



House Health and Social Services

Office of Children's Services HB 151 Overview, Implementation, Workforce Challenges, and Solutions

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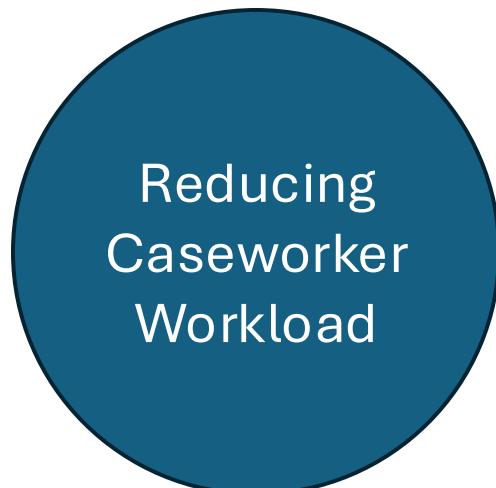
February 3, 2026

House Bill 151 (2018)

Children Deserve a Loving Home Act

The intent of the legislation was to:

- Strengthen Alaska's child welfare system
- Improve outcomes for children in foster care
- Support the Office of Children's Services (OCS) and foster families



Implemented HB 151 Requirements

✓ Caseworker Training Standards

Expanded training program
Mentor program

✓ Foster Care Licensing

Decrease timelines to process
Decrease size of application
Support for variance application

✓ Service Referrals

Created policy for referrals
All staff training

✓ Caseload Average Structure

Graduated workloads

✓ Family Connections

Strengthened sibling contact policies
Previous placement contact
Relative search expansion

✓ Transition Aged Youth

Transition guide and resources
Documents when leaving custody
Youth involved permanency plan
Youth involved case planning

✓ Foster Parent Decision Making

Prudent parenting standard

✓ Reporting Requirement

Report to Legislature

Continued Challenges

Consistently meet workload standards
Supervisor relative search certification

Impacts from the pandemic



Workforce shortages



Increased turnover



Changes in training delivery



Foster homes closed



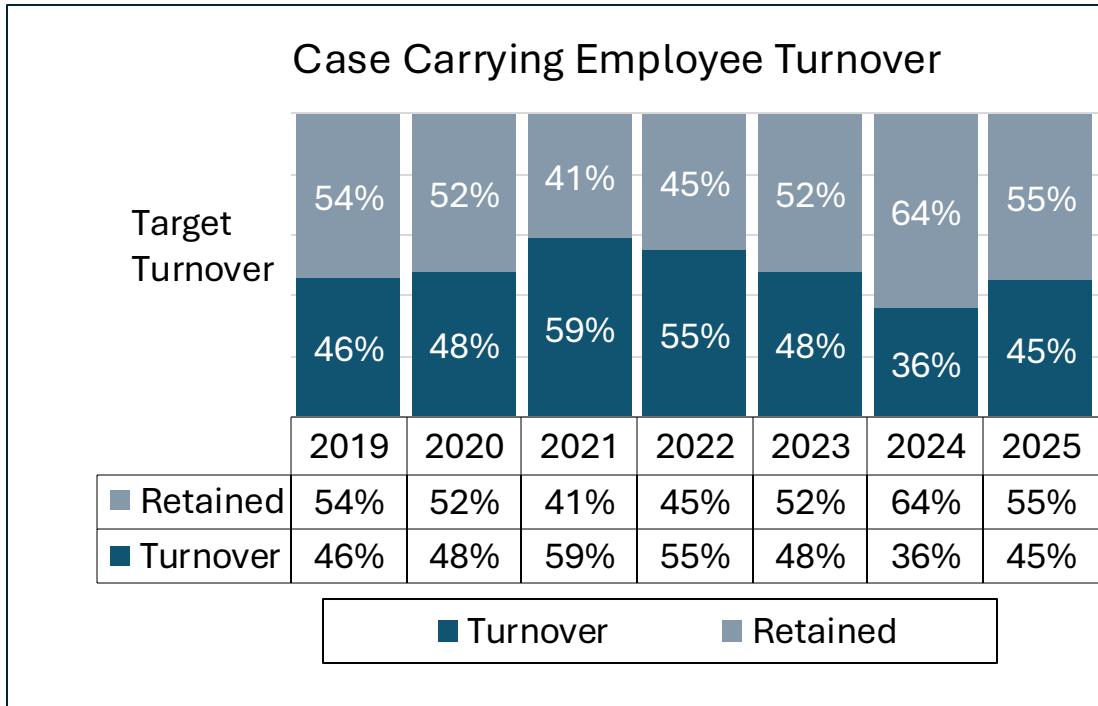
Remaining foster homes became selective



Limited community resources

HB 151 Report - Case Carrying Turnover Data

(11/1/2024 to 10/31/2025)



