



# Alaska House Health & Social Services Committee

# SAFE STRONG SUPPORTIVE

casey family programs

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# Casey Family Programs

- The nation's largest operating foundation focused on safely reducing the need for foster care and building Communities of Hope for children and families.
- We work to influence long-lasting improvements to the safety and success of children, families and the communities where they live.
  - Operating in all 50 states, DC, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.
  - Direct agreements with 16 tribes.
  - 9 field offices provide direct services to youth in care.

# Casey Family Programs' Work with Alaska

- Casey Family Programs has been working and investing in Alaska since the year 2000.
- We have worked with the State, Tribes, philanthropic organizations, the University of Alaska, and others to effect positive, improved outcomes for Alaskan children and families.
- We have sponsored statewide efforts to address Adverse Childhood Experiences in Alaska and to safely reduce the need for foster care.

**An Alaska Native infant (age 1 or younger) has a 15% chance of being the subject of a child abuse and neglect investigation.**

**An Alaska Native child has an 80% chance of being the subject of a child abuse and neglect investigation by age 18.**

- Casey Family Programs has actively supported efforts to reduce disproportionality of Native children in foster care in Alaska.
- We have sponsored Alaska's Strategic Plan of 2016-2020 to 'Transform Child Welfare Outcomes for Alaska Native Children'.
- We are strong supporters of Alaska's Tribal State Child Welfare Compact and its full implementation.
- We participate in Alaska's longstanding Tribal State Collaboration Group.

# Casey Support for the Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact

- Tribes know the needs of their children and families, their culture and traditions.
- Tribes are best suited to administer and deliver services.
- Casey Family Programs currently funds two contract positions: a project manager and a Tribal liaison.
- Casey is committed to supporting the Compact implementation and sustainability through consulting and technical assistance, regardless of state agency structure.







# Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact

## What is the Compact?

- Groundbreaking opportunity: Government-to-Government agreement
- A contractual agreement to transfer State general funds to Tribal Co-signers to provide select services on behalf of the State.
- 18 Co-signers representing 163 Tribes throughout the state.
- Took effect January 1, 2018
- State continues to have decision-making authority over child welfare cases.
- Addresses mutual vision of success, information sharing, shared responsibility and liability.

# Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact

Initial scopes of work (2018-2020) successfully implemented:

- Initial diligent relative searches
- Ongoing relative searches

3 new scopes of work incorporated in agreement in 2020 experienced challenges:

- Safety evaluations of relative homes
- Assisting with State licensing services: helping prospective foster parents complete the State application and licensure process
- Family contact services to ensure that children in foster care maintain the family connections essential to successful, timely reunification.

# Challenges to Compact Implementation & Sustainability

- Lack of existing systems to support implementation: Referral process and tracking outcomes is complex for State and Tribes.
- High caseloads and turnover of local OCS caseworkers may make local or regional referrals impossible.
- Lack of adequate State staff and Tribal Co-Signers' staff dedicated to manage Compact.
  - State funding for one staff per Co-Signer does not account for varying capacity among Tribes.
- Lack of staffing that will promote sustainability: including development and monitoring of quality improvement measures.



# No Research Evidence of an Ideal Organizational Structure

Governors and state legislatures have long reorganized state agencies in an effort to improve outcomes and services.

## **Research is lacking. The limited research and extensive state experiences tell us:**

- No ideal structure: Every approach has pros and cons.
- Positive child and family outcomes cannot be attributed to a particular model.
- No research evidence of improved accountability or service quality with reorganization.
- Organizational climate and culture (low conflict, cooperation, role clarity) may contribute more to outcomes than interagency coordination structures.

# Single Consolidated Health & Human Services Agency

Pros	Cons
Common overall vision & direction	Unmanageable size of bureaucracy & number of programs (especially in large states)
Political & budget visibility and clout for agency as a whole	Competition among divisions and constituencies for attention and resources
Potential and capacity for comprehensive responses and access to multiple services for children, families, and others	Lack of collaboration/coordination among divisions, programs; Difficulty developing comprehensive service strategies
Consolidation/reduced duplication of administrative, personnel, information management, payment, budget systems	Accountability challenges and difficulty assessing performance beyond individual programs — too many variables

# States With a Cabinet-Level Child & Family Agency

The scope, configuration and age of these agencies vary enormously.

