

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
SENATE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 12, 2020

1:30 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator John Coghill, Chair  
Senator Peter Micciche, Vice Chair  
Senator Shelley Hughes  
Senator Lora Reinbold  
Senator Jesse Kiehl

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

PRESENTATION BY THE ALASKA CHILDREN'S JUSTICE ACT TASK FORCE

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

CATHY BALDWIN-JOHNSON, MD  
Co-Medical Director, Alaska Cares  
Medical Director, The Children's Place  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Participated in a PowerPoint on the Alaska Children's Justice Act Task Force.

JOSH LOUWERSE, Senior Program Officer  
Covenant House Alaska  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Participated in a PowerPoint on the Alaska Children's Justice Act Task Force.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

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**CHAIR JOHN COGHILL** called the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Kiehl, Hughes and Chair Coghill. Senators Reinbold and Micciche arrived shortly thereafter.

**Presentation by the Alaska Children's Justice Act Task Force**

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CHAIR COGHILL announced that the only order of business would be a presentation by the Alaska Children's Justice Act Task Force.

He commented this will lay out the status of children in the state and help the legislature decide how to proceed.

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CATHY BALDWIN-JOHNSON, MD, Co-Medical Director, Alaska Cares; Medical Director, The Children's Place, Anchorage, Alaska, introduced herself and advised that these organizations are child advocacy centers in Anchorage and Wasilla.

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JOSH LOUWERSE, Senior Program Officer, Covenant House Alaska, Anchorage, Alaska, introduced himself and advised that Covenant House serves runaway, homeless youth ages 13-24 and also serve trafficked youth. He turned to slide 2 of the PowerPoint, Data credits:

- Jared W. Parrish PhD Senior Epidemiologist, MCH-Epi Alaska Division of Public Health  
jared.parrish@alaska.gov (907)269-8068
- Adverse Childhood Experiences Studies  
<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy>
- <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/wcfh/Documents/mchepi/CSA%20Final%20Draft.pdf>
- <http://dhss.alaska.gov/abada/ace-ak/Pages/default.aspx>

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 3, Introduction to the Alaska CJATF:

- Federally mandated and funded

- Mission: Identify areas where improvement is needed in the statewide response to child maltreatment, particularly child sexual abuse, make recommendations and take action to improve the system
- Statewide, multidisciplinary membership
- Legislation to improve protection & justice for children (starvation, serious physical abuse, privacy)
- Focus on education: child abuse in Alaska, mandatory reporting, & best practices for the multidisciplinary response to child abuse

DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON said the Alaska Children's Justice Act Task Force is in the process of updating its statewide mandatory reporting training and guidelines for the multidisciplinary team's (MTD) response to child abuse. She identified staff members in the audience, including, Pam Karalunas, Coordinator Alaska Children's Alliance, Chugiak; Marsha Tandeske, CJA Chair, guardian ad litem, Office of Public Advocacy, Anchorage; Mike Hopper, Child Psychologist, Fairbanks; Kim Guay, CJA Vice-Chair, Social Services Program Administrator, Anchorage; and Carla Erickson, Alaska Department of Law.

CHAIR COGHILL thanked the task force for their work. He said the children's advocacy centers are in statute because of their work, which has been helpful for the police and victims to keep them from being revictimized.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 4, Overview of our presentation:

- Newest research on child abuse and neglect in Alaska
- Including impact on state
- Opportunities for earlier intervention: Mandated reporting
- Commercial sexual exploitation of children in Alaska
- Specific requests for legislative changes

She said she would highlight legislative issues after the presentation. Mr. Louwerse will talk about what is happening with commercial sex exploitation of children in Alaska and the need for the proposed legislation, and she will cover specific requests.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 5, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs):

Collaborative study between CDC researchers and Kaiser Permanente

>17,000 participants of an HMO asked about events before age 18

75% white (54% female, 46% male), mean age 57, 75% at least some college.

