

1/27/05

**OVERVIEW:**

**OFFICE OF**

**CHILDREN'S**

**SERVICES**

**HFIN**

**FILE**

*Handout 1-27-05*



*Alaska  
Department of Health  
and  
Social Services*

*Office of Children's Services*

Presentation to the Finance Committee  
January 27, 2005

Joel Gilbertson, Commissioner  
Marci Kennai, Deputy Commissioner

# *Who We Are*

## Prevention and Well-Being

- ☆ Family Nutrition Services: Grantees provide services to pregnant and post-partum women with children up to age 5.
  
- ☆ Healthy Families Alaska: HFAK grantees visit families with children under age 3, who have an identified risk factor for child abuse or neglect.
  
- ☆ Infant Learning Program-ILP grantees screen and assess children, Infant-3, with identified risks for developmental delays.

## *Who we are (cont'd)*

- ☆ Protection and Permanency- Protection of children who are the subjects of reports of harm through the provision of services that include:
  - Screening and investigation of reports of harm
  - In-home services and family preservation
  - Reunification, adoption, guardianship
  - Out of home placement services including behavioral rehab services
  - Recruitment and licensing of foster/adoptive homes
  - Independent living services for youth
  - Research, Evaluation, Quality Assurance
  - Eligibility determination for federal financing

## *Who We Served in FY '04*

- Family Nutrition Services served over 27,000 clients in thirty sites throughout Alaska
- Infant Learning Program served 1,721 infants and toddlers in FY'04.
- Healthy Families served 373 families in FY' 04
- Child Protection conducted 11,202 investigations in 28 sites during FY'04.
- Approximately 2000 children are in OCS custody on any given day.

# *Child Protection Program*

## Federal Child and Family Services Review

In June of 2002, the Federal government completed the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) in Alaska. The CFSR consisted of the following activities:

- A comprehensive Statewide Self-Assessment
- State Data Profile that measured 6 outcomes
- Onsite Review of 50 cases and interviews with stakeholders

## Final Report received in September 2002

The review assessed the state's ability to achieve *safety, permanency, and well-being* for children who come to the attention of OCS.

# *Child Protection*

## Program Improvement Plan

- Alaska negotiated a two-year Program Improvement Plan with our Federal Region.
- The plan was approved on September 1, 2003 and will be in effect until August 31, 2005.
- Alaska needs to make progress toward improvement or risk losing federal dollars in the future.

# *Child Protection*

## *Highlights of the Program Improvement Plan*

### Safety

- Changes in policies and procedures that reduce repeat maltreatment
- Changes that reduce the maltreatment of children by out of home care providers
- Activities that focus efforts on responding to all reports of harm according to timeframes set in policy

# *Child Protection*

## *Highlights of Program Improvement Plan (Cont'd)*

### Permanency

- Achieve plans of reunification within 12 months of entry;
- Achieve plans of adoption within 24 months of entry into care;
- Facilitation of regular visits between parents and their children;
- Monthly visits between worker & child and worker & parents;
- Increase the stability of placement for those children in custody;
- Improvement the assessments of children and families to assure that they receive needed services;
- Provide services to foster parents that enhance their capacity to care for the children in their home

# *Child Protection*

## *Highlights of Program Improvement Plan (cont'd)*

### Well-Being:

- Support Foster Parents in their efforts to care for children in their care;
- Assure that children in care are receiving all health, mental health, dental, educational services that meet their needs;
- Assure that children we serve in their own homes are receiving appropriate health care and have a plan to address risk and safety .

# *Child Protection*

## *Highlights of the Program Improvement Plan (Cont'd)*

### Systems Improvement:

- The development of ORCA to improve accountability and performance;
- The development of a comprehensive Quality Assurance (QA) program;
- Improve the array of services available to families.

# *Child Protection*

## *Progress on the PIP*

- Completed first year of Program Improvement Plan
  - 58% (67 out of 114) Action Steps have been completed.
  - 76.4% (188 out of 246) Benchmarks have been completed.
  
