

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL  
SERVICES STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 17, 2004  
3:10 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Peggy Wilson, Chair  
Representative Carl Gatto, Vice Chair  
Representative Paul Seaton  
Representative Kelly Wolf  
Representative Sharon Cissna  
Representative Mary Kapsner

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative John Coghill

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

OVERVIEW OF DIVISION OF FAMILY AND YOUTH SERVICES TO OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES BY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

OVERVIEW ON PUBLIC HEALTH BUDGET CUTS BY ALASKA NURSES ASSOCIATION AND NANCY DAVIS, DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

**TAPES**

04-10, SIDE(S) A & B  
04-11, SIDE(S) A

**CHAIR PEGGY WILSON** convened the meeting of the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee at 3:10 p.m. Representatives Wilson, Gatto, Seaton, and Wolf were present at the call to order. Representatives Cissna, and Kapsner arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**SUMMARY OF INFORMATION**

JOEL GILBERTSON, Commissioner, Department of Health and Social Services, reviewed the responsibilities of the department and provided the committee with an overview of the restructuring efforts.

MARCIE KENNAI, Deputy Commissioner, Office of Children's Services, Department of Health and Social Services, provided the committee with an overview of division restructuring and new programs that are being implemented. She also described the Division of Family and Youth Services' (DFYS's) mission and how well the division has been able to remain in compliance with its own policies and objectives. Ms. Kennai explained some of the difficulties that are found in providing child welfare related services within the State of Alaska, citing that the main factors were geography and the isolation of some of Alaska's more distant communities.

MS. KENNAI stressed, however, that despite the geographic challenges Alaska's problems are not unique, although they may be more extreme. She said DYFS is working to improve its response time for investigations of child abuse claims. Although many of DYFS's restructuring actions are focused on this goal, it is still not meeting the goal of timely investigations to the degree the division desires.

NANCY DAVIS, Chief, Nursing Section, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Social Services, described the work and services provided by public health nurses, especially the role public nurses play in disease prevention. She also detailed the difficulties that public health nurses are encountering due to recent and proposed budget cuts. Ms. Davis stated that [the Division of Public Health] will work as hard as possible to provide its primary service of disease prevention as well as other necessary health services.

All speakers supported the public health nurses and sought to encourage the Alaska State Legislature in continuing and increasing the funding for the public health nurses, given their integral and important social and medical role. There was great concern amongst many speakers that the social and medical costs due to the loss of prevention would be greater than the money saved by reducing the cost of this organization.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

#### **COMMITTEE ACTION**

The committee took no action.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 5:04 p.m.

NOTE: The meeting was recorded and handwritten log notes were taken. A copy of the tape(s) and log notes may be obtained by contacting the House Records Office at State Capitol, Room 3, Juneau, Alaska 99801 (mailing address), (907) 465-2214, and after adjournment of the second session of the Twenty-Third Alaska State Legislature this information may be obtained by contacting the Legislative Reference Library at (907) 465-3808.