She said the ACEs was a collaborative study between the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta and Kaiser Permanente, which is a health maintenance organization (HMO) in San Diego. Everyone enrolled receives all their care from the same system. The study asked participants to complete a questionnaire about abuse and household dysfunction. She explained that physical neglect refers to not getting one's needs met and emotional neglect means getting belittled and not having supportive caregivers in one's life. The questions included five different categories of household dysfunction, including mental illness in a parent or caregiver, a family member who was jailed or imprisoned, seeing his or her mom getting beat up, substance abuse in the family, or losing a parent through divorce or separation. The participants were identified as low risk, an average age of 57, and mostly Caucasian. The majority had at least some college education.

One thing that surprised the researchers was that only one-third of the people reported no abuse or family dysfunction. She reviewed the findings [a new slide not in the online slide presentation], which showed over a quarter of these low-risk adults had been physically abused, over 20 percent had been sexually abused, over 25 percent experienced substance abuse in their families, and nearly 25 percent had lost a family member through separation or divorce. If the participant had experienced one of these things, there was an 87 percent chance that they had experienced more than one, and a fifty percent chance that they had experienced three or more ACEs.

DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed an additional slide that showed that the higher the ACE score, the greater likelihood that the person would have an increased risk of disease and death.

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SENATOR MICCICHE joined the hearing.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON said the ACE score was a better predictor for risk of heart disease than all the traditional things such as smoking and diet. The researchers also found that higher ACE scores led to a host of social problems, including depression and suicide attempts and greater likelihood of sexual assault in adults.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 6, Child Abuse in Alaska and slide 7, Alaska ACEs snapshot. She reviewed statistics from the 2013 Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Analysis by the Alaska Mental Health Board and Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse staff. She said only about one-third of Alaskans report that they have not experienced abuse or neglect and over two-thirds report having experienced at least one of these categories of adverse childhood experiences. Similar to the San Diego report, people who had high ACE scores of 4 or greater were much more likely to be unemployed, unable to work, to live in poverty, and have poor physical and mental health.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 8, "And it's not just one bad thing ..." and slide 9, a chart that showed the prevalence of risk for additional abuse to occur if the victim had one type of abuse.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 10, Maltreatment burden in Alaska. She said at least 10 percent of Alaskan children receive a report to the Office of Children's Services each year. Over one-third of Alaskan adults report experiencing physical or sexual abuse, physical neglect, or emotional neglect as a child. Research shows that children accumulate these ACEs, beginning in early childhood, with 37 percent of Alaskan children reported to OCS by the time they are nine years of age.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 11, Impacts Start Prior to Birth:

- Prenatal exposures and experiences can impact both vulnerability AND resiliency
- Impacts on brain development AND genetics
- Examples:

- FASD
- Asthma hospitalization risk - epigenetics

She said prenatal exposure to alcohol results in impacts to the brain, cognitive abilities, and behavior problems potentially throughout life. Researchers found that mothers who lost a spouse or child while pregnant had babies who were more likely hospitalized for asthma. Epigenetics provides an explanation for why that happens, she said.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 12, Epigenetics. Genes:

- How our gene expression is influenced by our environment
- Genes are the blueprints that tell our body's cells what to do
- Genes can be turned on or off
- Trauma & stress affects gene expression

She reviewed slide 13, Development influenced by both negative and positive factors.

She explained that genes that are turned on or off can pass on to the next generation, which helps us understand the intergenerational transmission of trauma.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON turned to slide 14, New emerging data resources:

Moving beyond describing the issue from an adult perspective to documenting the health and development over the life course

She said ACEs is about adults looking back at what happened in childhood. Alaska is being very innovative in its Maternal Child Health [MCH] Epidemiology unit in the [Division of Public Health] in actually looking at kids and going forward. The MCH uses information gathered from the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) to provide a baseline and opportunity to follow a cohort of 33,000 children born in Alaska between 2009 and 2011. The unit uses a number of data sources that have been linked [using the Alaska Longitudinal Child Abuse and Neglect Linkage Project (ALCANLink)] to see what happens to these children.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slides 15-16, with illustrations that highlight pre-birth household dysfunction to predict ACE Score. She said the MCH Unit is finding that the risk factors that are identified for moms, the household dysfunction, which is similar to the ACEs research but it also considers financial stress and poverty to help predict the children who will be at the highest risk for developing their own ACEs by the time they are three years old. Not only is it important to identify children exposed to household dysfunction, it is important to identify the ones likely to suffer abuse or neglect. The more stressors the mother experienced during pregnancy, the higher likelihood the child will accumulate ACEs and receive a report of concern to OCS, she said.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON turned to slide 17, PRAMS questions used to measure pre-birth household dysfunction ACEs [This slide depicted a graph showing the cumulative risk increases with the number of dysfunctions]:

