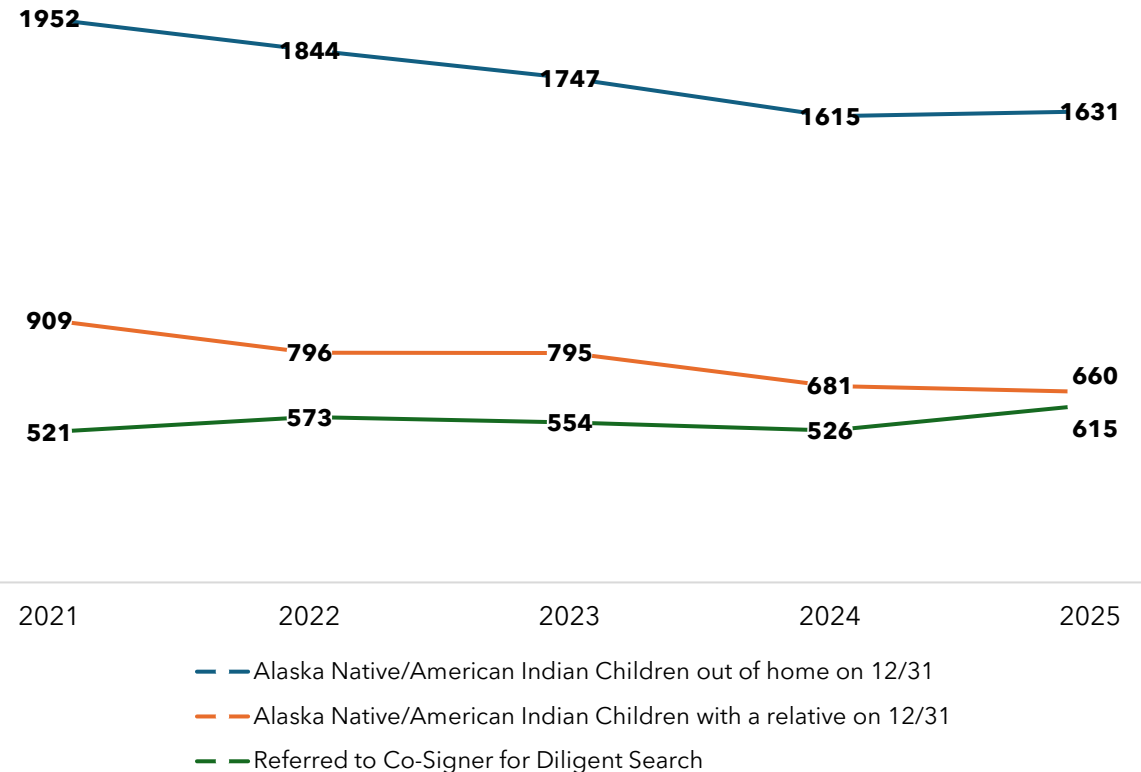
FY2023 - FY2025

Funded \$5,000,000 annually (100% UGF)
Creation of Centralized Compact Referral Unit within OCS. (FY23)

Scopes of Work:

- Initial diligent relative & ongoing placement searches
- Licensing assist services
- Family contact services
- Safety evaluation of relative homes
- Primary prevention
- Secondary prevention

ALASKA TRIBAL WELFARE COMPACT DATA



Federal Government Penalties

- Online Resource for the Children of Alaska (ORCA) system is outdated and needs replacement
 - Reduction of federal reimbursement for system maintenance from 50% to 35%.
 - Seeking Rural Health Transformation Funding.
 - Estimated replacement cost of at least \$40m.
- Performance Improvement Plan Fine
 - \$560,500



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Thank you

For more information please contact:

Chrissy Vogeley, Senior Policy Advisor

(907) 465-1611

christina.vogeley@alaska.gov