

Alaska
Department of
Administration
**Office of
Public
Advocacy**



Joint Judiciary Meeting
Rick Allen, Director OPA
January 23, 2013

Mission Statement

“The Office of Public Advocacy (OPA) provides legal advocacy and guardianship services to vulnerable Alaskans.”

With offices in Anchorage, Juneau, Fairbanks, Palmer, and Bethel, OPA advocates for abused and neglected children in protective proceedings, provides public guardianship for incapacitated adults, advocacy for victims of elder fraud, attorney services for respondents in adult guardianship proceedings, for parents in child in need of aid cases, and conflict cases received from the Public Defender Agency. A.S. 44.21.400-470.

General Functions

The Office of Public Advocacy:

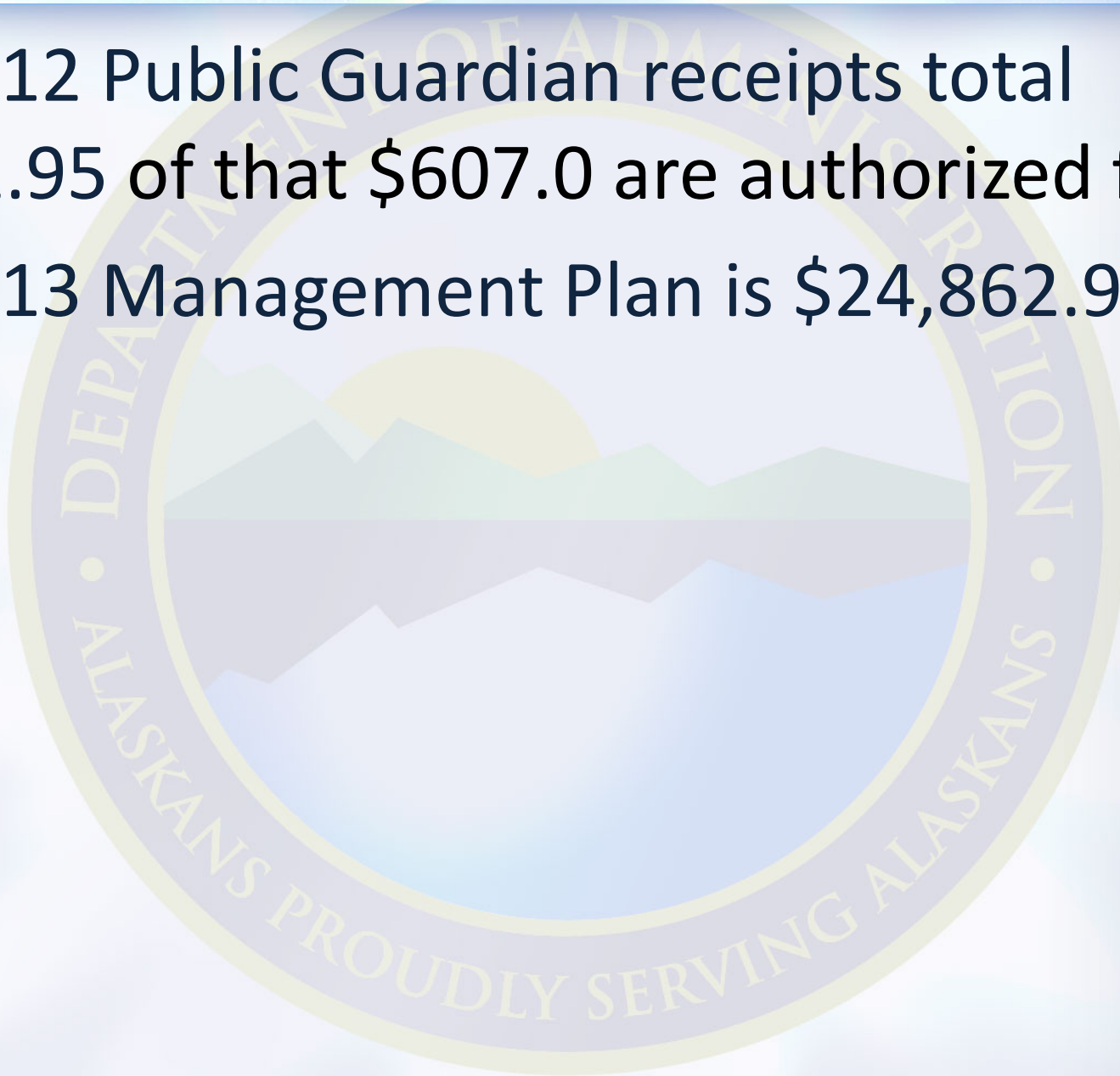
- Provides guardianship and conservatorship services to incapacitated individuals
- Provides guardian ad litem services to abused and neglected children
- Provides representation to elderly victims of fraud and abuse
- Provides attorney services for parents in child in need of aid cases
- Provides representation in conflict cases received from the Public Defender Agency
- Provides Respondent representation in Guardianship proceedings
- Provides Court Visitor services in Guardianship and Conservatorship proceedings

Structure

- Employees – Office of Public Advocacy (OPA) has 47 attorneys and 78 staff including the public guardians
- Offices
 - State run offices – 14 individual units
 - Five locations: Fairbanks, Palmer, Bethel, Juneau, Anchorage

Budget (numbers in thousands)

- FY2012 Public Guardian receipts total \$652.95 of that \$607.0 are authorized for use
- FY2013 Management Plan is \$24,862.9



