

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

February 7, 2006

3:07 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Peggy Wilson, Chair
Representative Carl Gatto
Representative Sharon Cissna
Representative Berta Gardner

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Paul Seaton, Vice Chair
Representative Tom Anderson
Representative Vic Kohring

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

OVERVIEW(S): DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA;
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

- HEARD

HOUSE BILL NO. 408

"An Act relating to the definition of 'child abuse and neglect'
for child protection purposes; and providing for an effective
date."

- HEARD AND HELD

OVERVIEW(S): DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES - BRING
THE KIDS HOME (BTKH)

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 408

SHORT TITLE: CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT/DISCLOSURE/PFDS

SPONSOR(S): RULES BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

01/30/06	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/30/06	(H)	HES, FIN
02/07/06	(H)	HES AT 3:00 PM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

MANDIE NORRIS, Intern
to Representative Eric Croft
Alaska Legislature;
Spokesperson, University of Alaska Legislative Intern Program
POSITION STATEMENT: Presented a gift to the president of the
University of Alaska.

MARK HAMILTON, President
University of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Received lauds from the University of
Alaska Intern Program delegation; and co-presented an overview
of the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project.

ROGER SAMPSON, Commissioner
Department of Education and Early Development (EED)
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented an overview of the Alaska
Statewide Mentor Project.

JOANNE GIBBENS, Program Administrator
Office of Children's Services (OCS)
Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HB 408 on behalf of the governor.

STACIE KRALY, Chief Assistant Attorney General
Statewide Section Supervisor
Human Services Section
Department of Law (DOL)
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Responded to questions on HB 408.

STACY TONER, Deputy Director
Division of Behavioral Health (DBH)
Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented an overview of the Bring The
Kids Home (BTKH) program.

BILL HERMAN, Trust Program Officer
Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA)
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented an overview of the Bring The
Kids Home (BTKH) program.

JEFF JESSEE, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented an overview of the Bring The Kids Home (BTKH) program.

GUS MARKS, Grants Manager
Juneau Youth Services (JYS), Incorporated (Inc.)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented an overview of the Bring The Kids Home (BTKH) program.

ACTION NARRATIVE

CHAIR PEGGY WILSON called the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at [3:07:10 PM](#). Representatives Gatto, Gardner, Cissna, and Wilson were present at the call to order.

[3:07:56 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON announced that the first order of business would be a presentation by the members of the University of Alaska Legislative Intern Program.

[3:08:50 PM](#)

MANDIE NORRIS, Intern to Representative Eric Croft, Alaska Legislature; Spokesperson, University of Alaska Legislative Intern Program, presented a gift to the president of the University of Alaska, in appreciation of the intern program.

[3:10:03 PM](#)

OVERVIEW(S):

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA

[3:10:26 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON announced that the next order of business would be an overview of the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project by the Department of Education and Early Development and the University of Alaska.

[3:11:02 PM](#)

MARK HAMILTON, President, University of Alaska, introduced the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project, and distinguished between the words "cooperation" and "collaboration," stressing the root word "labor" as significant in the work, which the involved entities have undertaken to create this project. He explained how this project stemmed from reports provided by teachers who described difficulties in establishing support units within their assigned schools. Given the retention issues, particularly in the rural school districts, the task was to identify a means to ease these difficulties and help the newly assigned teachers to be "comfortable" in their positions. He reported that last year 300 new teachers were assigned mentors; master teachers of high quality. Mentorship support involves monthly site visits, weekly telephone conferences, and daily e-mail contact, which helps to further the development and training of a new teacher. Although a database type report has not been generated, the anecdotal evidence is impressive. He stressed that by increasing the retention factor alone, the statistics will inevitably show an increase in student success levels. A parallel should be drawn between the teaching and the medical professions, he opined. The model of an intern's residency under a master doctor for practical training and insured success is modified here to apply to, and provide support for, the new teachers. The University of Alaska's role is to train and support the master teachers to be effective mentors. The school principals who have observed the program have requested similar assistance, which resulted in the development of a principal "coaching program." Thus far, federal grants have funded this project, however, he said this year the federal grants are being cut and financial support is being sought from the state. The direct and implied costs involved in teacher retention will justify the funding, he said, and he predicted that Alaska will be recognized nationally for developing and implementing this program.

