

**HOUSE BILL NO. 401**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTIETH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE HOUSE RULES COMMITTEE BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

Introduced: 2/12/98

Referred: Community and Regional Affairs, Health, Education and Social Services, Finance

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 "An Act relating to contracts for the provision of state public assistance to  
2 certain recipients in the state; providing for regional public assistance plans and  
3 programs in the state; relating to grants for Alaska tribal family assistance  
4 programs; and providing for an effective date."

5 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

6 \* **Section 1.** FINDINGS AND INTENT. (a) The legislature finds that

7 (1) self-sufficiency for Alaska families is a statewide goal and that achieving  
8 self-sufficiency is greatly influenced by local conditions, particularly in rural Alaska with its  
9 unique mix of subsistence and cash economies;

10 (2) self-sufficiency efforts are more likely to succeed when local communities  
11 in a region of Alaska take responsibility for reducing dependence and when those efforts  
12 accurately reflect the social and economic conditions of the region of Alaska;

13 (3) new federal welfare reform law offers Alaska Native non-profit  
14 organizations the opportunity to assume responsibility for providing public assistance and self-

1 sufficiency services throughout Alaska; and

2 (4) it is in the best interests of the state to promote regional responsibility for  
3 the design of the state public assistance program and self-sufficiency services.

4 (b) It is the intent of the legislature to provide certain appropriations that would  
5 otherwise be used to provide assistance and self-sufficiency services to the recipients living  
6 in a public assistance region through an Alaska tribal family assistance grant to the Alaska  
7 Native non-profit organizations that are assuming the responsibility for providing the  
8 assistance and those services in that region of Alaska. It is further the intent of the legislature  
9 that state public assistance plans may be approved on a regional basis in appropriate  
10 circumstances and, if approved, may be administered uniformly in the region for all recipients  
11 in order to achieve the maximum cost efficiencies and benefits of a regionally designed  
12 program.

13 \* **Sec. 2.** AS 36.30.850(b) is amended by adding a new paragraph to read:

14 (38) contracts awarded under AS 47.27.072 for state public assistance  
15 provided under a regional public assistance plan.

16 \* **Sec. 3.** AS 47.27.005 is amended to read:

17 **Sec. 47.27.005. Duties of the department.** The department shall

18 (1) administer the Alaska temporary assistance program by providing  
19 assistance with basic living expenses and self-sufficiency services to needy children  
20 and their families under this chapter **and, if appropriate, by establishing regional**  
21 **public assistance programs to provide effectively for varying economic conditions**  
22 **in regions of the state designated by the department;**

23 (2) establish, by regulation, program standards that will provide  
24 incentives to work, incentives for financial planning, and opportunities to develop  
25 self-sufficiency while providing assistance with basic living expenses;

26 (3) prepare, submit to the federal government, and amend, if necessary,  
27 a state plan designed to assure that federal money is available to the state for the  
28 operation of the program set out in this chapter to provide assistance for basic living  
29 expenses and self-sufficiency services to needy children and their families consistent  
30 with the state objectives identified in (2) of this section;

31 (4) adopt methods of program administration to ensure consistency with

1 the federal requirements under any successor federal program that replaces the aid to  
2 families with dependent children program;

3 (5) make reports to the federal government as required under any  
4 successor federal program that replaces the aid to families with dependent children  
5 program, in the form and containing the information required, and comply with the  
6 provisions that the federal government determines are necessary to ensure correct and  
7 verifiable information on the program;

8 (6) provide to the legislature an annual executive summary of the  
9 information required to be reported to the federal government under (5) of this section;

10 (7) conduct studies and research in order to evaluate and monitor the  
11 effectiveness of the state program; and

12 (8) adopt regulations and take action to implement, interpret, and  
13 administer the provisions of this chapter.

14 \* **Sec. 4.** AS 47.27.005 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

15 (b) The department may adopt program standards that vary by region in the  
16 state to implement its duties under (a) of this section. The program standards need not  
17 contain all of the requirements of this chapter so long as they meet the standards set  
18 out in AS 47.27.072 and comply with the program elements set out in AS 47.27.071.

19 \* **Sec. 5.** AS 47.27 is amended by adding new sections to read:

20 **Sec. 47.27.071. Alaska tribal family assistance grants.** (a) Notwithstanding  
21 any contrary provisions of this chapter and in addition to grants awarded under  
22 AS 47.27.050, the department may award and administer Alaska tribal family  
23 assistance grants in accordance with this section to Alaska Native organizations that  
24 meet the requirements of AS 47.27.070. Only organizations that received approval for,  
25 and have agreed to operate, a federally approved tribal family assistance plan in this  
26 state are eligible to receive a grant under this section. An organization that receives  
27 a grant under this section must operate the plan approved under this section on a state  
28 fiscal year basis.