The risk of contact with child welfare systematically increases with the increased number of pre-birth household dysfunctions

She said many of these things come to the attention of OCS because someone is concerned about abuse or neglect and reports it. The more preexisting prenatal household dysfunctions present, the more likely these children will accumulate their own ACEs and be reported to OCS. Adjusting for maternal race, education, and age did not change the outcome and the curve remained the same, she said.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON turned to slide 17, [which illustrates the synaptic density between birth and six years of age] titled, Impacts continue after birth. She said as infants and through the first few years of life children's brains are filled with an explosion of connections between neurons, called synapses. When kids hit their teenage years, their brains go through a pruning process, which makes the teenage brain really vulnerable to alcohol or drugs. Some of the new pruning is actually in the top part of the brain, which is responsible for making decisions. She remarked that for those parents who have felt that their teenagers have half a brain, it is because of this pruning process.

CHAIR COGHILL commented that that explains a lot.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON turned to slide 19, Cumulative incidence of contact with OCS among children born in Alaska. This slide depicts a chart showing the OCS contact between birth and nine years of age. She said both positive and negative things influence brain development. She reiterated that it is important to limit ACEs in children since it impacts brain development and their genetics and leads to a full host of social ills and physical and mental problems.

DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON turned to slide 19, Cumulative incidence of contact with OCS among children born in Alaska. The study shows that as the cohort of 33,417 children get older their risk of accumulating their own ACEs continues to climb before their ninth birthday.

DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 20, ALCANLink Study (N = 33,417) - Accumulation of ACEs Among children born in Alaska during 2009:2011, [depicting an illustration that shows the type of OCS actions for the cohort before their ninth birthday].

She said this study will provide data on this cohort as these children hit their teen years. She said by the time children in Alaska are nine, one in three will have a report made to the OCS, one of four will have a screened in report, one of eight will have a substantiated report, and one in 16 will be removed from the home and placed into the foster care system. By then, some of these children will have 16-20 reports to the OCS.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 21, Types of maltreatment:

- Screened in by OCS in 2019:
- Neglect: most common type - 59.4%
  - Most common cause of child deaths
  - Most commonly linked to parental substance abuse
- Mental injury - 22.5%
  - Example: Exposure to DV
    - Physical abuse - 11.4%
    - Sexual abuse - 6.6%

She related examples of death by neglect, such as when a parent was under the influence and rolled over on her baby or the child wanders to a slough and drowns.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 22, Different life trajectories: Two roads to travel:

#### Safe and Nurturing

- Have a stable foundation from which to explore their world
- Child feels calm and safe
- Spend more time in the upper brain: bonding, talking, interpersonal relationships, learning
- Fewer risk factors for adult health & well being

#### Trauma and Chaos

- When a child is unsafe/threatened, they spend more time in the lower brain,
- Focus is on survival
- Fight, Flight or Freeze neural pathways may become "hardwired"
- Genetic expression may change
- More risk for adult health & well being

DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 23, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs):

The more ACEs documented, the higher ones risk for developing later health and social problems.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 24, Disproportionality: why?

- Alaska Native/American Indian children & families disproportionately represented in child maltreatment reports and deaths
- >3X as likely to be reported to OCS
- 1223 out of 2548 (48%) of children seen at Alaskan CACs
- (Compared with 14% of total population)

DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 25, Disproportionality: why?

- New research in Alaska:
- NO BIOLOGICAL OR CULTURAL LINK between AN/AI people and abuse
- In a background of
- historical trauma & racism
- Risk is instead related to:
- Social determinants of health including poverty, intimate partner violence, substance use & poor mental health

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON turned to slides 26-27, What Does Child Maltreatment Cost and Alaska estimates, Alaska estimates:

- Between \$631 million to \$10.7 billion ANNUALLY
- Alaska research suggests:
  - Costs for SUBSTANTIATED reports: \$82 million for childhood health care, child welfare, special education
  - 40.6% adult Medicaid enrollment linked to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
  - Decreasing ACEs and improving our response to child maltreatment could save our state ~\$92 million annually in costs related just to: Medicaid, smoking, diabetes, binge drinking, arthritis, obesity

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CHAIR COGHILL commented that she covered a lot of information and noted that the legislature had often seen these issues come before it.