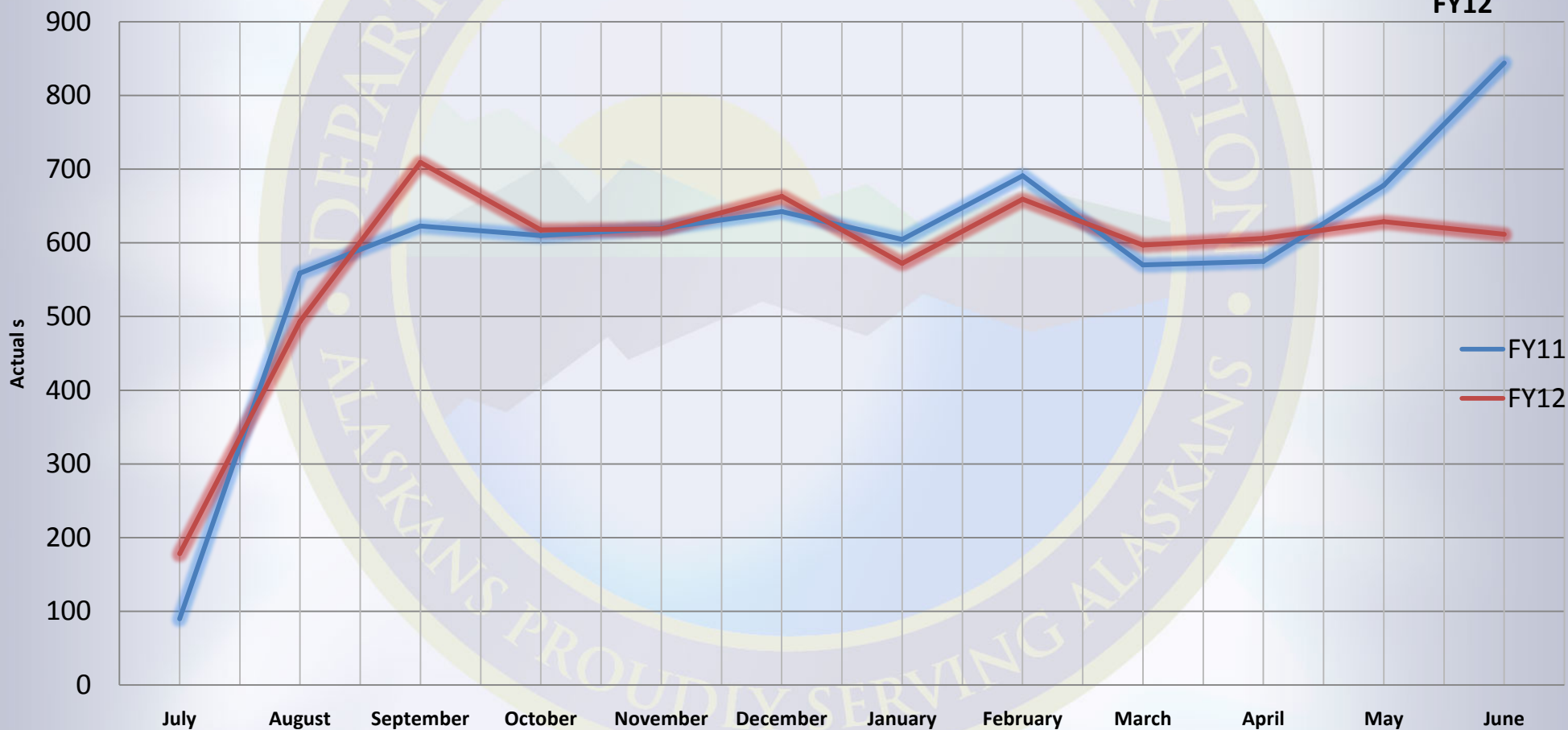
Accomplishments

- Leveling out contractor costs
- Keeping more cases in-house
- Created new unit without additional positions
- Successfully challenging improper appointments by the court
- Educating the judiciary on proper Office of Public Advocacy (OPA) appointments