29 (b) If an organization intends to apply for a grant under this section, the  
30 organization first must submit to the department a letter of intent along with a copy  
31 of the proposed federal tribal family assistance plan that will be submitted to the

1 federal government for approval. The organization must make its submission to the  
2 department at least eight months before the proposed effective date of the federal tribal  
3 family assistance plan. The department shall review the submission and notify the  
4 organization of any significant deficiencies that would make the organization ineligible  
5 to be considered for an Alaska tribal family assistance grant even if federal approval  
6 is received without significant changes to the federal tribal family assistance plan and  
7 federal grant money is awarded for implementation of that plan. The organization may  
8 make a supplemental submission to the department to resolve any deficiencies noted  
9 by the department. If, after departmental review and any supplemental revision, an  
10 organization's plan remains eligible for consideration for a grant award under this  
11 section, the department shall notify the organization that the organization may submit  
12 a proposal for a grant award after the organization has received notice of federal  
13 approval of the federal tribal family assistance plan and the pending award of federal  
14 grant money. The commissioner may waive the time deadline specified in this  
15 subsection if the commissioner

16 (1) enters into a joint planning agreement between the department and  
17 the organization; or

18 (2) finds good cause and the waiver is in the state's best interest.

19 (c) If the department awards a grant under this section, the grant shall be in  
20 an amount that

21 (1) for the first fiscal year under the plan accepted by the department,  
22 represents a fair and equitable portion of the state appropriations for the state public  
23 assistance program administered under this chapter, intended to serve the state  
24 residents who will be served by the plan; and

25 (2) for the second and following state fiscal years under the plan  
26 accepted by the department, represents a fair and equitable portion of state  
27 appropriations made for public assistance programs that is allocated for Alaska tribal  
28 family assistance grants to be awarded under this section in order to serve the state  
29 residents who will be served by the plan; if the money is not allocated for these grants,  
30 the amounts shall be made in the same manner as described in (1) of this subsection.

31 (d) For an organization to be eligible to be awarded a grant under this section,

1 the organization's proposal must include

2 (1) documentation that the organization

3 (A) has received federal approval of its federal tribal family  
4 assistance plan to operate a tribal assistance program in this state; and

5 (B) will receive a grant directly from the federal government to  
6 implement the federal tribal family assistance plan;

7 (2) a plan for operation of the Alaska tribal family assistance grant that  
8 meets the requirements of (e) of this section; and

9 (3) if the commissioner determines that a federally approved tribal  
10 family assistance plan would be a cost-effective and efficient means of administering  
11 the program established in this chapter in that region of the state and the needs of state  
12 public assistance recipients receiving assistance under this chapter can be met through  
13 a contract awarded under AS 47.27.072, the organization's agreement to enter into a  
14 contract with the department to provide state public assistance to those eligible state  
15 residents in the region who are not included in the population to be served by the  
16 federally approved tribal family assistance plan.

17 (e) An organization's plan for operation of the Alaska tribal family assistance  
18 grant must

19 (1) be designed to facilitate self-sufficiency of assistance recipients  
20 within the region specified in the federally approved tribal family assistance plan by  
21 addressing the conditions specific to the region of the state;

22 (2) provide for a reasonable pattern of service delivery from all  
23 providers serving the region of the state;

24 (3) serve a specified region that consists of a geographically cohesive  
25 group of communities that share similar interests, resources, and traditions; and

26 (4) provide for administration of the grant money received under this  
27 section to establish a program in accordance with the plan accepted by the department  
28 and in compliance with other requirements of this section; the program must include  
29 the following standards for providing assistance to eligible families:

30 (A) only families with at least one dependent child or a woman  
31 in the last trimester of pregnancy are eligible for assistance paid from Alaska

1 tribal family assistance grant money;

2 (B) amounts for assistance provided from Alaska tribal family  
3 assistance grant money to eligible families may not exceed the amounts  
4 specified under AS 47.27.025(b), when combined with assistance provided  
5 under the federally approved tribal family assistance grant;

6 (C) to remain eligible for assistance paid from the Alaska tribal  
7 family assistance grant money, any minor parent of a dependent child must  
8 meet the requirements of AS 47.27.027;

9 (D) families receiving assistance paid from Alaska tribal family  
10 assistance grant money must comply with the provisions of AS 47.27.035(a)  
11 regarding participation in work activities;

12 (E) families receiving assistance paid from Alaska tribal family  
13 assistance grant money must comply with the provisions of AS 47.27.040  
14 regarding assignment of support rights and cooperation with the child support  
15 enforcement agency of the Department of Revenue;

16 (F) the organization has an impartial appeals process to allow  
17 for affected families in the region of the state covered by the plan accepted by  
18 the department to have a fair hearing.

19 (f) The department may award a grant under this section only if the department  
20 determines that the proposal, including a plan for operation of the grant, meets the  
21 criteria specified in (d) and (e) of this section and the department determines that an  
22 award of the grant to the organization would be in the public interest. The department  
23 may not distribute grant money until a grant agreement between the organization and  
24 the department is executed that meets the requirements of this section.

