



# House Health and Social Services

## Office of Children's Services

HB 151 Overview, Implementation, Workforce  
Challenges, and Solutions

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# 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

Reducing  
Caseworker  
Workload

Improving  
training

Increasing  
Stability for  
Children

# 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



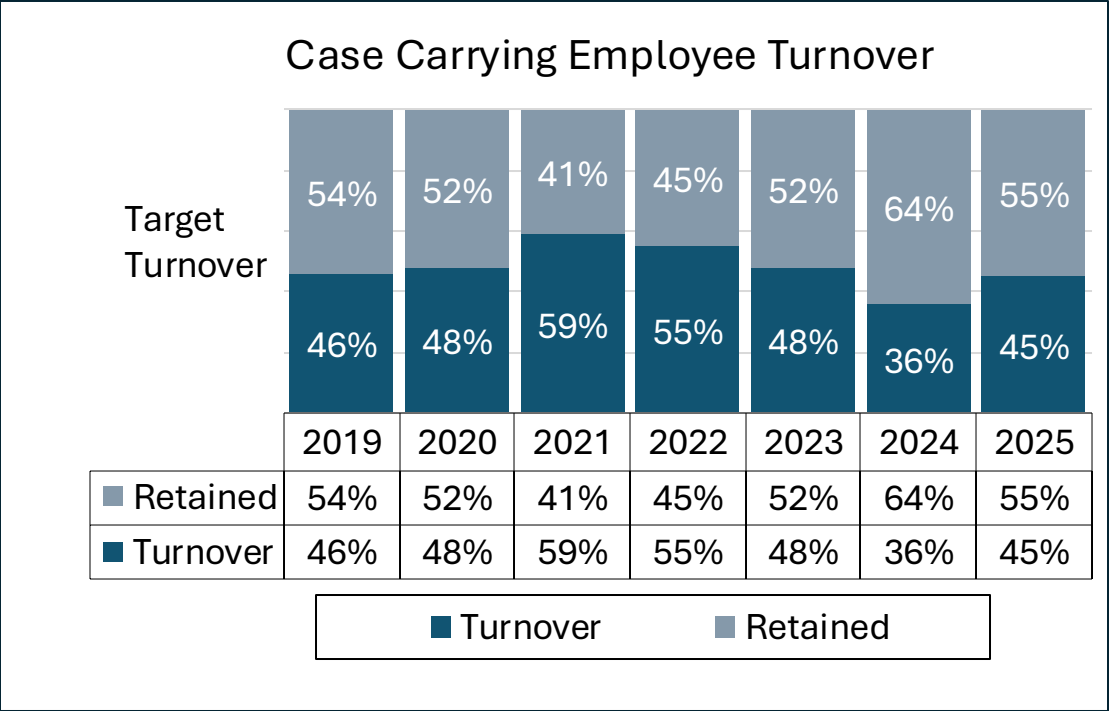
Remaining foster homes became selective



Limited community resources

# HB 151 Report - Case Carrying Turnover Data

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



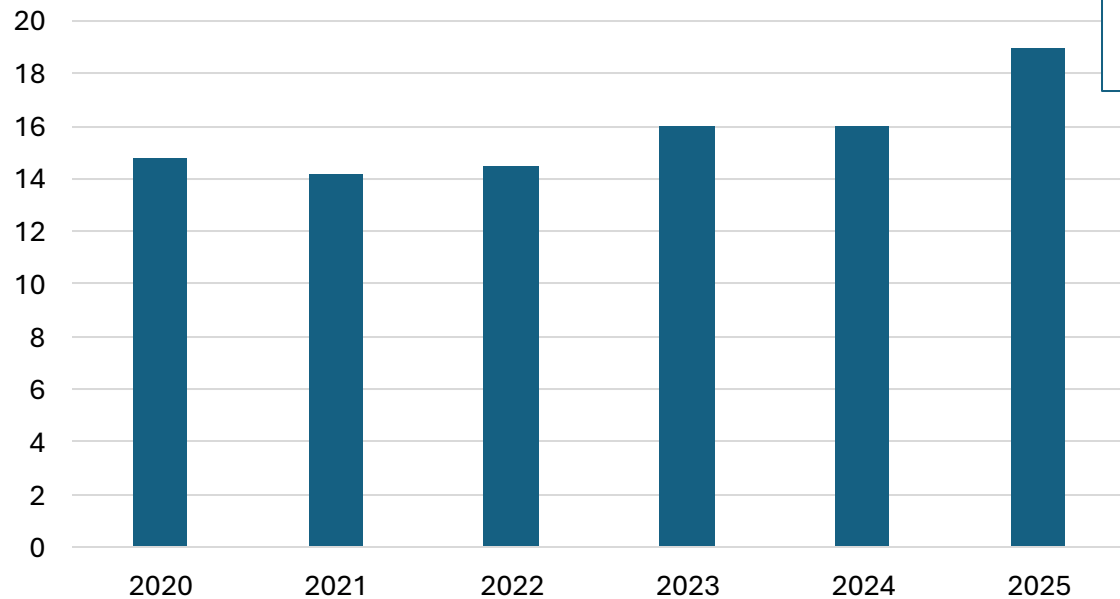
Four Quarter Turnover (11/1/2024 - 10/31/25)		
Region	Turnover Rate*	Healthy Turnover Rate**
Anchorage	42.4%	27.3%
Northern	40.0%	17.8%
Southcentral	49.1%	33.3%
Southeast	50.0%	31.8%
Western	42.9%	42.9%
Statewide	44.5%	28.9%