- Safety Goals Achieved (also AK missions and measures)
  - Repeat Maltreatment – As of June '04, rate is 15.5%. We exceeded our stated goal of 22% or less.
  - Incidence of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care-  
As of June '04, rate was 1.20%. We exceeded our stated goal of 1.77% or less.

# *Child Protection*

## *Progress on the PIP*

- Progress on Permanency (as of June 2004)
  - Placement Stability (no more than 2 placements in 12 months)- Currently at 74.3% just short of our Dec '04 goal of 74.6%.
  - Reunification in less than 12 months-Goal is 63.3% by March 2005 – currently at 54.1%
  - Adoption in less than 24 months- Goal is 24.7% by August 2005 – currently at 18.7%

# *Investments in the system*

26 new positions in FY 05 enabled us to begin re-engineering our system:

- Reduced caseloads to an average of 24 cases per worker statewide.
- Enabled us to address the needs of youth aging out of our system by preparing them for responsible adulthood.
- Allows us to respond to investigations in a timely manner to assure child safety and promote permanency for children.
- Established a vigorous Quality Assurance Program
- Improved supervision for front line workers.

# *Investment in the System*

The capital budget in 03, 04, and 05 reflects major investment of resources to develop an automated case management and financial payments system for OCS.

- Planning for Online Resources for the Children of Alaska (ORCA), began in March '03 and went live with the case management module on September 7, 2004
- Financial Modules will go live on February 1, 2005
- This is a state of the art, web-based system that will enable workers to manage their cases from a desktop and enable supervisors and managers to hold everyone accountable for the work!
- The system will enable us to manage with current data.

# *Investments in the System*

- In FY '05, 54% of the OCS budget was Federal dollars
- Tribal partnerships-OCS has contracts with nine tribal organizations that enable them to draw federal dollars for some of their child welfare work. Collectively, they receive 1.5 million dollars per year that they can put into prevention programs or other child welfare activities.
- Rasmuson Foundation has given us funding to implement a national reform effort, *Family to Family*, in Anchorage. Early results are showing positive outcomes for children. We would like to take this statewide next year.

## *Investments in the system (cont'd)*

- Casey Family Programs is helping us to develop a kinship care support program for relatives who care for children who are unsafe in their parents' care.
- Annie E Casey Foundation is providing technical support on the Family to Family Initiative and in helping us to develop the capacity to look at data differently.
- Casey Family Programs has funded an initiative to help us look at disproportionality with our tribal partners.
- Alaska Children's Trust will fund a child abuse prevention campaign within the next 6 months.