ROGER SAMPSON, Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), provided specifics of the projects goals, paraphrasing from the following project summary [original punctuation provided]:

The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (EED) created the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project in partnership with the University of Alaska (UA) in support of their shared mission to improve academic achievement for students in Alaska. The Alaska Statewide Mentor Project (ASMP) includes two components:

Teacher mentoring for beginning teachers.

Principal coaching for new school principals.

The goals of the program are to increase teacher retention, increase student achievement, and equip principals with the skills to be instructional leaders and effective managers. The ASMP model is based on the nationally acclaimed New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz

Teacher Mentoring

Goals: Increase teacher retention and increase student achievement.

Who are the mentors? The mentors are teachers with extensive classroom experience, often in variety of grade levels in urban and rural Alaska. They are released from teaching to provide mentoring for a two-year period.

How are the mentors trained? Mentors receive formal training in eight three-day Mentor Academy sessions held over two years. Topics focus on formative (in-class) assessment tools, the analysis of student work, and differentiated instruction.

What teachers receive mentoring? 1st- and 2nd- year teachers from participating school districts.

What does the research show? Nationally, research shows that effective mentoring slows teacher attrition by half while increasing student achievement. Teachers who receive quality mentoring gain the skills of a teacher with five years' experience in just two years. Mentors also become instructional leaders when they return to their districts.

Principal Coaching

Goals: Increase the retention rate of principals and give them skills to be effective instructional leaders.

Who are the coaches? The coaches are retired administrators with demonstrated success as

instructional leaders. They have had experience in many educational settings and communities in Alaska.

How are the coaches trained? Coaches receive ongoing training through workshops and seminars in the areas of instructional leadership, school management, human resources, and student services.

What principals receive mentoring? Principals participate on a voluntary basis with permission from their district.

What does the research show? The person most likely to influence the learning atmosphere of a school, other than the classroom teacher, is the principal. Alaska needs committed school leaders to accelerate its standards-based school reform efforts.

What problems does the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project address?

The teacher turnover rate in Alaska is very high, especially in rural communities.

Students do not reach their academic potential when they have novice teachers.

The person most likely to influence the learning atmosphere of a school, other than the classroom teacher, is the principal. Principals often have to learn on the job without any guidance or assistance.

The high turnover rate of teachers and principals is negatively impacting student development and hampering Alaska's standards-based education initiatives.

How does the project solve the problems?

New teachers and principals are not left alone in the first years of practice to "sink or swim," but instead are provided with a supportive mentoring model that is more consistent with that of other high-impact professions such as medicine or law.

Research in the U.S. has shown that effective mentoring slows teacher attrition by half, increases student achievement, and speeds up the rate at which a teacher reaches proficiency.

What is unique about the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project model?

Alaska's mentor program is modeled after the nationally acclaimed program from the New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz. This model has been developed over a 17-year period and is research-based. The model includes:

Rigorous mentor selection

Full release of master classroom teachers so they can mentor full-time and participate in professional development for mentors

Structured face-to-face teacher/mentor interaction at least monthly with weekly follow-up e-mail and/or phone meetings

Documentation of specific instructional goals for teachers

Ongoing mentoring for the first two years of teaching

What are the results after the first year?

According to data from the Alaska Institute for Social and Economic Research, the five-year weighted retention rate for 1st- and 2nd-year teachers in districts participating in the Alaska Statewide Mentoring Project prior to implementation was 68%.

Of 339 new teachers participating in the mentor program in the first year, 77% returned to the district.

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COMMISSIONER SAMPSON stated:

This is a win for school districts, for the department ... , for the University system, the state of Alaska, and most importantly, this is a win for the young people of Alaska. It's an absolute homerun. ... Usually we come with an idea, that we want [the legislature] to support, and we project what we think the outcomes will be. With this [project] we bring ... more than an idea. ... We have one year of formal research information that was designed from the beginning of the program that shows, in some areas of the state, ... the turnover rate [was reduced to] ... zero. But in many regions ... the turn over rate [was cut] in half. ... The easy part is getting [the teacher] right now, the hard part is retaining teachers that are ... effective for Alaska students. This program does that.

[3:25:17 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER SAMPSON stressed how this program is able to affect the teaching profession on a level beyond what any of the existing policies allow, and provides a crucial induction into the classroom experience. The \$5 million request for this proven program is in the governor's budget. He explained that the funding request would allow the program to be expanded into more districts, and covers the teacher and principal programs.