25 (g) Records pertaining to recipients of assistance from an Alaska tribal family  
26 assistance grant awarded under this section are confidential public assistance records  
27 under AS 47.05.020 and the regulations adopted under it. Use and misuse of these  
28 records are subject to the provisions of AS 47.05.030. It is an official purpose under  
29 AS 47.05.020 for an organization receiving a grant under this section and the  
30 department or another agency of the state to exchange information concerning  
31 recipients of assistance under this section so long as the information requested is for

1 purposes directly connected with the administration of a grant under this section.

2 (h) An organization receiving a grant under this section shall provide to the  
3 department a copy of its quarterly report made under 42 U.S.C. 611. The organization  
4 shall have its financial records audited annually by a certified public accountant  
5 authorized to practice in this state under AS 08.04. The department may prescribe the  
6 form and specify the information required to document compliance with this section.

7 (i) If an organization wishes to terminate its program before the end of the  
8 time period for which the grant was awarded under this section, the organization must  
9 obtain the consent of the department or provide notice to the department six months  
10 before the anticipated date of termination. At the end of a grant agreement or by early  
11 termination under this section, the organization shall provide an inventory of property  
12 valued at \$1,000 or over and purchased, in whole or in part, with grant money awarded  
13 under this section. The department shall notify the organization of the required  
14 disposition of the property listed on the inventory.

15 (j) If the department awards a grant under this section, a person applying for  
16 assistance under this chapter who is covered by the federally approved tribal family  
17 assistance plan in the region of the state may obtain assistance from the department  
18 only through the organization designated by the department to serve the region. A  
19 person aggrieved by a decision made by an organization under a grant awarded under  
20 this section may use the appeal procedure specified in AS 47.27.072(e).

21 **Sec. 47.27.072. Regional public assistance plans, programs, and contracts.**

22 (a) Notwithstanding any contrary provisions of this chapter, the department may  
23 develop a regional public assistance plan and implement a regional program for the  
24 administration of this chapter in order to provide state public assistance in a uniform  
25 and cost-effective manner in a region of this state. The department may develop a  
26 regional public assistance plan only if an Alaska Native organization is authorized to  
27 implement a federally approved tribal family assistance plan in the region and has been  
28 awarded an Alaska tribal family assistance grant for a program in that region for the  
29 applicable fiscal year under AS 47.27.071. The regional public assistance plan under  
30 this section must be designed to serve eligible state residents in the region who are not  
31 covered by a federally approved tribal family assistance program in that region.

1 (b) The department may award contracts to implement this section. A contract  
2 authorized for delivery of state public assistance under a regional public assistance plan  
3 under this section is exempt from the competitive bid requirements of AS 36.30 (State  
4 Procurement Code). Subject to appropriation, a contract under this section must be in  
5 an amount that represents a fair and equitable share of the money appropriated to serve  
6 the state residents specified in (a) of this section. This section provides additional  
7 authority to contract to that available under AS 47.05.015 or other law.

8 (c) The department may award a contract under this section only to an  
9 organization that

10 (1) has been awarded an Alaska tribal family assistance grant for a  
11 program in that region under AS 47.27.071;

12 (2) agrees to administer state public assistance under this chapter to  
13 other state residents in the region who are not served by the Alaska tribal family  
14 assistance grant awarded under AS 47.27.071;

15 (3) agrees to provide state public assistance identical to that provided  
16 under the federally approved tribal family assistance plan for which Alaska tribal  
17 family assistance grant money has been awarded under AS 47.27.071; and

18 (4) agrees to implement an appeals process as described in (e) of this  
19 section.

20 (d) Records pertaining to recipients of state public assistance under a contract  
21 awarded under this section have the same confidential protections as are provided to  
22 recipients of assistance from Alaska tribal family assistance grants under  
23 AS 47.27.071.

24 (e) An organization that receives a contract under this section shall provide an  
25 appeals process to applicants for or recipients of state public assistance covered by the  
26 contract awarded under this section. The appeals process must be the same method  
27 available under the federally approved tribal family assistance plan, except that the  
28 decision reached will be considered as a recommended decision to the department.  
29 Within 30 days after receiving a recommended decision the department shall review  
30 the recommended decision and issue a decision accepting or rejecting the  
31 recommended decision. If the department rejects the recommended decision, the

1 department shall independently review the record and issue its final decision. The  
2 final decision of the department on the matter is appealable to the court of this state.

3 (f) If the department establishes a regional public assistance plan and awards  
4 a contract to provide state public assistance under this section, a person applying for  
5 state public assistance under this chapter in the region of the state covered by the  
6 regional public assistance plan may obtain state public assistance from the department  
7 only through the organization designated by the department to serve the region.

8 \* **Sec. 6.** AS 47.27.900 is amended by adding a new paragraph to read:

9 (10) "federally approved tribal family assistance plan" means a plan  
10 that meets the requirements of 42 U.S.C. 612 and has been approved for financing  
11 through a tribal family assistance grant directly from the United States Department of  
12 Health and Human Services.

13 \* **Sec. 7.** This Act takes effect immediately under AS 01.10.070(c).