SENATOR REINBOLD referenced slide 20 related to the AlcanLink study of 33,417 kids and asked how many of every 100,000 kids are removed from their homes by OCS.

DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON answered she did not have the numbers per 100,000. She explained that these figures are cumulative, so it compares to the total children in the state prior to their ninth birthday. She reported that one in three children in the state

were reported to OCS, one in four children were screened in, one in eight cases were substantiated, and one in 16 children were removed from their homes by OCS. In further response she agreed that the study shows that one in 16 children were removed from their homes by OCS.

CHAIR COGHILL said he thinks that economic strata is one of the conditions.

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SENATOR MICCICHE said he would like to see these figures compared to other states.

DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON said it is often difficult to compare but when comparisons are done, Alaska often is in the top five states for reported rates of maltreatment. One thing that makes comparison difficult is that different states use different definitions and ways of screening reports, or substantiating cases. Regardless, Alaska ranks "way up there."

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SENATOR MICCICHE asked if researchers ranked ACEs from soul crushing to less horrific since not all abuse is equal.

DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON said some people are considering weighting ACEs. Some impacts are not just with the specific category or ACEs but how old the child was, how often the behavior occurred, if the child had a caring supportive adult, if the child received any therapy or treatment. This makes it challenging to weight ACEs.

CHAIR COGHILL said those members who also serve on the Senate Education Committee often hear about ACES trauma, but it does not give it any scope. It can range from light to extreme. This meeting today can help quantify and help members to understand that the trauma can continue once children are involved in the OCS or foster care. The legislature is trying to help, but it struggles to balance because sometimes dysfunction is better than placing children. However, sometimes the family situation is in dire need.

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SENATOR HUGHES, referring to slide 20, calculated the total number of children removed from the home based on the statistics that reported 1 in 16 children removed from their homes between 2009 and 2011. Extrapolating that to 100,000 would mean 6,250 of

100,000 children or 6 in 100, which is astonishingly high, she said.

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MR. LOUWERSE continued the PowerPoint on slide 28. He referred to bills requested by the governor, HB 225 and SB 165, related to human trafficking.

He reviewed slide 29, Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) is:

- Sexual activity involving a child in exchange for something of value, or promise thereof, to the child or another person or persons
- Treating a child as a commercial and sexual object
- A form of violence against children
- Words matter: not child prostitution

MR. LOUWERSE said he has worked for Covenant House Alaska for eight years and has traveled the state training people, such as law enforcement officers in identifying victims, so he was surprised when the FBI said their clientele was highly vulnerable to being trafficked. He characterized the commercial exploitation of children as the broad umbrella. For many years, Alaska has had perception issues and it's only now that child prostitution is recognized as an issue. The first federally prosecuted sex trafficking was in Alaska in the early 2000s, when dancers came to Alaska from Russia. Viewing it as sexual exploitation helps people understand this is child abuse. The common ages to recruit prostitutes is from 14 to 16 years of age. These children may look older or people might think the prostitutes chose that lifestyle but these are children who cannot legally consent to sex.

He said that when he trains, he asks what stereotypes come to mind with "teen prostitute." The answers range from scantily clad, drug addicts, to teens making bad choices. He next asks what comes to mind when people think of "sexually exploited children" and the response is different. These children get services and help. If people view them as "teen prostitutes" law enforcement criminalizes them. There is not child prostitution, only sexual exploitation of children, he said.

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MR. LOUWERSE reviewed slide 30, Sex Trafficking:

- CSEC victims are victims of sex trafficking when there is a third party exploiter who profits from the exploitation
- Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion,
- or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age (20 in Alaska)

He said the benefits could be that the person is trading for something, like drugs. If someone is older than age 20, it is necessary to prove force, fraud, or coercion.

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MR. LOUWERSE reviewed slide 31, Intersections of Abuse. This slide depicted child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children, commercial sexual exploitation of children, and sex trafficking of minors.