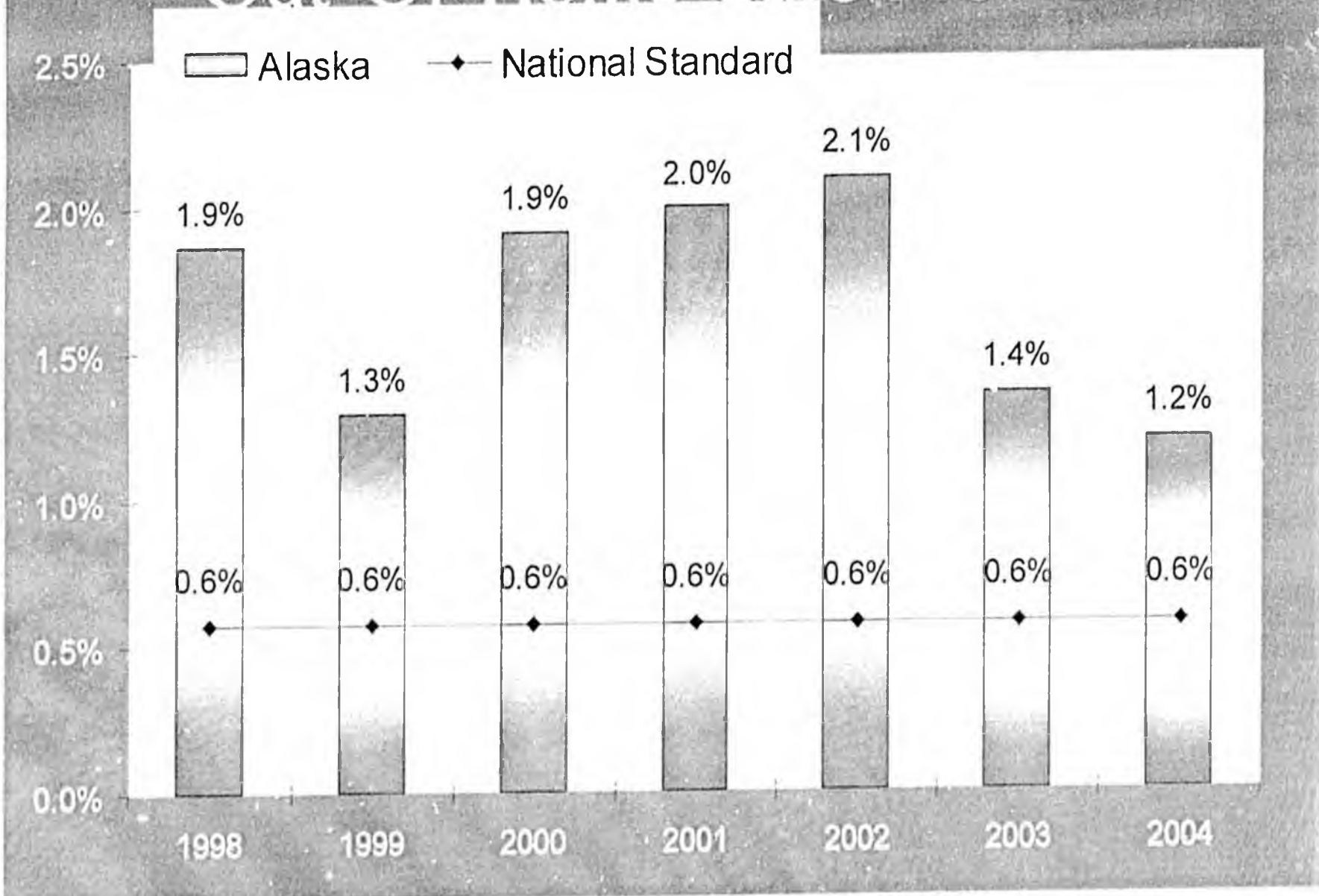
## *Ongoing Challenges*

- Continue improvement of our outcomes, especially related to permanency
- Add foster home family assessments to what we currently do.
- Continue our workforce development, recruitment and retention committees. (Current Vacancies = 18 (includes supervisors, CSS/SW positions)
- ORCA is a wonderful system but needs to have ongoing resources and support.
- Ongoing and current education/training for all staff to assure that best practice is consistent.
- The ability to visit children and families monthly is a desired outcome but for Alaska it is difficult and expensive.
- Lack of available services in rural communities