[3:27:34 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON asked how the mentors are compensated for their efforts, and how direct mentor contact is achieved.

COMMISSIONER SAMPSON explained that the master teacher is loaned to the mentor program, which then pays their current salary and benefits for the two year period, honoring any step increase that are due. The loaning school guarantees a position for the master teacher when they return. He reported that the model program, in existence for seventeen years, indicates that following two years of mentoring, 50 percent of the master teachers return to the classroom, 25 percent move into leadership roles as principals, assistant principals, staff developers, and curriculum directors, and the remaining 25 percent continue in mentoring. Considering this outcome, he opined that the money is well spent and continues to enrich the

districts in the long term and benefit from the expertise that the teachers attain.

3:30:19 PM

CHAIR WILSON suggested that the established relationship of the teachers involved tends to continue, given the bond developed during the mentorship, thus informally continuing the support.

COMMISSIONER SAMPSON commented that the direct service, by the mentors is to the teachers to whom they are assigned. However, he said, indirectly many more teachers are served, as the veteran teachers on site request to join the mentoring discussion sessions. These informal opportunities and benefits are not accounted for in the statistical data.

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REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER pointed out that on page 2, of the EED, Alaska Statewide Mentor Project Summary paper, the turn over rate of 23.8 percent was reduced to 21 percent in 2005, and asked whether that should be considered significant. Further she said that the report indicates that the non-urban districts report a drop from 34 percent to 26 percent, and asked for clarification on the programs effectiveness statewide.

MR. HAMILTON explained that the non-urban schools were the primary recipients of this program, but that the statistics were compiled to indicate statewide retention versus individual district information, which present more impressive numbers.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER inquired whether it is difficult to get teachers to take rural positions.

COMMISSIONER SAMPSON responded that it is not difficult to get mentors to assist in rural areas, and it is part of the interview/selection process. He explained that the newest educators in the state commonly begin in a rural setting and migrate to the urban schools. Describing the selection process, he said that the mentors are chosen based on the success that they have had in the areas which the program requires. Many of the larger schools in a district have mentorship programs already in place, but none have a full release mentorship, which allows a teacher to not carry a class in order to focus solely on mentoring.

3:36:10 PM

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA noted the large number of new teacher hires indicated in the handout. She asked how many were local or Alaskan resident teachers, and whether there is an effort to hire Alaskan residents.

COMMISSIONER SAMPSON answered that perhaps two Natives applied for the mentoring program, which is indicative of the low numbers of applicants from the rural areas. However, he reported that the majority of students who are identified in the Alaska Scholars Program, qualifying for a university education, stay in the state. He stressed the importance of the scholars program as a means to "grow our own."

[3:38:21 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO stated his understanding that the cost to replace a teacher is about \$12,000, and a higher retention level might reduce that figure by approximately half.

COMMISSIONER SAMPSON pointed out that considering the statistics from the largest school districts, that savings has already been realized.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO indicated that the 2005 percentage, previously mentioned on page 2 of the report, does not indicate that much of a "drop;" 21 percent is not half of 23.8 percent.

MR. HAMILTON explained that the data figures reflect statewide figures, however, the program was not a statewide program. Therefore, the statewide numbers are affected only slightly, but with an expanded program, this number should change dramatically.

MR. SAMPSON added that the first and second year teachers are also the first to get laid off, which has happened in some districts, such as the Kenai Peninsula; skewing the statistics.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO offered that the Anchorage fire department has a successful mentor program utilizing retired captains.

[3:41:47 PM](#)

HB 408-DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

CHAIR WILSON announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 408, 24-GH2021\A, "An Act relating to the

definition of 'child abuse and neglect' for child protection purposes; and providing for an effective date."

[3:42:14 PM](#)

JOANNE GIBBENS, Program Administrator, Office of Children's Services (OCS), Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), presented HB 408 on behalf of the governor, and stated that this bill brings Alaskan statute into compliance with federal law. She explained that the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003 amended the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), which is the funding source for OCS's child abuse and neglect prevention and treatment programs. The definition of "child" is amended in HB 408 to include "an infant who has been identified by a health care provider involved in the delivery or care of that infant as being affected by abuse of a controlled substance or from withdrawal from prenatal exposure to a controlled substance." The purpose of the bill is to ensure that health care professionals report such individuals to the department under the state's mandatory reporting laws for child abuse and neglect. She pointed out that, although health care providers are already making these reports, the bill is necessary to be compliant with federal law which requires state statute to reflect a mandate for these reports.