OPA Budget – Contractor Costs

**OPA Budget - Contract Advocacy Costs
FY11 and FY12**

Overall
decrease of 2%
from FY11 to
FY12



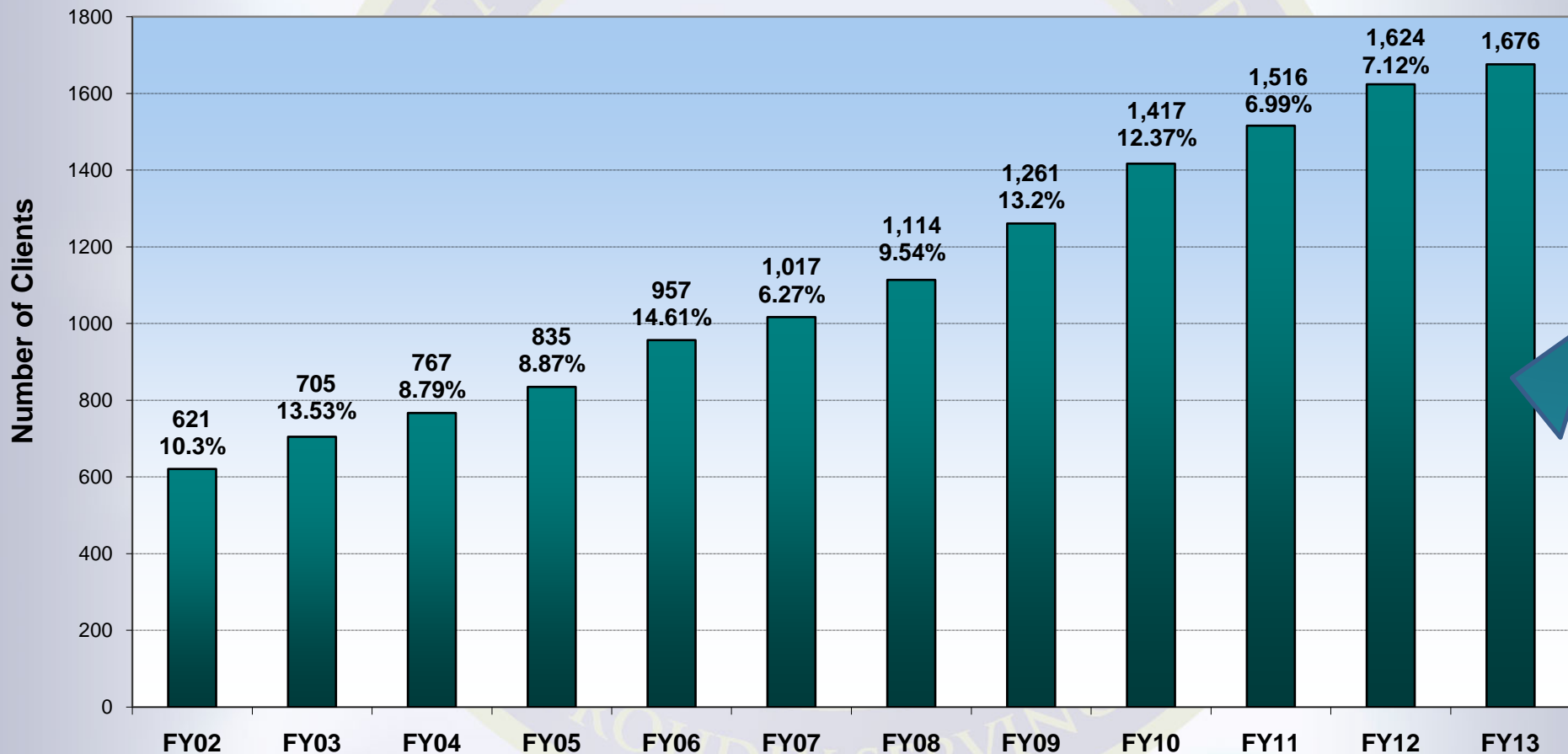
Challenges

- Challenge #1 – Public Guardian caseload continues to increase
- Challenge #2 - Bethel caseload is significantly higher per attorney/staff than elsewhere
- Challenge #3 – The December 2011 Supreme Court ruling; Flores cases are increasing

Summary of Public Guardian Client Count

Summary of Public Guardian Client Count FY02 through FY13 (1/17/2013)

