

FAQ's about the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact October 2017

Q: What is the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact?

A: The Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact is a government-to-government agreement between the State of Alaska and Alaska Tribes and Tribal Organizations. It establishes a framework for Tribes to provide child welfare services on behalf of the state, and recognizes Tribes' inherent sovereign authority to serve their citizens as they have since time in immemorial. The compact defines the services to be carried out by Tribes and Tribal Organizations in a defined jurisdiction or service area.

Q: What services can Alaska Tribes provide under this compact?

A: Under the compact, Alaska Tribes and Tribal Organizations will provide identified child welfare services that would be otherwise provided by the Alaska Office of Children's Services. This includes, but is not limited to, intake, screening, and investigations of abuse and neglect; relative searches; developing and managing safety and case plans; foster care licensing and support; supervised visitation and transportation; and adoption and guardianship home studies.

Families served close to home and by people they trust will lead to better outcomes. Tribes and Tribal Organizations will incorporate their values, culture, and traditions into family services programs, ensuring a stronger child welfare system in Alaska.

Q: Does this mean all Alaska Tribes will take over child welfare services for the entire state?

A: No. Alaska Tribes and Tribal Organizations have the option to enter into a compact with the State of Alaska to provide selected child welfare services on behalf of the state for a negotiated service area. This compact establishes the framework for these services, and creates uniformity for all those who choose to participate.

Q: Will the State of Alaska pay Tribes to carry out child welfare services?

A: Yes. The State of Alaska will pay Alaska Tribes and Tribal Organizations that provide child welfare services on behalf of the Alaska Office of Children's Services.

Q: Will Tribes provide child welfare services for non-tribal children in their region under this compact?

A: This will depend on the defined service area and population served under each contract.

Q: Aren't some Alaska Tribes already providing child welfare services in their region?

A: Many Tribes and Tribal Organizations provide child welfare services to their tribal citizens, however services are often limited due to funding. This compact creates a streamlined way to contract these services with tribes.

Q: Will the State of Alaska and the Office of Children’s Services still oversee Tribes’ child welfare services?

A: The State of Alaska will manage service contracts with Tribes and Tribal Organizations, similar to the way other contractors and grantees are administered.

Q: Have any other states set up a similar compact with Tribes?

A: This compact is the first of its kind in the State of Alaska and the United States.

Q: Does the State of Alaska partner with Tribes in other areas?

A: Alaska Tribes and Tribal Organizations have partnered with the state to deliver essential health and social services for many years. This compact builds on those existing partnerships to strengthen child welfare services.

Q: Will this help alleviate OCS workers’ high caseload?

A: While the recommended national standard is 12 cases per child services worker, Alaska OCS workers carry between 16 and 50 cases per worker. This lack of resources, combined with unprecedented fiscal and social challenges facing our state, has led to high worker turnover at Alaska OCS offices. This compact provides a more local approach for child welfare services, potentially faster responses, and helps to alleviate high caseloads in other parts of the state. It will also serve children and parents in their home communities, helping them to maintain their cultures and traditions.