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MR. LOUWERSE reviewed slide 32, Pathways to Entry: Ways recruitment can happen:

- Parents selling children
- Violence and force
- Kidnapping
- Seduction
- Fear, coercion, blackmail
- False advertising for "modeling," "acting," or "dancing" opportunities
- Peer recruitment
- Internet enticement through social media, gaming, or profile-sharing sites
- Survival

He related that parents sell children for sex in urban and rural Alaska. Currently there are fewer incidents of child kidnapping but in many situations, perpetrators are grooming children. These children are often homeless and someone who meets their basic needs can also begin to recruit them. It might be through a seductive relationship, which often can turn violent. He related an example of techniques an Anchorage man used to intimidate girls and women. He said this population is very vulnerable. He has seen an increase in internet blackmail. The perpetrator will convince youth to send explicit photos or entice them with offers of modeling, acting, and singing. He

related an example of a hotel clerk who noticed something was amiss and intervened, preventing trafficking. He emphasized the need for training. He pointed out that some peer recruitment happens. For example, sometimes perpetrators send in youth to Covenant House to try to recruit other youth. In addition, rural to urban or urban to rural recruitment happens, where traffickers entice youth to encourage their friends to move, and then exploit them.

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MR. LOUWERSE reviewed slide 33, What you need to know:

- Within 48 hours of becoming homeless, one in three children will be approached by a trafficker.
- In Alaska, common age of recruitment is 14- 16 years
- Average lifespan once recruited is 7 years

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MR. LOUWERSE reviewed slide 34, Alaskan Risk Factor:

- Population with high amounts of historical trauma and trauma exposure
- Transient male-dominated industries
- Transient male-dominated industries placed in rural areas next to communities with high amounts of historical trauma Rural and Urban
- Celebrated history of prostitution

He said national expert Victoria Sweet came to Alaska a few years ago and three things in her presentation stood out. She talked about risk factors for creating a market, supply and demand for trafficking in populations with high amounts of historical trauma and trauma exposure. Second, Alaska has transient male populations, such as North Slope workers, military, fisheries, and other transient workers, who are willing to buy sex. Third, when these industries are located in rural Alaska, the women with historical trauma are more vulnerable.

MR. LOUWERSE pointed out that this country has a history of glamorizing its portrayal of prostitution. This is evident in Alaska in Gold Rush Day celebrations.

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MR. LOUWERSE turned to slide 35, Current Status of CSEC in Alaska.

- Loyola University/Covenant House Study 2016
- 65 youth surveyed locally (641 Nationally)
- 1 in 5 Identified as trafficking victims Nationally
- 1 in 4 Identified as trafficking (labor/sex) victims locally
- 1 in 4 females as sex trafficking locally
- 200 victims served in last two years between 5 Anchorage providers
- 10 current minor child cases FBI
- Law enforcement report an increase of online recruitment
- More cases of traffickers creating explicit images/videos of minors

MR. LOUWERSE related that in 2016, ten cities participated in a labor study conducted by Dr. Laura Murphy, Loyola University. He read the statistics for Alaska from the slide. Dr. Murphy traveled to a number of cities and shared that she found the stories she heard in Alaska on sex trafficking the most disturbing. In addition, Covenant House has worked with organizations such as STAR [Standing Together Against Rape] and the Alaska Native Justice Center using grant funding to collectively serve 200 victims in the last two and one-half years in Alaska. He said this data will help people understand that this is really an issue.

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CHAIR COGHILL asked what he does to make people more aware of sex trafficking and exploitation issues.

MR. LOUWERSE replied that when he first visits a community he talks about how recruiting and coercive brainwashing occurs. He said it's a red flag if a youth has been in foster care, has substance abuse or mental health issues, or has been in treatment. They are the most vulnerable. Other indicators include stolen identification or keys, cash that appears for no reason, or girls that have substantially older boyfriends. He said Covenant House is starting to look at identifying the factors that make children vulnerable to avoid trafficking. These youths' support systems are not working so it puts them at risk for manipulation.

CHAIR COGHILL said he has also heard that kitchen help or maids in the hospitality industry, who are often international, are also under duress. He acknowledged that these vulnerable groups

are not children but they are vulnerable and subject to sex trafficking.