# *Budget Requests for 2006*

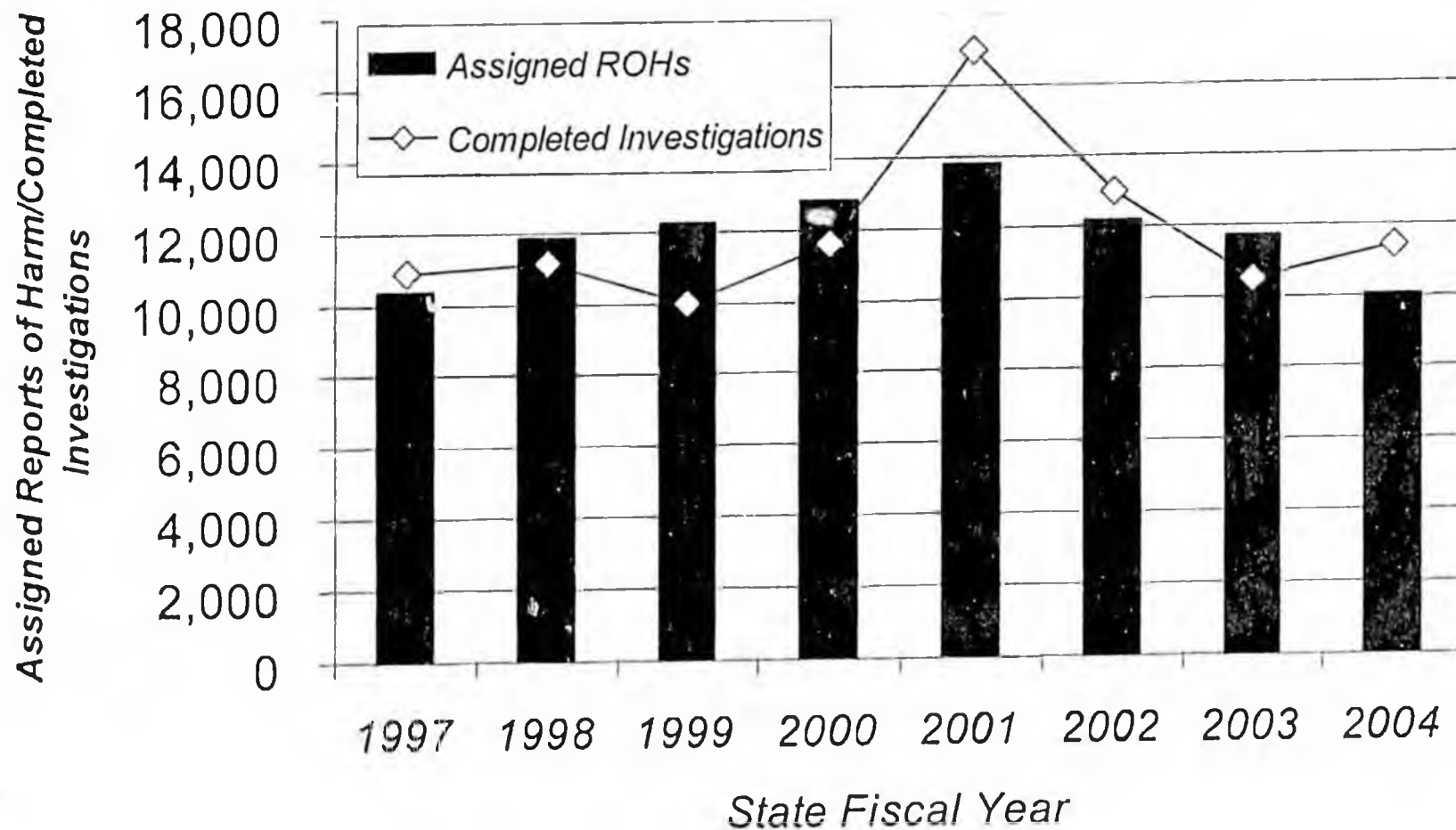
- Request for 34 new positions-to reduce *workload*, especially in rural areas, to support ORCA, to implement foster home licensing reform and to enable us to visit the families and children in our care.
- Increased funding for social work training to improve practice outcomes and assure consistency across the state.
- To focus on retention of social workers, payment of licensure fees is requested
- Request funds to pay for foster home recruitment expenses to expand the pool of resources available to children.
- Expand voluntary post adoption services to stabilize adoptive families and improve placement stability.
- Restore Family Preservation funding to enhance the service array