[3:43:58 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA asked whether: HB 408 mandates more specific reporting; are these children likely to be taken into custody; what system will be in place to support a state custodial outcome; and is there a follow-up program for the involved parent to help stem recidivism.

MS. GIBBENS explained that by expanding the term "child," the scope of all mandated reporters, including a number of different types of health care providers is also expanded. She stated that OCS receives infant related calls on a regular basis and does not anticipate an increase, save certain areas of the state. When a call comes in from a hospital, the OCS response will: establish a family profile for assessment purposes; make a referral for treatment if appropriate; and ascertain the safety of the infant and other siblings in the home. In case work follow-up, OCS works with the hospital staff, substance abuse counselors, and any available local programs that are applicable; albeit a shortage of statewide programs exists. She reiterated that this reporting is already happening.

3:47:55 PM

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER stated that the language of HB 408 defines "child" as "an infant" born into an abusive situation and would it not be more appropriate for the bill language to include any child who is subject to [substance abuse] exposure, either prenatal or postpartum.

STACIE KRALY, Chief Assistant Attorney General, Statewide Section Supervisor, Human Services Section, Department of Law (DOL), answered that the bill is expected to encompass children both prenatal and postnatal who have "been exposed to controlled substances through the mother." She explained that DOL drafted HB 408 as a comprehensive vehicle for meeting CAPTA requirements without making unduly burdensome requirements on providers and to quantify what is already in practice.

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REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER inquired why alcohol is not included in the bill.

MS. GIBBENS responded that HB 408 is intended to bring state statute into federal compliance, which only requires addressing illegal substances. She offered to reconvene with the appropriate departments to consider including alcohol as part of the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER stated that this may be an opportunity to address alcohol as child abuse.

MS. KRALY reiterated that the purpose of HB 408 is to comport with federal requirements.

CHAIR WILSON inquired if including language to address alcohol would compromise the bill comporting to federal requirements.

STACIE KRALY responded that it would not be a problem at the federal level and pointed out that other states do include alcohol in their legislation.

CHAIR WILSON asked what the ramifications might be of including alcohol in the bill's language.

MS. GIBBENS stated that OCS would probably experience an increase in the number of calls received, although they currently receive calls from medical care providers concerned

about prenatal alcohol use and exposure. She pointed out that OCS does respond to these calls. In answer to a question, she clarified that OCS's federal funding is subject to the mandated reporting of, and appropriate response to, illegal substance abuse issues.

CHAIR WILSON announced that the bill would be held pending the proposal of amendments.

[3:54:55 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER requested the following language changes:

Page 1, line 9

Delete **"child" includes an infant who has been identified** ...

Insert **"child abuse" includes pre natal exposure** ...

[3:55:55 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON pointed out the CAPTA requirements contained in the bill packet, and reiterated that this bill would be brought back before the committee on Thursday [February 9, 2006].

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER cautioned that "we may be opening a can of worms" in dealing with the adult use of a legal substance.

CHAIR WILSON acknowledged that, with Alaska being the nation's number one consumer of alcohol, its use presents many social and medical issues in the state.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA reminded the committee of the need for preventative/recovery programs for parents versus removing their children. She stated that many parents may have the intent of being good parents and she pointed out the need to develop means to assist and educate them to that end.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER said that despite the need for emphasis on prevention and services, it is imperative to first protect the child and ensure their safety.

[3:59:55 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON reiterated that HB 408 would be held and said that it would be brought before the committee again [February 9, 2006].

#

^OVERVIEW(S):

^DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES - BRING THE KIDS HOME (BTKH)

[4:00:06 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON announced that the final order of business would be a presentation by the Department of Health and Social Services on the Bring The Kids Home (BTKH) project.

[4:01:15 PM](#)

STACY TONER, Deputy Director, Division of Behavioral Health (DBH), Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), described BTKH as a collaborative effort of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA), Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), the Tribal entities in the state, care providers, and the involved families.

BILL HERMAN, Trust Program Officer, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA), introduced himself as the work group facilitator for Bring The Kids Home (BTKH) program and explained that the mission statement of AMHTA encompasses the efforts of projects such as BTKH; hence their involvement. The Trust worked to include the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) who have been responsive to the program and become a partner in the effort. He reported that 40 percent of the people placed with out-of-state residential care facilities are Alaska Natives.