MR. LOUWERSE agreed. He pointed out that there is a place where labor trafficking and sex trafficking meet so it's important to consider this as a whole problem. He said his expertise is in sex trafficking but his experience is that most of the young people who are labor trafficked were forced to run drugs for a gang.

CHAIR COGHILL said the term "mule" comes to mind, with youth trying to get through checkpoints with drugs. The ACEs will be the focus as the committee looks into legislation.

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SENATOR MICCICHE cited adult prostitutes by choice, pimps of prostitutes, and people who sexually exploit children as different categories of prostitution. He asked how to find the people who hurt children and emphasized that the law should show them no mercy.

MR. LOUWERSE answered that to get the bad guys, it is important to find young people willing to share what is happening to them. He said nonprofits and law enforcement are working on this and Covenant House has proposed a safe harbor bill using a collaborative effort by the Office of Children's Services (OCS) and the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to support youth. He emphasized the importance of having a specific track for minors afraid to testify against their traffickers. These minors often don't make good witnesses because of criminal records.

CHAIR COGHILL agreed.

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SENATOR MICCICHE said he has worked with service organizations and his experience with children with ACEs is that it takes a while just to turn their lights back on due to the trauma.

CHAIR COGHILL said the committee members are parents and grandparents. He has a 14-year-old granddaughter, so he is on guard.

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SENATOR KIEHL asked if he could talk about why victims stay in these adverse situations.

MR. LOUWERSE referred to the Stockholm syndrome. As the result of a bank robbery, the captives trauma-bonded with their perpetrators and misinterpreted the police as the bad guys when police tried to free the hostages. This process of grooming is not much different than what domestic violence victims encounter with a cycle of violence. These youth have experienced bad relationships, so even when someone hurts them they may not interpret it that way. They lack a frame of reference. He said perpetrators brainwash victims using coercion, violence, gifts, a little love, fear, and drugs.

CHAIR COGHILL commented that the perpetrators use everything from basic needs to naivety.

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SENATOR REINBOLD related that she did not vote for a former commissioner because he minimized the fact that just one percent of rapists in Alaska go to jail. He didn't seem to take it seriously when it is of critical concern. She advocated for zero tolerance laws like some other countries impose.

CHAIR COGHILL expressed interest in allowing the presenters ample time to finish their presentation.

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SENATOR HUGHES asked for information on the slide that showed Alaska's problem is worse than in Los Angeles. She found it horrific to learn that parents commercially exploit their children and said she can't imagine that this is happening in Alaska.

MR. LOUWERSE offered to cover this in his presentation.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON referred to slide 37, How do we create the best future for our children's lives? This slide consists of a graph that illustrated the development from infant to preschool and shows the trajectory of health development for ACEs children.

She said things like poverty, lack of health services, and toxic stress cause the health trajectory to go down, whereas reading to children, providing health services, and preschool help raise their health trajectory. Alaska has reasons for hope because it has clearly dedicated people interested in helping children.

MR. LOUWERSE displayed slide 38, What can we do? Reasons for hope:

- Healing is possible
- Our brains can always learn
- We can all help build resilience in children
- We can all help protect children

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON turned to slide 39, Earlier recognition & intervention: Mandatory Reporting. This slide showed the cover of a report titled, Report Child Abuse in Alaska.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 40, Mandatory reporting gaps:

- EMS & paramedics (trainings)
- Clergy (multiple cases involving clergy as perpetrators & protectors of perpetrators)
- Animal control & veterinarians (research links between animal cruelty & child abuse)
- Guardians Ad Litem (GALs) (CASA volunteers are required already)
- Judges (recent case - reporting not required, no immediate notification)

She suggested adding EMS and paramedics ad to the list of mandatory reporters and expressed concern that the clergy was not included in the mandatory reporting gaps.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 41, Early & effective intervention:

- Child Advocacy Centers
- Multidisciplinary response
- Child focused
- Forensic interview
- Medical exam
- Mental health service
- Support & advocacy
- Information sharing
- Nearly 33,000 children & their families served since 1996

She said the FBI has signed a memorandum of agreement with the National Children's Alliance so that child advocacy centers are working to provide optimal services to child victims of sex trafficking.