# Percent of Children Maltreated by Out-Of-Home Care Providers



# Number of OCS Assigned Reports of Harm

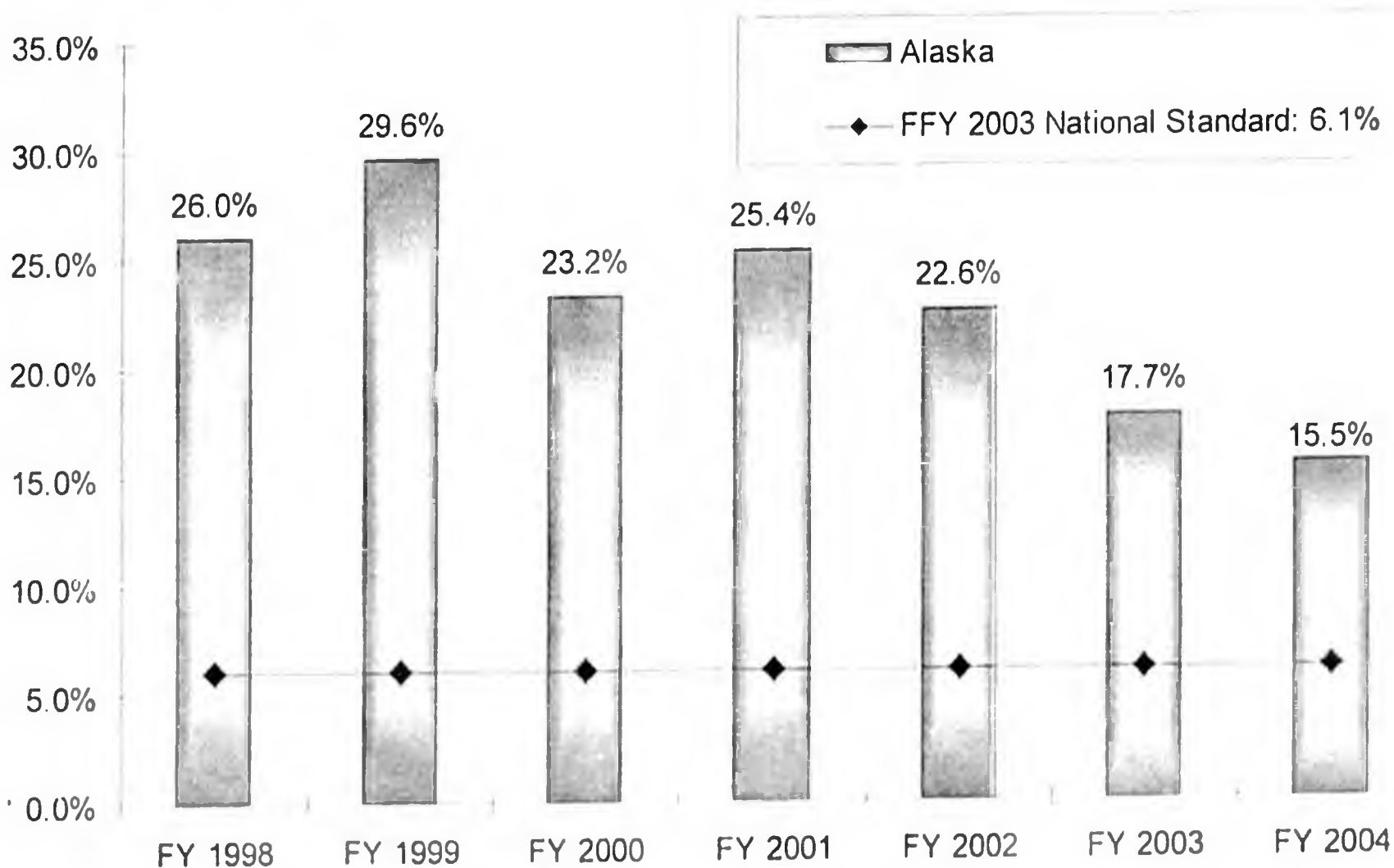
## Number of OCS Completed Investigations