MR. HERMAN stated that the Kellogg Foundation Logic Model was used to develop the framework for BTKH. He directed attention to the committee packet and explained slides 2-6, [pages 1-3]. Slide 2, bullets the Seven Indicators of Progress, which read: 1:Client Shift - reducing the numbers of children/youth placed out of state; 2:Funding Shift - reduction in Medicaid/general fund match dollars from out-of-state services, and the corresponding increase of the same funds for in-state services; 3:Length of Stay - reduction in the average length of stay for in-state and out-of-state residential institutions; 4:Service Capacity - increase in the number of children/youth receiving home and community based services; 5:Recidivism - decrease in

the number of children/youth returning to residential care; 6:Client Satisfaction - with services rendered; and 7:Client Improvement - with children/youth exhibiting functional improvement in one or more life domain areas at discharge and one year after discharge. He described how the graphs of slides 3-6, track these indicators, and he provided an analysis.

[4:04:48 PM](#)

MR. HERMAN continued with slide 7 [page 4], which enumerated the project strategies and he highlighted [in order addressed]: Strategy 5:Home & community-based services - increase capacity; Strategy 7:Assessment & Care Coordination - intervene; and Strategy 3:Examine financing & policy issues - examine the state's financing and policy issues to eliminate impediments and assure that mechanisms are in place to encourage movement of the kids back to Alaska. Further, he reported that the quarterly meetings have been well attended for reviewing the project, and that the cooperative effort has been honed.

[4:06:01 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER addressed Strategy 3, and asked whether the certificate of need (CON) requirement for facilities has had an impact on the project.

MR. HERMAN responded that from the perspective of the trust, the CON requirement has had a positive impact. The effort is to treat the clients at the lowest level of care possible, which allows them to successfully interface with services in their home areas. He cautioned that bringing a client from a high level care facility out-of-state, to a high level care facility in-state, would not provide the same possibility for home service. Additionally, he said that the CON helps to maintain a balance and insure that facilities are not "over built" in any one area.

[4:07:29 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked for clarity on the impact that results when transferring a child from an out-of-state, high level care facility, to in-state care at the same high level; provided that the services are available.

MS. TONER answered that the intent is to allow a client to receive the benefits of out-of-state care, without interrupting their program, and to have them return to Alaska for follow-up

rehabilitation; requiring care that is a "step down" and at a level that is available in a less institutionalized setting. This type of rehabilitation should be able to be provided in the patient's local community and possibly in a home-based setting. However, she said that Anchorage is expanding service levels to provide care for some residential psychiatric treatment services, which will be the first locked facility of its kind in Alaska.

CHAIR WILSON stated her understanding, that despite the intention to bring these kids home, there may be a compelling reason not to take them out of a care facility until it is deemed in their best interest to do so.

[4:09:42 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER inquired whether the state is concurrently establishing options which would not require client relocation to out-of-state facilities, even for the highest level of care needed.

MS. TONER answered, "Yes." She explained that to address this complex issue requires a multi-pronged approach, and she described how client needs are reviewed, prior to referral to an out-of-state facility, to ensure that state services are fully accessed. Further, she said:

We're trying to strengthen families, ... strengthen providers to [to enable them to] take more difficult children, ... expanding residential care services in the state, and ... expanding residential psychiatric services.

[4:10:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER said that the process necessary to obtain a CON and build an adequate facility is lengthy. She further stated that a recommendation for a level of service should not be dependent on the availability of a bed in a facility.

MS. TONER concurred that treatment recommendation should not be based on what services are available, but on the individual needs of the client. She described the evaluation criteria and review process, which are utilized, along with an implementation schedule, to assure that a patient receives the appropriate care.

[4:13:34 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON informed the committee that a bill to address the concerns of the CON process would be forthcoming, and asked that questions regarding that issue be held.

[4:13:48 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA stated her understanding that a percentage of children in out-of-state treatment programs are afflicted with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), and asked for clarity on the disposition of the treatment for these clients.

MS. TONER explained that under some circumstances, there may not be enough clients with the same affliction to justify the establishment of an in-state residential psychiatric service. Thus, these clients would still be referred to out-of-state services.

[4:15:25 PM](#)

MS. TONER directed the committee's attention to slide 2 [page 1], titled Seven Indicators of Progress, and reviewed the enumerated bullets [previously detailed in these minutes]: 1:Client Shift, 2:Funding Shift, 3:Length of Stay, 4:Service Capacity, 5:Recidivism.