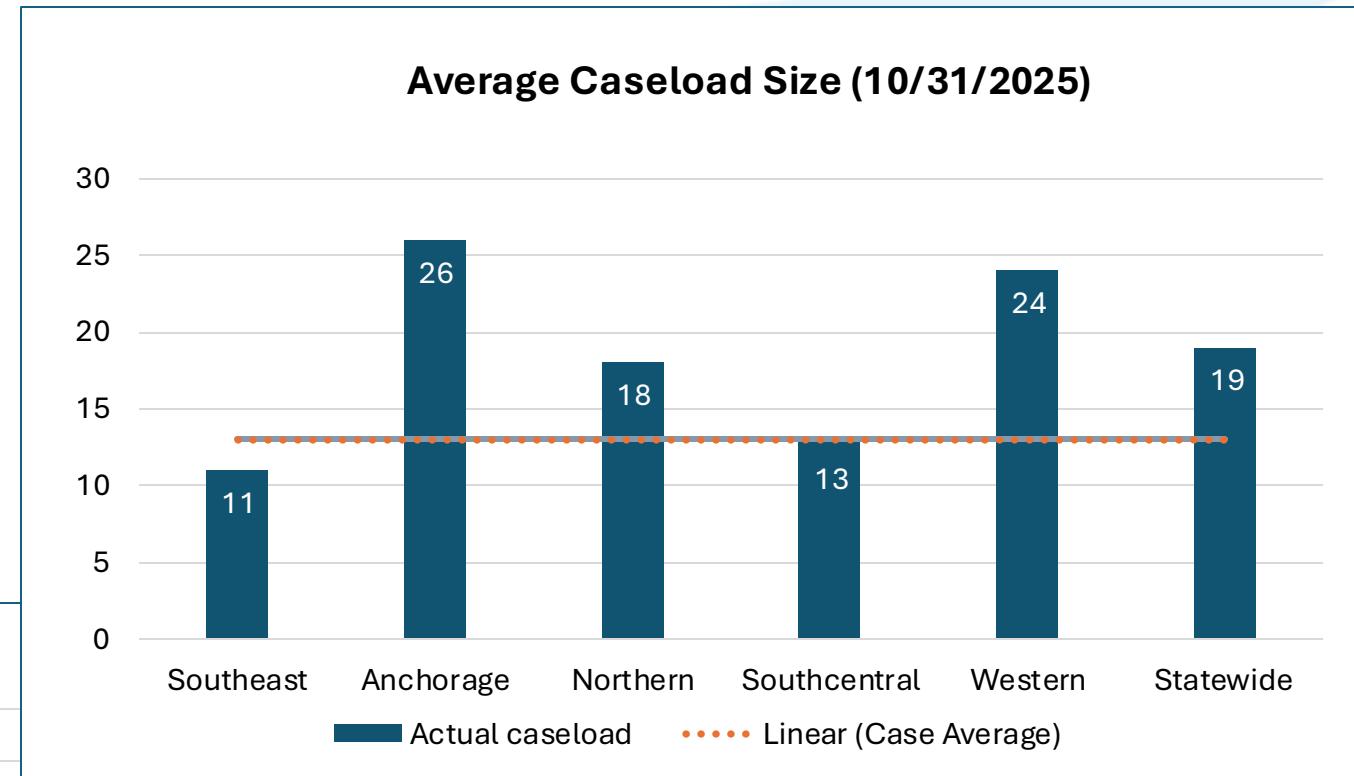
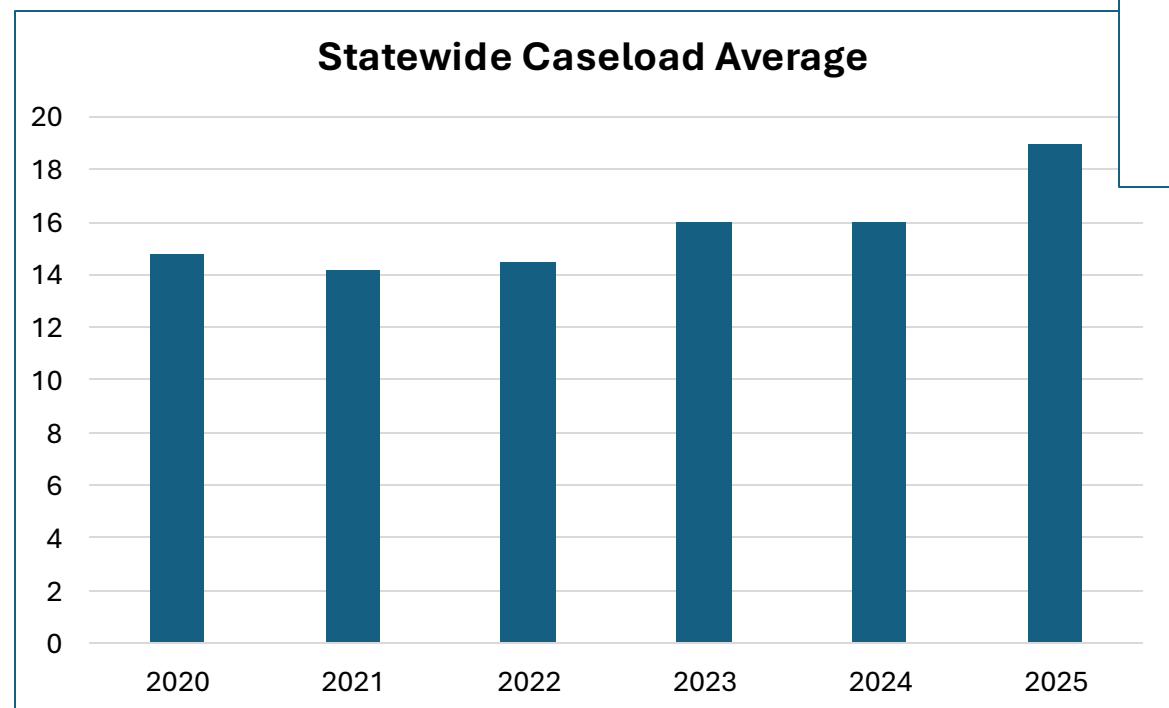
Four Quarter Turnover (11/1/2024 - 10/31/25)		
Region	Turnover Rate*	Healthy Turnover Rate**
Anchorage	42.4%	27.3%
Northern	40.0%	17.8%
Southcentral	49.1%	33.3%
Southeast	50.0%	31.8%
Western	42.9%	42.9%
Statewide	44.5%	28.9%