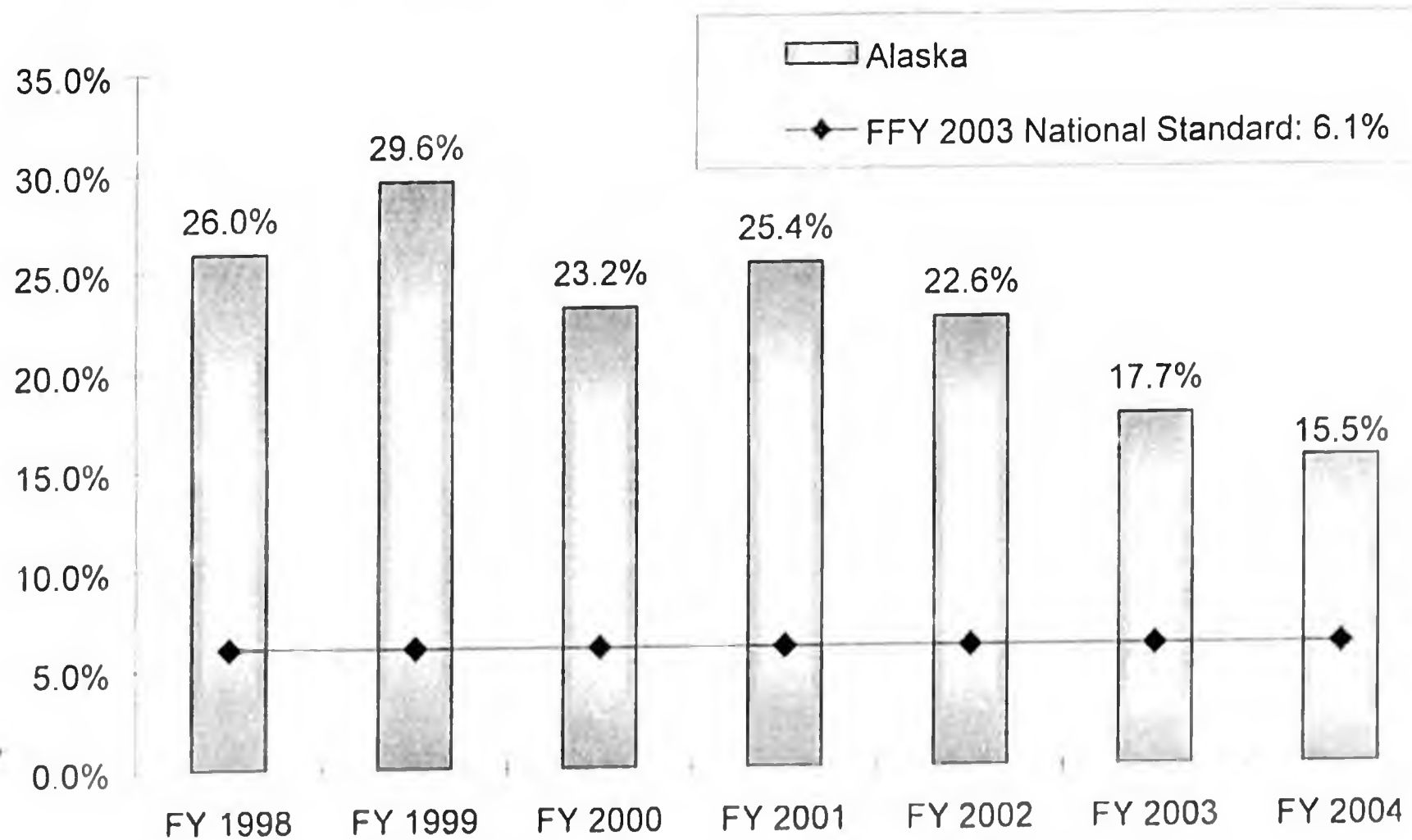
# National Data Indicators for Safety and Permanency

<b>National Data Indicators for Safety and Permanency</b>				
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>National Standard</b>	<b>Where we were in June 2002</b>	<b>Program Improvement Expected by Sept 2005</b>	<b>Progress as of June 30, 2004</b>
<b>Repeat maltreatment</b>	6.1% or less	23.4%	22%	15.5%
<b>Incidence of Child Maltreatment in foster care</b>	.57 or less	1.91%	1.77%	1.2%
<b>Placement Stability</b>	86.7% or more	70.6%	74.6%	72.2%
<b>Length of time to achieve reunification</b>	76.2% or more	58.3%	63.3%	54.1%
<b>Length of time to achieve adoption</b>	32% or more	21.8%	25%	18.7%