\* 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

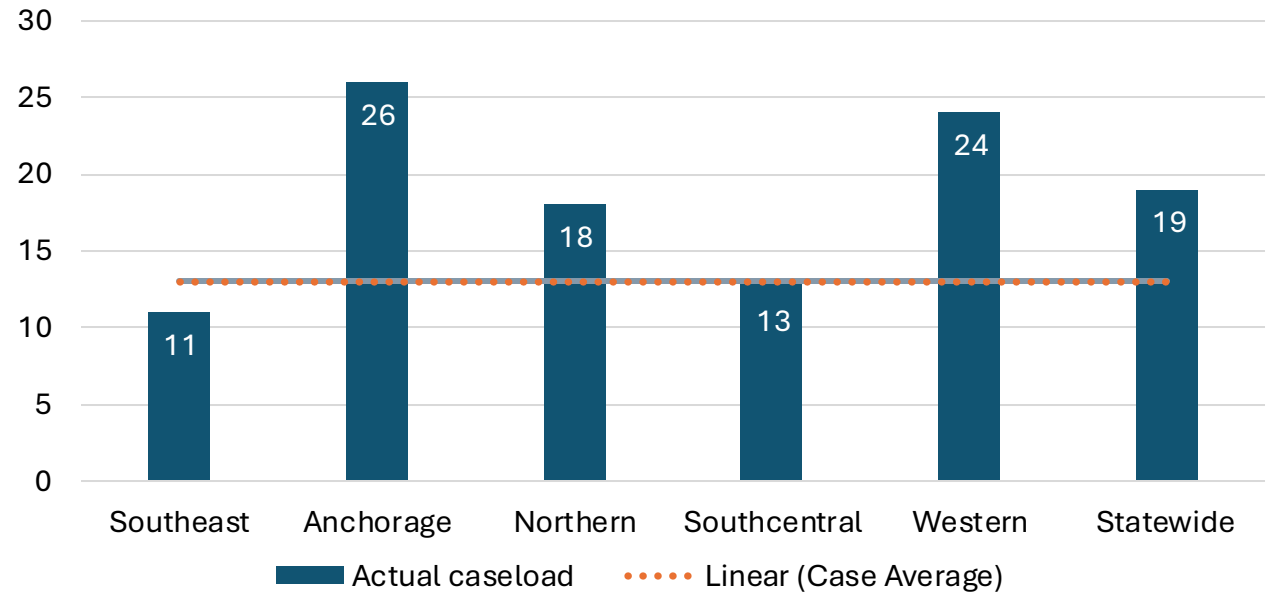
# Caseloads

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

**Statewide Caseload Average**



**Average Caseload Size (10/31/2025)**



# 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

## Legislative

- Audit
- Ombudsman
- Annual reporting requirements
- Citizens Review Panel

## Federal

- Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR)
- Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP)
- Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR)
- The Children's Bureau

## Courts

- Superior Court on every case
  - Most decisions OCS makes are reviewable in court
- Alaska Supreme Court - Appeals

## Local Stakeholders

- Multi Disciplinary Teams
- Community Collaborative Groups
- Tribal Organizations

## Required Statutory Partnerships

- Tribes
- Children's Justice Act Task Force
- Citizen's Review Panel

## Partnerships Implemented by and with OCS

- Resource Family Advisory Board
- Parent Advisory Committee
- Facing Foster Care Alaska Board