State Agencies	Programs Administered
<b>Arizona</b> Dept. of Child Safety <b>Illinois</b> Dept. of Children & Family Services <b>Massachusetts</b> Dept. of Children & Families <b>Mississippi</b> Dept. of Child Protection Services	child welfare
<b>Indiana</b> Dept. of Child Services	child welfare, child support
<b>Tennessee</b> Dept. of Children's Services	child welfare, juvenile justice
<b>New Mexico</b> Children, Youth & Families Dept. <b>Rhode Island</b> Dept. of Children, Youth & Families	child welfare, juvenile justice, child behavioral health
<b>Washington</b> Dept. of Children, Youth & Families	child welfare, juvenile justice, early learning
<b>New Jersey</b> Dept. of Children & Families	child welfare, children's system of care (child behavioral health & substance use treatment, developmental disabilities)

# States With a Child & Family Agency (Cont'd)

State Agencies	Programs Administered
<b>Connecticut</b> Dept. of Children & Families	child welfare, juvenile justice, child mental health & substance abuse treatment
<b>Delaware</b> Dept. of Services for Children, Youth & Their Families	child welfare, juvenile justice, child care, child mental health & substance abuse treatment/prevention
<b>Wisconsin</b> Dept. of Children & Families [County-administered]	child welfare, juvenile justice, child care, child abuse prevention, financial assistance
<b>Florida</b> Dept. of Children & Families [Highly privatized/regionally administered]	child welfare, child care, mental health, adult protection, financial assistance
<b>Wyoming</b> Dept. of Family Services	child welfare, juvenile justice, child care, child support, financial assistance, food & energy assistance
<b>Vermont</b> Dept. for Children & Families	child welfare, juvenile justice, child care, child support, financial assistance, food, energy & housing assistance

# State Child & Family Agencies

Pros*	Cons*
Ability to align with outcomes and monitor outcomes and performance	Improvement in state child & family outcomes data is mixed, cannot be attributed to new structure
Can enact change more easily, including: hiring/training staff, upgraded data and quality assurance systems	Unrealistic goals and expectations for immediate change and the funding required
Improved access for children/families to needed services	Improved access noted if the agency administers the needed services: mental health, prevention services, financial assistance
Greater access to the Governor; greater visibility with the Governor and within the Legislature	Unanticipated costs of reorganization, including new administrative, personnel, information management, payment, budget systems
Mission clarity and unity	Challenges ensuring that all divisions/programs buy into the shared mission or feel included
More authority & visibility in the budget process	Expectations that a smaller agency will need fewer resources and be more efficient; competition among divisions and programs; some infrastructure/business capacity likely to be lost

\*Pros and cons reported in 2015 interviews with jurisdictions by Washington State Partners for Our Children, in 2016 interviews by Casey Family Programs, and in individual state reports.

# Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families: The Most Recent Reorganization

## Background and Planning

- In 2016, the Governor created a Blue Ribbon Commission to recommend the organizational structure for a new cabinet-level department focused solely on children and families.
- Commission Membership: Co-chaired by a key legislative committee chair and an influential retired judge. Members included state legislators, tribal representatives, administrators of existing programs and agencies, court administrator, state employee union representative, and issue experts.
- Commission's work: For 9 months, it studied other states' models, developed guiding principles and desired outcomes for the new department, and considered Tribes' and other stakeholder input, data, and financing approaches.
- Commission Recommendations: The new Dept. include the existing Dept. for Early Learning and child welfare and juvenile justice programs from the State Dept. of Social & Health Services.

# Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF)

- Commission Recommendations: Use the new DCYF as an opportunity to focus on prevention of adverse childhood experiences, improving child & family outcomes, and support for the most vulnerable youth.
- DCYF mission: Protect children and strengthen families so they flourish.
- Enabling Legislation, enacted in 2017, incorporated Commission recommendations.
- Implementation: After a yearlong transition period, programs were gradually transferred to DCYF over an 18 month period.
- DCYF structures required by legislation:
  - An Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability to direct and implement innovation, alignment, integration, collaboration, and systemic reform work.
  - A Parent Advisory Group to advise on policy & program development decisions.
  - A Director of Tribal Affairs.
- Cost of creating DCYF: \$10 million was budgeted over 2 years for administrative costs of forming the new Dept.

# State Agency Reorganization: Lessons Learned

- Review existing data to determine agency priorities and desired outcomes for Alaska Native and other Alaska children and families.
- The ends determine the means: Consider how the priorities and desired outcomes should drive the structure. *Reorganization can provide support for needed reforms.*
- Involve Tribes, communities, and those with lived experience in planning from the beginning and throughout reorganization.
- Ensure that agency resources are aligned with desired outcomes: Build on and expand existing strengths, successes, and capacity, e.g., State-tribal compact, prevention, family strengthening.
- Transition to a new structure usually takes 2 to 5 years: 1 year or more for planning/preparing, up to 5 years for implementation. Targeted efforts are necessary to sustain momentum and support for change.

# State Agency Reorganization: More Lessons Learned

- Reorganization is usually disruptive to some extent. Shared vision, clear direction, and necessary resources for planning and implementation can help staff and stakeholders weather times of transition.
- Plan carefully for the separation from a single consolidated health/human services agency: e.g. transferring staff, equipment, infrastructure.
- Ensure that resources are adequate. There is no evidence or experience that new structures save money. Instead, there are additional costs associated with the reorganization process and often with new infrastructure. During the transition, it may be necessary to allow for possible redundancy.
- Strong leadership, continuous improvement systems, and accountability mechanisms are important regardless of structure.

# High Costs of Child Welfare Workforce Turnover for Children & Families

- Studies in Colorado and Wisconsin found that case worker turnover dramatically increases the time to achievement of a permanent family for children in foster care.
- A study by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO 03-357) found that caseworker turnover contributed to states' failure to meet federal performance standards including:
  - Timely response in child protection investigations,
  - Timely closure of investigations (an important factor in both workload and families' need for resolution),
  - Frequency of caseworker contact,
  - Maltreatment recurrence, and
  - Timely attainment of permanency for children in out of home care.

# Other Costs of Child Welfare Workforce Turnover

- Direct costs of overtime, worker separation, and hiring/training new staff.
- Domino Effect: Remaining staff are more likely to leave.
- Indirect costs for other workers (increased paperwork and case management, emotional exhaustion, supervisors redirecting time to providing direct service).
- Financial costs: Every time a caseworker leaves, the cost to the child welfare agency is 30–200 % of the exiting employee's annual salary.

# What Causes Caseworkers to Leave?

- A meta-analysis of 22 studies identified 36 variables that most affected caseworkers' intention.
- Factors that have the greatest effect: Stress, emotional exhaustion, organizational commitment, job satisfaction.

# What are the Essential Foundational Steps that Agencies Need to Take?

- Conduct their own outreach and inquiry to determine the causes of their workers' dissatisfaction and turnover.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive workforce development plan that responds to the state workforce needs.
- Build a supportive agency culture, regardless of agency structure.

# What Works to Reduce Turnover?

1. Analysis of turnover and organizational environment; assessment of caseload/ workload.
2. Building, leading & elevating a comprehensive workforce development plan.
3. Identifying the right competencies: Job analyses, specialized positions to support best practices.
4. Educating/preparing the right students: University-agency partnerships, financial supports for students & existing staff.
5. Finding/hiring the best applicants.
6. Onboarding and welcoming new staff.
7. Providing incentives and a range of supports for staff.
8. A comprehensive training system.
9. Effective management and supervision.
10. Healthy agency climate and culture.