Since beginning of FY12 OPA has seen a 9% increase in new appointments

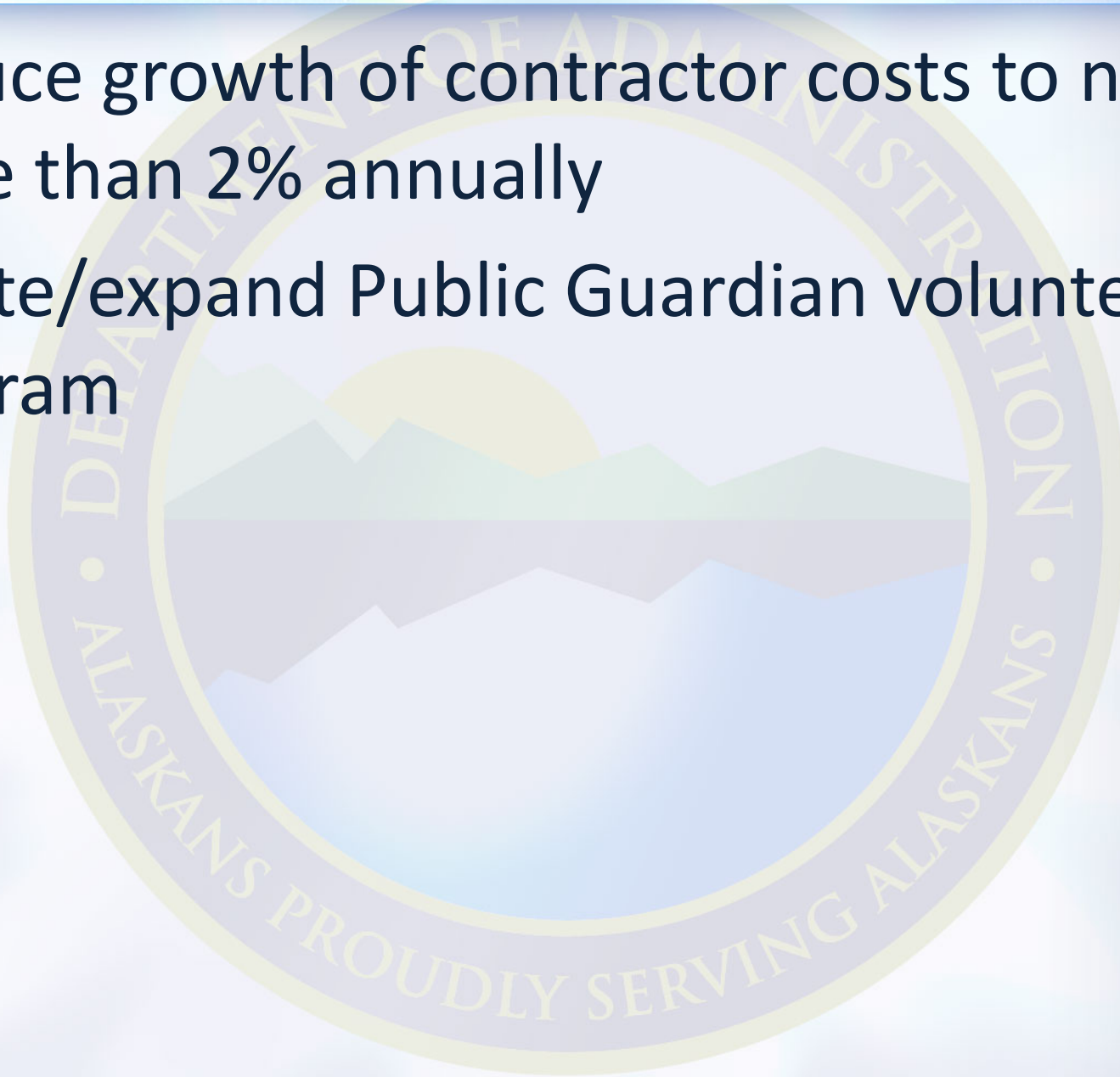


Current Efficiency Initiatives

- Criminal Justice Working Group: *electronic discovery*
- Add additional staff in geographic locations with increasing caseloads
- Address definitions within our enabling statute
- Implementation of SEM data system for Public Guardian trust activities.

Cost Containment Programs

- Reduce growth of contractor costs to no more than 2% annually
- Create/expand Public Guardian volunteer program



Alaska
Department of
Administration
**Public
Defender
Agency**



Joint Judiciary Meeting
Quinlan Steiner, Director PDA
January 23, 2013

Mission Statement

“To provide constitutionally mandated legal representation to indigent clients appointed by the court.”

The Public Defender Agency was created by the legislature in 1969 to provide constitutionally mandated defense services to indigent clients in criminal, juvenile delinquency, child-in-need-of-aid, and involuntary commitment matters.