CHAIR COGHILL said that in Alaska, state and federal dollars have gone to help the child advocacy centers, which is a great partnership.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 42, Protective Factors: Focus on adults:

- Supportive, nurturing, stable family
- Supportive social networks
- Caring adults outside family
- Household rules, monitoring of child
- Parental employment
- Adequate housing
- Access to health care, other services
- Community safety
- Community involvement
- Cultural connectedness

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 43, What can you do?

- Realize this affects ALL of us in Alaska
- Make your decisions using a trauma informed lens "It's not what's wrong with you, it's what happened to you"
- Support community-based & systemwide approaches to strengthen children and families

She asked members to support these approaches. She said a number of communities have coalitions that are performing this type of work. These organization are ones geared towards primary and secondary prevention.

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DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 44, Alaska data indicates that:

- Many Alaskan adults bear the burden of a lifetime accumulation of family violence and dysfunction

- Alaskan children start accumulating these adverse events early in life
- Our economy and our society bear the costs

DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON reviewed slide 45-46, To reduce this burden we need:

- Prevention
- Early recognition
- Early, effective, timely intervention
- Effective treatment
- Effective legislation to protect children & hold offenders accountable

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MR. LOUWERSE turned to Specific legislative "asks" SB165/HB225: "An Act relating to sex trafficking..."

- CJA supports the proposed legislation
- Support prosecution of patrons (Johns) including requirement to register as a sex offender
- Support vacating prostitution convictions
- Recommendations for Amendment
- Expand vacating convictions
- Drug possession and theft
- Safe Harbor
- Special protections and system of service for minors
- Mandatory training for law enforcement, prosecutors, judges

MR. LOUWERSE referenced an earlier question by Senator Hughes and related experiences with parents selling their children to sex traffickers. He explained that these are typically people who were exploited as children but grew up and had children. These parents are still in that lifestyle. In other instances, parents are trading sex with their daughter to obtain drugs for their substance abuse habit. For example, these parents might have a house party and their 14-year-old daughter is present and someone offers the parents drugs if the seller can have sex with their daughter.

He said the bill would provide a penalty provision for those buying sex, the people exploiting and trafficking sex, and the service piece. He said this would result in fewer people buying sex, and the youth receiving support can also help them. Covenant House supports prosecuting buyers and vacating

prostitution convictions. He said another barrier for young people is that during the time of coercion, these youth commit crimes, such as theft or possession of drugs. He suggested that in addition to vacating the prostitution conviction, to also vacate the lower level crimes. These low-level crimes serve as barriers to victims for housing and jobs. He has seen youth ready to leave that lifestyle or their exploiters, but they met with so much resistance that it was just easier to go back. He said he previously touched on safe harbors but elaborated that it would create a specific set of protections for minors and a system of response. He emphasized the need to have pathways built into the statutes. He said these recommendations in the 2012 report are still valid.

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CHAIR COGHILL commented on the importance of providing support services for some of the younger people. He has observed people wanting to get out of their circumstances but they couldn't earn enough money and returned to their exploited lifestyle. The money was just too easy, he said.

MR. LOUWERSE agreed that some people are vulnerable to re-trafficking. He offered his view that internet safety training for law enforcement, judges, prosecutors, and even the Department of Education and Early Development is important.

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MR. LOUWERSE reviewed slide 48, SB168/HB228 for Sex Offender Registries:

- CJA supports:
- Victim notification & ability to testify
- Clear criteria
- Continue registration from other states
- Additional registerable crimes

He said the Alaska Children's Justice Act Task Force supports SB 168 and HB 228. In particular, the task force supports the victim notification and ability to testify, the clear criteria, he said. Further, the task force supports accepting registration from other states, the reach back provisions, and the additional registerable crimes for sex offender registries.

CHAIR COGHILL said it is important to hear the task force's perspective.

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SENATOR HUGHES said he answered part of her question related to the situation with parents exploiting their children. She asked if the task force has identified reasons for Alaska's higher rates.

MR. LOUWERSE answered that Alaska tops the nation with bad statistics. He said all that exposure to trauma and violence has created the problem. He said one in three children by the age of nine are reported to OCS. The task force has not talked about whether the youth who are reported to OCS have the same amount of accumulated ACEs. This means that one third of Alaska's youth have really high ACE loads. It comes down to supply and demand, he said. He concluded that a large number of traumatized youth translates into the likelihood that someone will take advantage of them.