# 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.

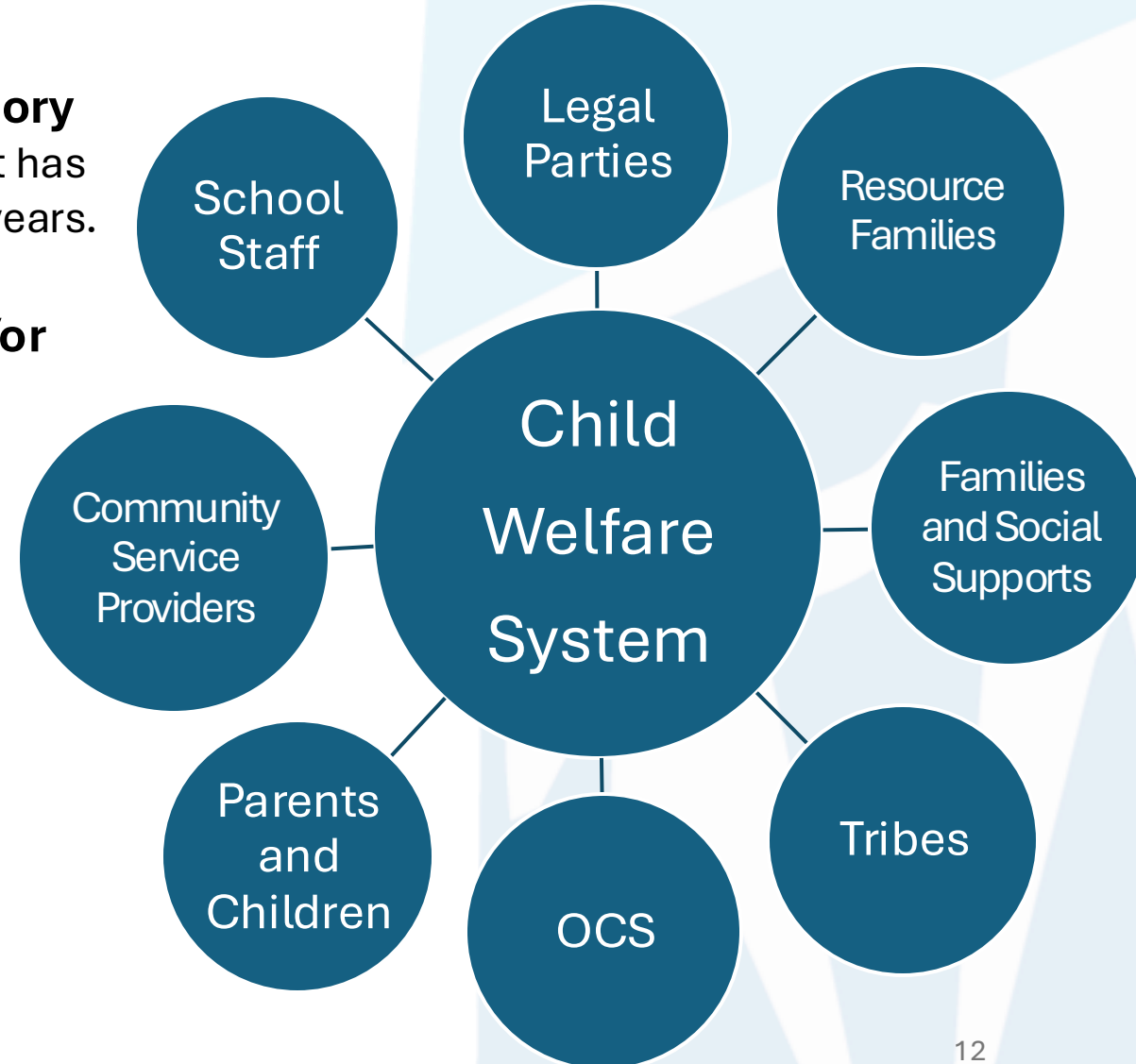
## **OCS intervenes after serious maltreatment and/or neglect has already occurred**

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***

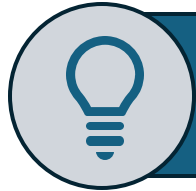
- Competitive compensation and benefits
- Tuition assistance/loan forgiveness
- Rural housing stipends or support
- Highlight child welfare workers and publicly support this difficult work



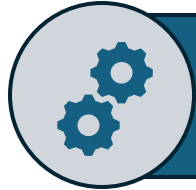
## ***Services that may prevent OCS involvement***

- 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