A.S. 18.85.010-180.

Services

- The Agency's primary responsibilities are to:
 - (1) communicate legal rights, legal process, charges and evidence,
 - (2) investigate allegations and viable case strategies, and
 - (3) represent clients in court proceedings
- Agency attorneys represent clients before the Alaska Supreme Court, the Alaska Court of Appeals, and the Superior and District Courts of Alaska

Appointments

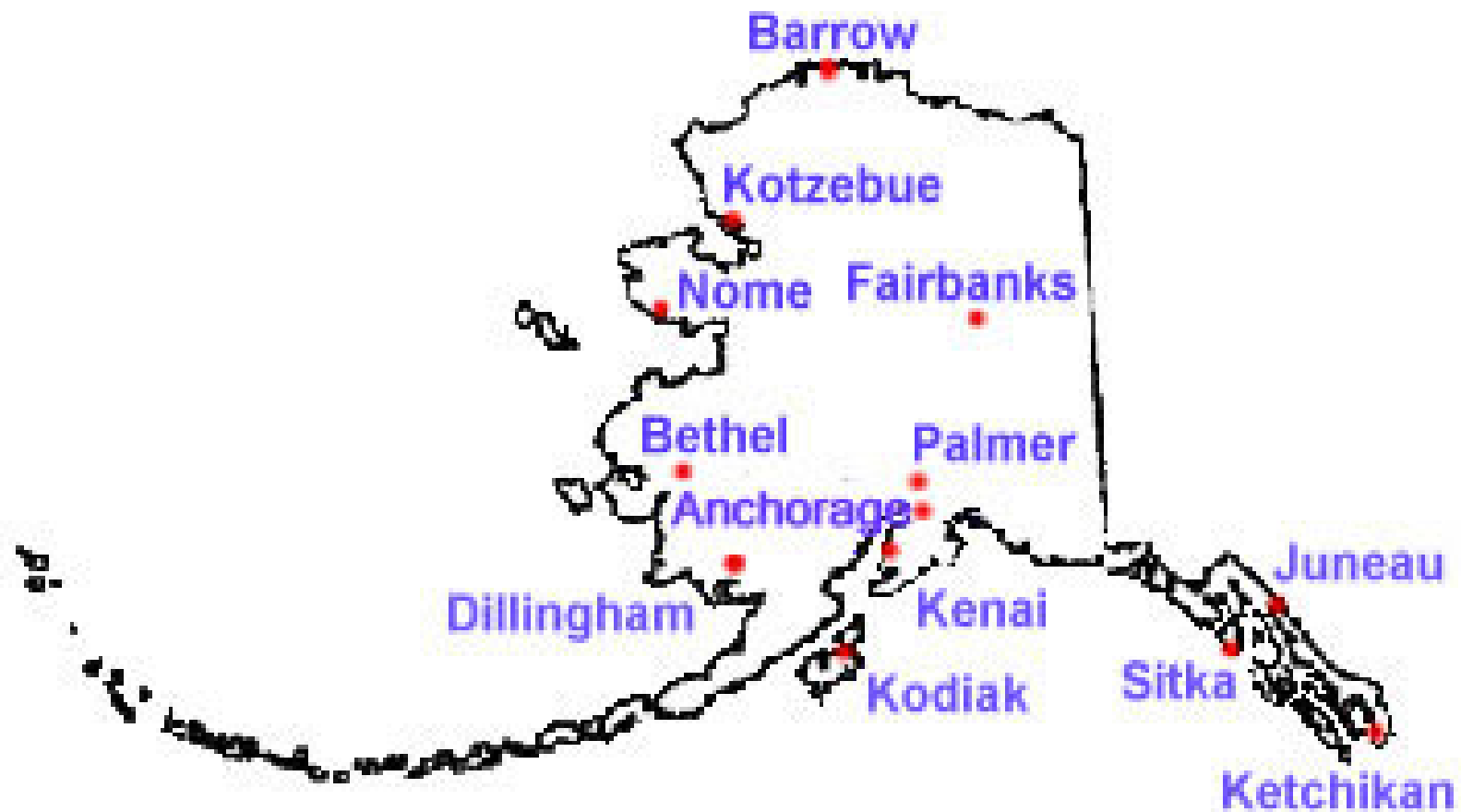
- The Agency receives cases only after an appointment order is issued by the courts. The Agency does not self-appoint and has no control over its caseload.
- Individuals who request public counsel must be indigent as defined by Alaska Law. Alaska Courts are required to find that a client is indigent and qualifies for publicly funded counsel before appointing the Public Defender Agency; A.S. *18.85.110-120 and A.S. 18.85.170(4)*.
- The Office of Public Advocacy handles all cases in which the Public Defender Agency has a legal conflict of interest.