He remarked that sex traffickers can make two to three times the amount for a sex act in Alaska than in other places. This means people are bringing in victims during the summer, blocking out rooms in hotels, and selling sex. He stated that people come up from Las Vegas and other parts of the West Coast to do that.

CHAIR COGHILL thanked him for his work with the FBI. He said the type of activity he is describing is traceable.

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SENATOR HUGHES asked why the number of ACEs are higher in Alaska.

DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON replied there is a lot of historical and intergenerational transmission of trauma in Alaska. The state has historically had a significant transient population, and families often lack support of other family members, such as aunts or grandparents. Alaska also has a lot of substance abuse, she said.

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CHAIR COGHILL said he is a lifelong Alaskan who has seen alcohol problems rise, with drug abuse on top of it. Each type of abuse brings different sets of problems, but each one is a dramatic problem. He wondered why Alaskans buy these drugs. He offered his view that there is not only a health aspect and a family dynamic, but a spiritual dynamic. Many people want to bring in spiritual aspects to emphasize the value of their lives, which many people question. People should treat themselves better than they do. People are rightfully angered, but that anger can help

them solve their problems. As the committee considers the bills, he will be looking for ways to solve these thorny problems. There is a system of help, prosecution, and other systems. Sometimes people are perpetrators but also victims and need help. He said the presenters have provided the deep seated reasons to not give an inch but to forge a way forward.

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SENATOR MICCICHE asked if the task force was working with law enforcement because most people wouldn't recognize these types of problems. He suggested that the public needs training to become more aware of these situations and expressed a willingness to support additional state funding for sting operations. He offered his view that the committee would agree. He said, "Business wise, you have to make this be the worst state in the union in which to do business, because the risk is too high of getting caught. And, I think that's a gap that we have."

MR. LOUWERSE said the bill would raise the penalties but he didn't know if it would make Alaska the most punitive state. The law enforcement team is a small team, consisting of one Anchorage Police Officer, a few FBI officers, and some troopers. He suggested strengthening law enforcement funding to give them the ability to dive into these cases. He explained that law enforcement personnel are often pulled off prostitution cases to work on other cases. In fact, some public members complain about spending money on prostitution since they perceive it as a victimless crime.

CHAIR COGHILL reviewed upcoming committee announcements. He said the Department of Law will present the bill. The attorney general and assistant attorney general are committed and motivated and want to prosecute the bad guys and provide support for victims. He said the committee will ask questions, bring in law enforcement to present, and then discuss the resources necessary.

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SENATOR REINBOLD said the statistics are horrifying. She asked if any rural or Native community has addressed the problem, such as setting zero tolerance for these crimes. If so, it could be used as a model, she said. The adverse experiences are horrible, but the statistics for murder of indigenous women is intolerable, she said.

DR. BALDWIN-JOHNSON said she was unsure if a specific community could be identified as a model community. As Mr. Louwerse indicated, the sexual exploitation of children has been under the radar. She said Covenant House, a small group of law enforcement, and the Loyola University study are bringing this issue to light.

CHAIR COGHILL said there will be more on the topic and the committee will look for communities.

SENATOR KIEHL asked where legislators should focus first. The committee has discussed the severity of punishment, and it could address the certainty of punishment. He pointed out that the legislature can change laws, but if victims won't testify, there won't be any punishment. He asked if he could suggest where the legislature could initially focus its efforts, such as victim safety, resources for prosecution, or severity of offense.

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MR. LOUWERSE responded that Covenant House works with ACES victims and its staff understands that victims are operating in a survival mode, so staff must meet victims' needs for at least 30 days, or the victims cannot get to forward thought. He suggested the first step is to help youth achieve stability. It might mean creating spaces for them. Covenant House is applying for federal funding to bring housing specific to trafficking victims. Once victims are stable, it allows them to go through a supportive process and make good choices.

CHAIR COGHILL related that the committee's goal will be to help achieve a healthy, stable society. He offered to work with the task force to address the issues highlighted today.

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There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Coghill adjourned the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting at 3:01 p.m.