* Turnover Total of exiting FTE employees during the 4 quarters - Excludes non-permanent positions

** Healthy Turnover excludes non-permanent positions as well as promotions, lateral transfers in division, and demotions

Caseloads

If every current case carrying position was filled, the caseload standard of 13 or less would be met



OCS Recruitment & Retention Framework

As required by HB 151, OCS reports on a 5-year Recruitment and Retention Plan which is updated annually

Adopted the U.S. Surgeon General's
Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being
Framework



Recruitment & Retention Strategies

- Implemented mentoring and expanded mentoring initiative
- Utilized competency-based evaluations
- Operationalized centralized hiring
- Created additional support positions
- Created a new position focused on the workforce:
Wellness and Resiliency Officer
- Creating a crisis debriefing model
- Reimagining the on-call process



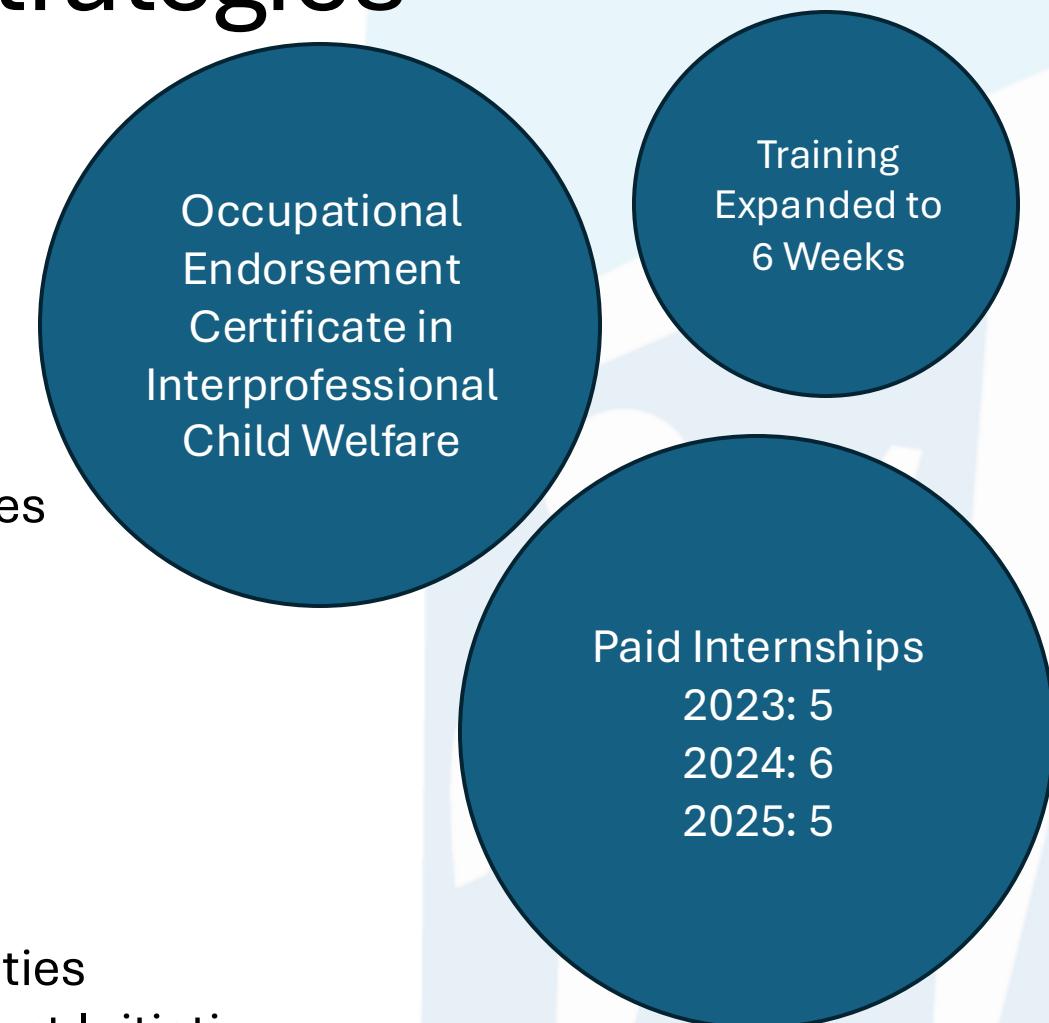
Recruitment & Retention Strategies

Training & Education

- Enhancing training for supervisors
- Improving training for frontline workers
- Improving overall on-going training for staff
- Investing in our future leaders
- Developing paid internships for multiple college degrees

Hiring & Retention

- Hired additional frontline workers
- Revamping the onboarding and orientation process
- Implementing anonymous staff suggestions
- Created flex and promotional opportunities
- Providing flexible scheduling and remote work capabilities
- Provided retention bonuses with Governor's Peoples First Initiative



Occupational
Endorsement
Certificate in
Interprofessional
Child Welfare

Training
Expanded to
6 Weeks

Paid Internships
2023: 5
2024: 6
2025: 5

Recent Public Statements on Compliance

Implementation of House Bill 151 failed to resolve the Office of Children's Services labor challenges

Legislative Audit, June 2025

OCS has made every effort to implement the requirements of HB 151

"The Office of Children's Services did not follow the law. They did not follow almost any of those reforms. They treated them as optional."

Podcast, August 2025

OCS has implemented the requirements of HB151 however, this bill alone cannot resolve the workforce challenges. OCS continues to innovate and partner to achieve better outcomes.

"OCS did this not because they couldn't find qualified workers, but because they ... wanted to do foster care on the cheap."

Talk of Alaska, November 2025

Regardless of formal education, or when candidates demonstrate core competencies, OCS follows the union salary scale. This approach expands the talent pool and strengthens recruitment efforts.

"Legislators [assume] our reforms are being put to work to help children. They're not. They've never been implemented."

Anchorage Daily News Op-Ed, January 2026

OCS has implemented the law through changes in policy, procedure, and practice while continuing to address challenges to achieve intended outcomes.

Reporting and Partnerships



OCS is one part of the Child Welfare System

OCS involvement is never the beginning of the story

OCS is often the *last* point of entry into a system that has been present in the background of a family's life for years.