Offices

- The Public Defender Agency is comprised of four internal divisions: Criminal, Civil, Appellate and Administrative
- The Agency maintains 13 offices statewide: Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Palmer, Kenai, Ketchikan, Sitka, Bethel, Nome, Kotzebue, Dillingham, Kodiak, and Barrow

Office Locations

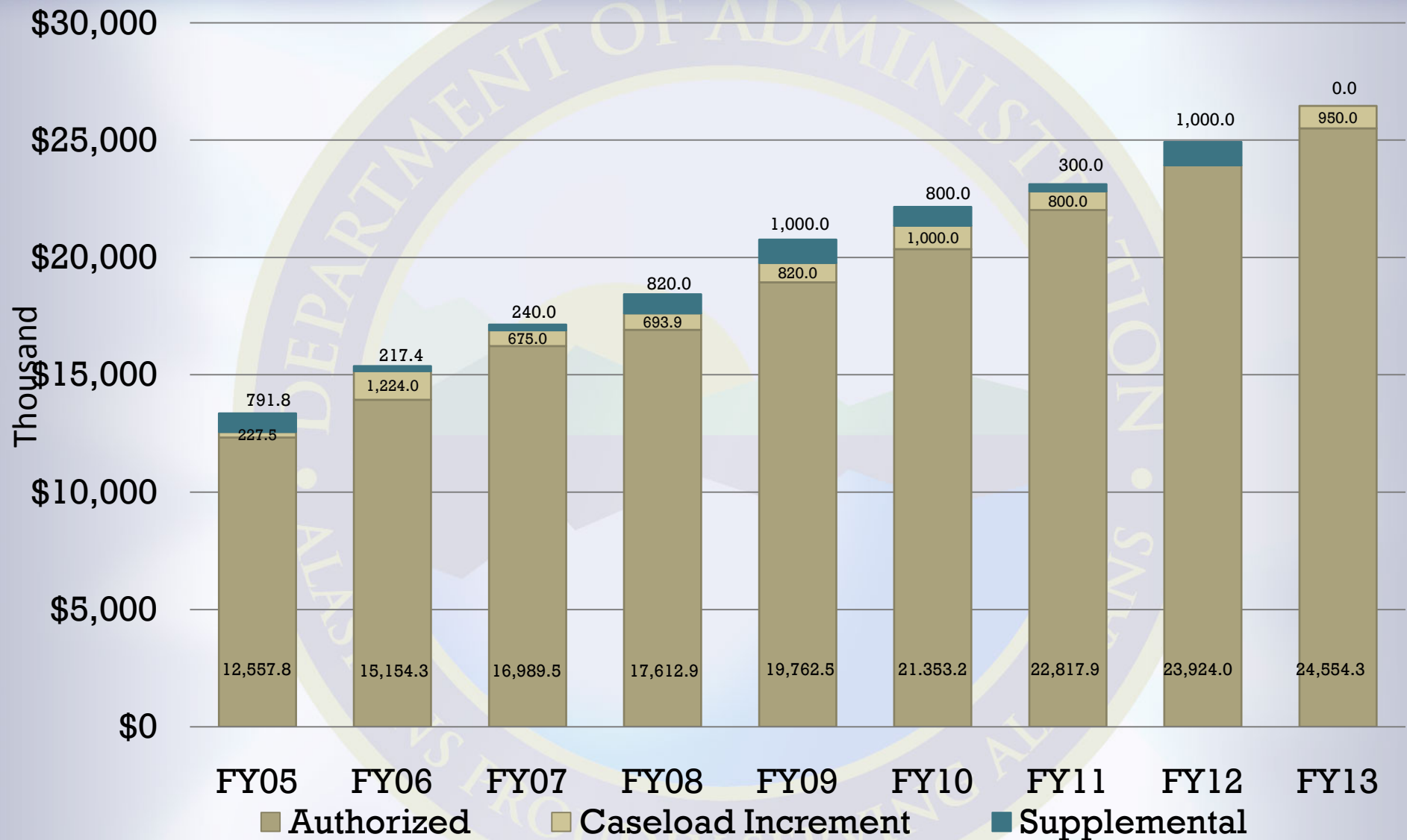
Public Defender Office Locations



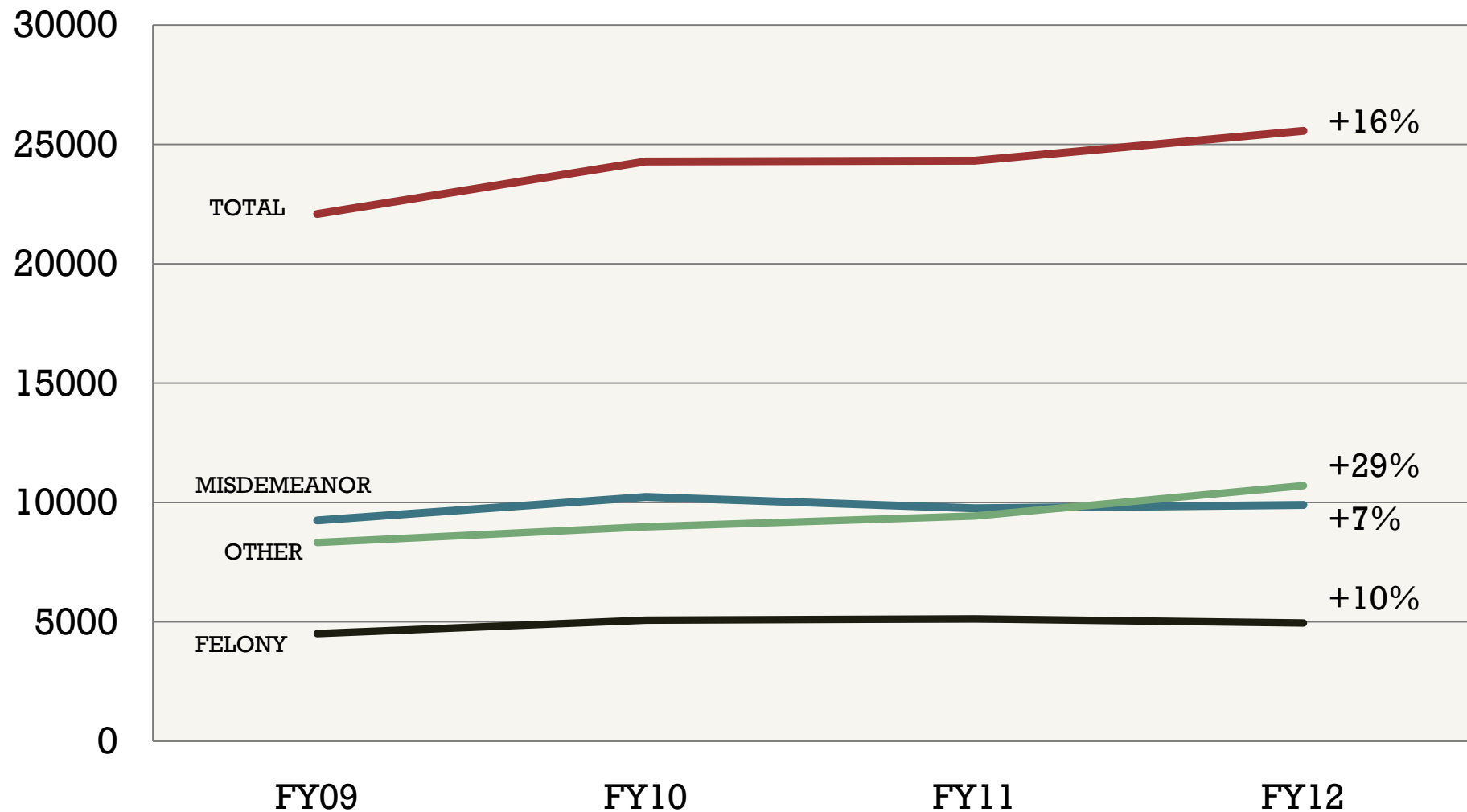
Staff and Budget

- The Agency employs 173 attorneys, investigators, paralegals, and support staff
- FY2013 Management Plan is \$25,504.3 (thousand)
- FY2013 includes a caseload increment of \$950.0 (thousand)