CHAIR WILSON asked about the recidivism goal of 75 percent.

MS TONER responded that the goal is to reduce the recidivism factor "by" 75 percent, not "to" 75 percent. She continued with the bullets: 6:Client Satisfaction, and 7:Client Improvement. She elaborated on each point for clarity.

CHAIR WILSON inquired what the recidivism percentage rate is today.

MS. TONER responded that she would provide that statistic to the chair.

[4:18:18 PM](#)

JEFF JESSEE, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA), referred to the Seven Indicators of Progress and explained how this "dash board of indicators" will allow the administrators to receive continuous feedback on the success of the program. He stressed that the information

gleaned from these indicators will be the basis for adapting the system to be as workable as possible. In response to a question, he agreed that the collaboration between the agencies has been a great benefit to the project, and that each entities interests have played a key role in establishing these indicators. He said:

The families are interested in whether this is working for them. They feel like they're actually being responded to; ... they really want to look at client satisfaction. Legislators want to look at the numbers [to ascertain] are we doing anything with the funding; are we getting this project under control. The clinicians want results for the clients. They want the kids getting better and they want ... symptomology to go down. ... Everybody's got a piece of the puzzle and together ... we've got a picture of the whole operation.

[4:20:29 PM](#)

MS. TONER elaborated on the trends presented in the graphs on slides 3-6, [pages 2-3].

[4:23:58 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked whether the referral facilities commonly used for patients, for in-state and out-of-state, care are for-profit or not-for-profit institutions.

MS. TONER responded that the majority of the providers are for-profit entities.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER suggested that this would indicate a possible conflict of interest and represent a vested interest by the providers to maintain client residency.

MS. TONER declined to say whether this would represent a conflict of interest. However, she said it is important to bring these clients back to Alaska as soon as possible.

MR. JESSEE opined that it does represent a conflict of interest, particularly when there isn't good communication between the in-state and out-of-state providers. It can be difficult to have the clients returned to care with which the out-of-state provider has no familiarity. He explained that there is much

work to be done to create an atmosphere of understanding, as well as facilities, that will foster this program.

[4:26:42 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER stated her understanding of the difficulty a facility would have in releasing a client, into the hands of an unknown entity, albeit their family. The out-of-state care providers would not have the opportunity to know the families, she opined.

CHAIR WILSON pointed out that the out-of-state providers would not necessarily have an understanding of life in Alaska.

MS. TONER said that one of the greatest concerns, is that these clients are being treated by people who don't understand village life.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER related an experience to illustrate her personal interest in this program.

[4:28:23 PM](#)

MS. TONER directed attention to slide 7 [page 4], with seven bulleted strategies, which read: 1:Theory of change -continued ongoing communication; 2:Strong Family Voice - in policy development, advocacy, family education and support, and quality control/assurance and evaluation; 3:Examine financing & policy issues; 4:Performance & Q/A measures - continuous quality improvement procedures are in place; 5:Home & community-based services - develop a wide range of accessible services that reduce the need for kids to enter residential care and ease transition back into the community for those in out-of-home care; 6:Work force development - build the capacity and core competencies of in-state providers to provide services that meet the needs of kids with severe behavioral health disorders; 7:Assessment & Care Coordination - develop "gate keeping" policies and practices and implement regional resource committees to divert kids from psychiatric residential care.

[4:29:54 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA pointed out that establishing a work force to conduct an effective programs is always an issue. At one time, she reflected, the state did have a program in place, however, eventually state funding was pulled. She stressed that consistent funding for a program is essential to maintain a pool

of talented workers. With this concern in mind, she asked how this program would handle financial sustainability.

[4:31:40 PM](#)

MR. JESSEE acknowledged that if a program fails to perform, funding will be lost, and he opined that this is what happened to the precursor to this program; the Alaska Youth Initiative (AYI). He anticipates that BTKH is recreating the successful aspects of the AYI model, and with the appropriate indicators in place will be able to avoid the pitfalls.

CHAIR WILSON stated her understanding that the program indicators will allow a means to continually problem-solve and make necessary adjustments.

MS. TONER responded that this is a continuous improvement process, and that each aspect of the program is being reviewed and revised appropriately.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA reiterated her concern for the sustainability aspect of the program.