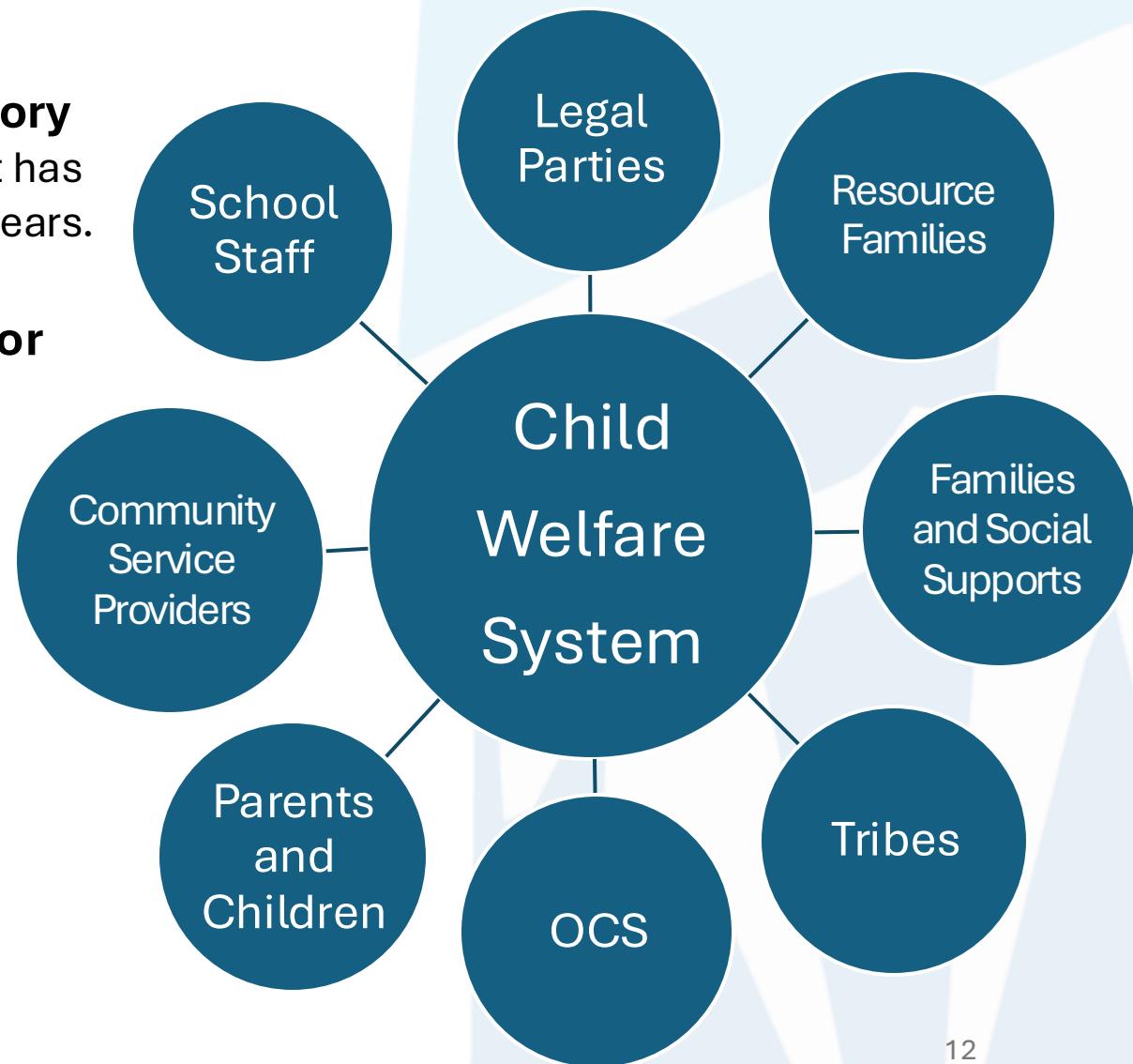
OCS intervenes after serious maltreatment and/or neglect has already occurred

OCS does not directly provide prevention services.

OCS caseworkers are not social workers

Caseworkers act as coordinators of services – not direct service providers.

Achieving long term goals depends on shared responsibility across the system.



Pathways to Improvement: Ideas for Alaska's Child Welfare System



Attracting Experienced Applicants to OCS

- Competitive compensation and benefits
- Tuition assistance/loan forgiveness
- Rural housing stipends or support
- Highlight child welfare workers and publicly support this difficult work



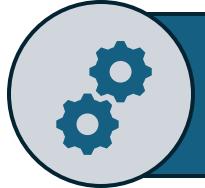
Services that may prevent OCS involvement

- Intensive in-home services for moderate to high-risk families
- Affordable childcare and early childhood education
- Accessible parent and youth peer navigation
- Broad spectrum of community-based services, especially in rural communities
- Strengthen the continuum of care from prevention to intervention

OCS is making a difference



We are innovative



We are dedicated to the families of Alaska



We are committed to working with the voices of lived experience



We see positive outcomes