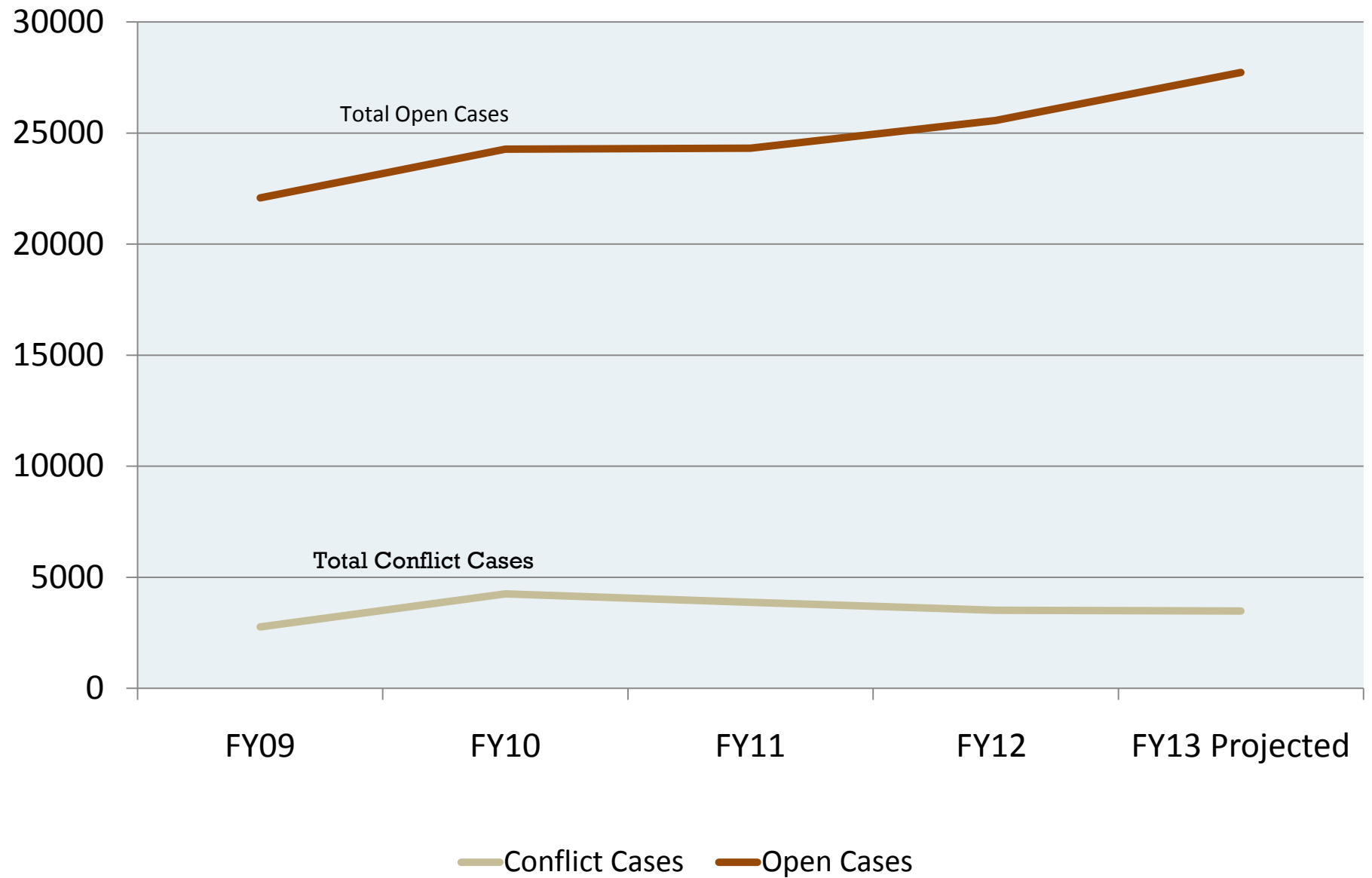
FY05-FY12 Budget Summary



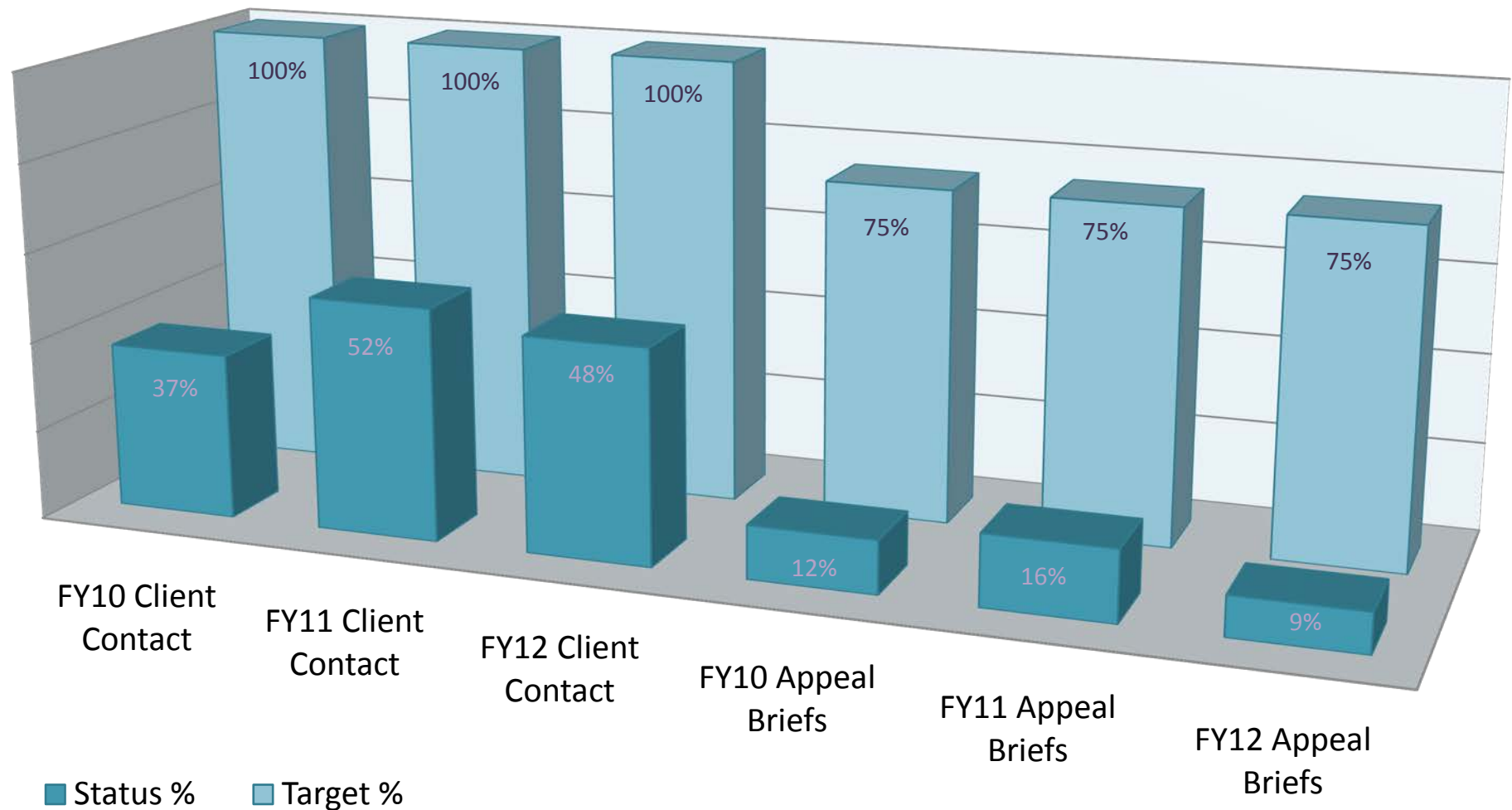
Caseload Growth



Conflict Cases



Performance Measures



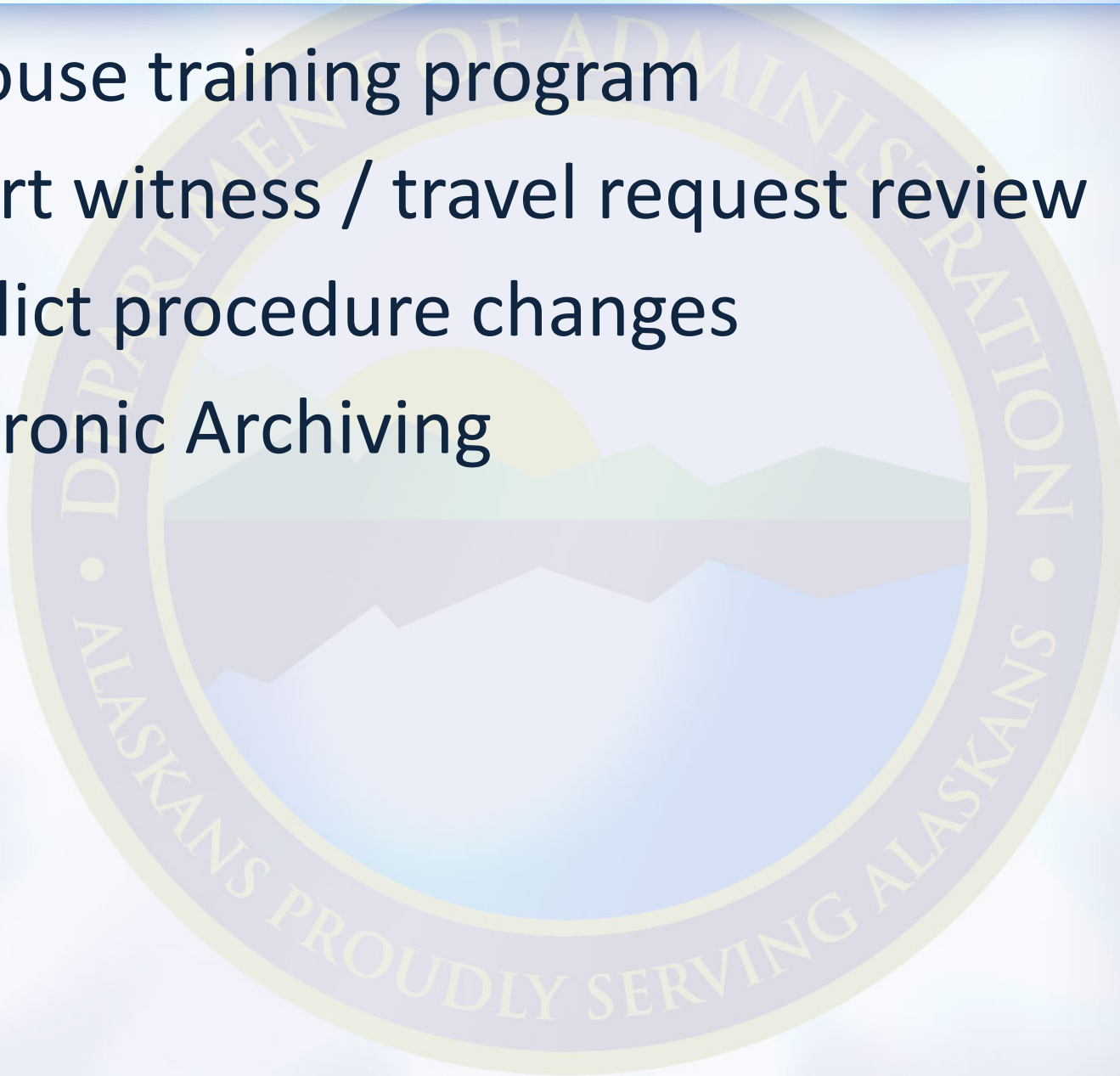
Client Contact = telephonic or in-person contact with client within 7 days of case opening
Appeal Briefs = opening briefs filed within 90 days

Current Efficiency Initiatives

- Criminal Justice Working Group: *electronic discovery*
- New case management system / performance measures
- Redeployment of resources: Nome to Anchorage Appeals, Kotzebue to Palmer LOA, Anchorage Civil to Anchorage Criminal Paralegal

Cost Containment Programs

- In-house training program
- Expert witness / travel request review
- Conflict procedure changes
- Electronic Archiving



The seal of the Department of Administration, State of Alaska, is a circular emblem. It features a central mountain range silhouette. The outer ring contains the text "DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION" at the top and "ALASKANS PROUDLY SERVING ALASKANS" at the bottom, separated by dots. The words "STATE OF ALASKA" are also visible on the left side of the ring.

Thank you!

www.DOA.alaska.gov for more information.

Questions?