[4:35:17 PM](#)

MS. TONER returned to the overview slides 8-10 [pages 4-5], detailing the funding needs to attain strategies 2-5.

MR. JESSEE interjected that over \$40 million a year is paid for out-of-state services. He opined that this program will shift much of that money back to in-state care, representing an investment in the state.

[4:40:07 PM](#)

MS. TONER continued with slides 11-12 [page 6], indicating the funding requirements and applications to accomplish strategies 6 and 7. She indicated that she would not address slide 13 [page 7], DHSS Certificate of Need, due to the late hour, however, she directed attention to the proposed budget, slide 14 [page 7], and highlighted the proposed funding sources for fiscal year (FY) 07.

MR. JESSEE explained how the Mental Health Trust funding is assumed by the state. Further, he described the matching fund system which must be met, and he stressed that if the providers

must engage in searching for matching funds, this program will be "stalled overnight," hence the need for state support

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MS. TONER directed attention to slides 15-16 [page 8], titled Unduplicated Medicaid Residential Psychiatric Treatment Center (RPTC) by Ethnicity and the Percentage Medicaid RPTC Recipients by Ethnicity, respectively. Responding to a question, she said that these numbers and percentages indicate totals for recipients both in-state and out-of-state. She also acknowledged that in the three years of statistics shown, the number of recipients is not declining; however, she pointed out that the in-state services are stepping up and the out-of-state services are being used less.

CHAIR WILSON observed how the remote areas lacking services versus the help available in the urban centers plays a part in the cost indicators.

MS. TONER agreed, and said that expanding provider services in the rural settings continues to be a complex undertaking. She explained that many people relocate themselves to service areas; usually urban areas of the state, or out-of-state.

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MS. TONER presented slide 17 [page 9], titled Recipients by Gender, and pointed out that a greater number of RPTC recipients are male, although not a significant difference. Finally, she directed attention to slide 18 [page 9], titled Additional Resources, to provide the internet address for DBH where the BKHD information can be accessed.

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GUS MARKS, Grants Manager, Juneau Youth Services (JYS), Incorporated (Inc.), provided an update of serves for children under the age of ten, and acknowledged a grant and an award that have been received through the Tlingit and Haida Head Start program. Additionally, funding from the Mental Health Trust Authority, the Denali Commission, and the Rasmuson Foundation is funding a 15 bed, level 4, facility. He reported that this new center, at Montana Creek, Juneau, will receive patients directly from out-of-state facilities, and is due to open later this summer. He opined that the trends indicated in the current report should begin to change in the coming years, as

residential facilities of this caliber are established throughout the state, reducing the need to refer patients to out-of-state facilities.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked whether the new facility will deal with substance abuse patients.

MR. MARX stated that 75 percent of the clients have "co-occurring" disorders [mental health and substance abuse] and that the staff is receiving the appropriate training.

CHAIR WILSON stated that she will be looking forward to next year's presentation of the progress of the program. She reflected on her six year legislative tenure and the changes in this field which she has witnessed, during that time.

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MR. JESSEE said that the largest potential, missing partner in this process is the educational system. He stressed that the cooperation of the school system is important for identifying clients. He opined that the districts work semi-autonomously and are only intersected via legislative involvement. He suggested that perhaps the committee members could facilitate a means for the schools to participate in the BTKH program.

CHAIR WILSON questioned why that bridge hasn't been established; a lack of contact, interest, or other reason.

MR. JESSEE explained his understanding of a schools financial responsibility for special education students, which these students represent, and the impact to a school when a child is identified.

CHAIR WILSON stated, thus because a school will lose money if the child is sent out-of-state, every attempt is made to maintain them in the school.

MR. JESSEE opined that the school districts tendency is to "let the other parts of the system take responsibility for this, because there is a risk on their part." He stressed the need for the school administrators to know that BTKH needs their help to identify the children and to create services in the schools that can assist the children and their families.

CHAIR WILSON reminded the committee that the schools are able to receive Medicaid funding, and asked whether that has not helped the schools to work with these children.

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REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA stated her understanding that the state pays education costs for out-of-state children, through the Department of Education and Early Development (EED) budget. She surmised that the funding comes from the department, but that the necessary participation program relates to the district level.

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CHAIR WILSON suggested that there may also be support and resources at the federal level which may need to be connected into. She invited members of the committee to provide informal suggestions to this end.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 4:59 p.m.