# Percent of Children with Recurrence of Maltreatment by State Fiscal Year

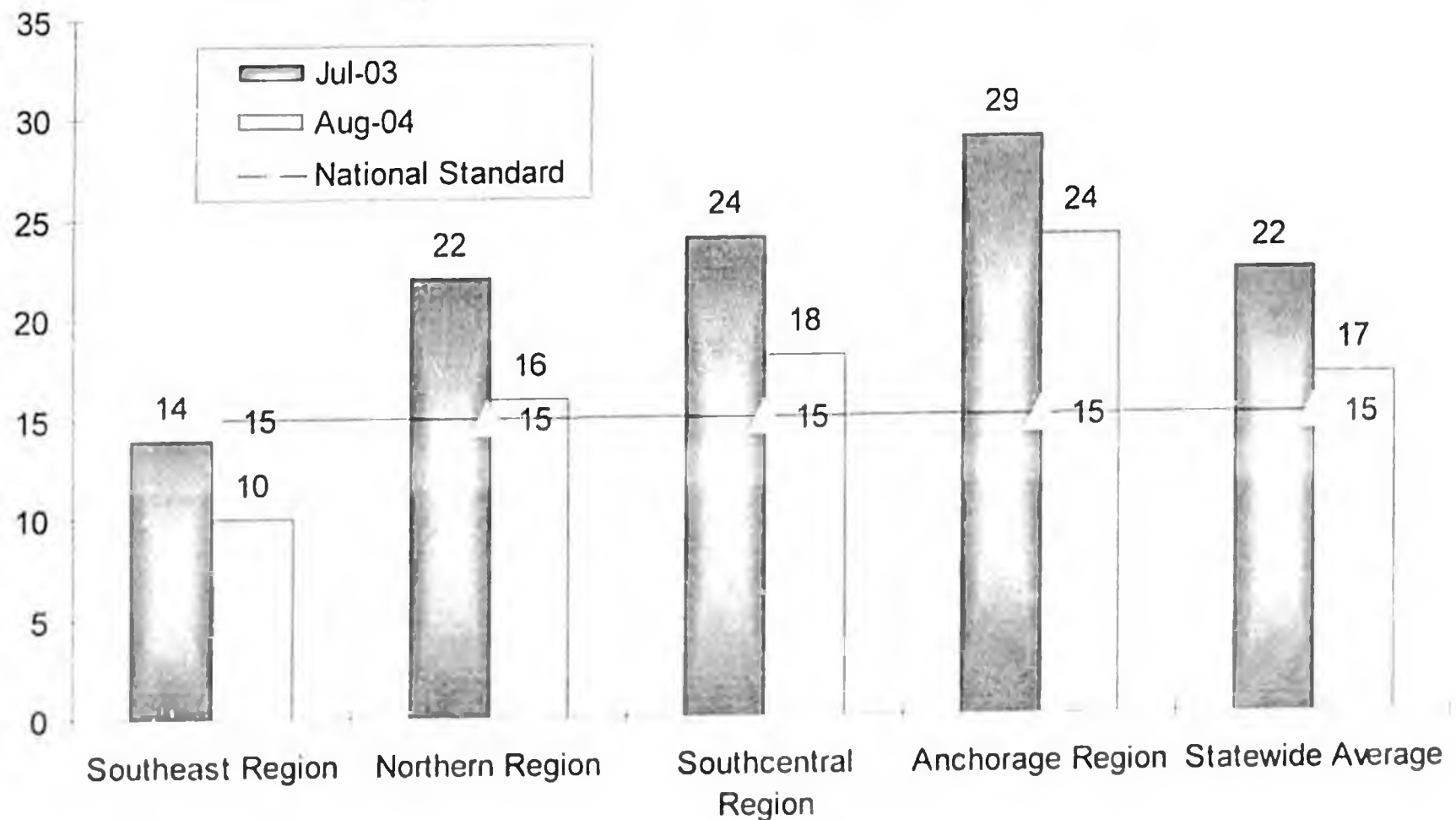


# Percent of Children with Recurrence of Maltreatment by State Fiscal Year

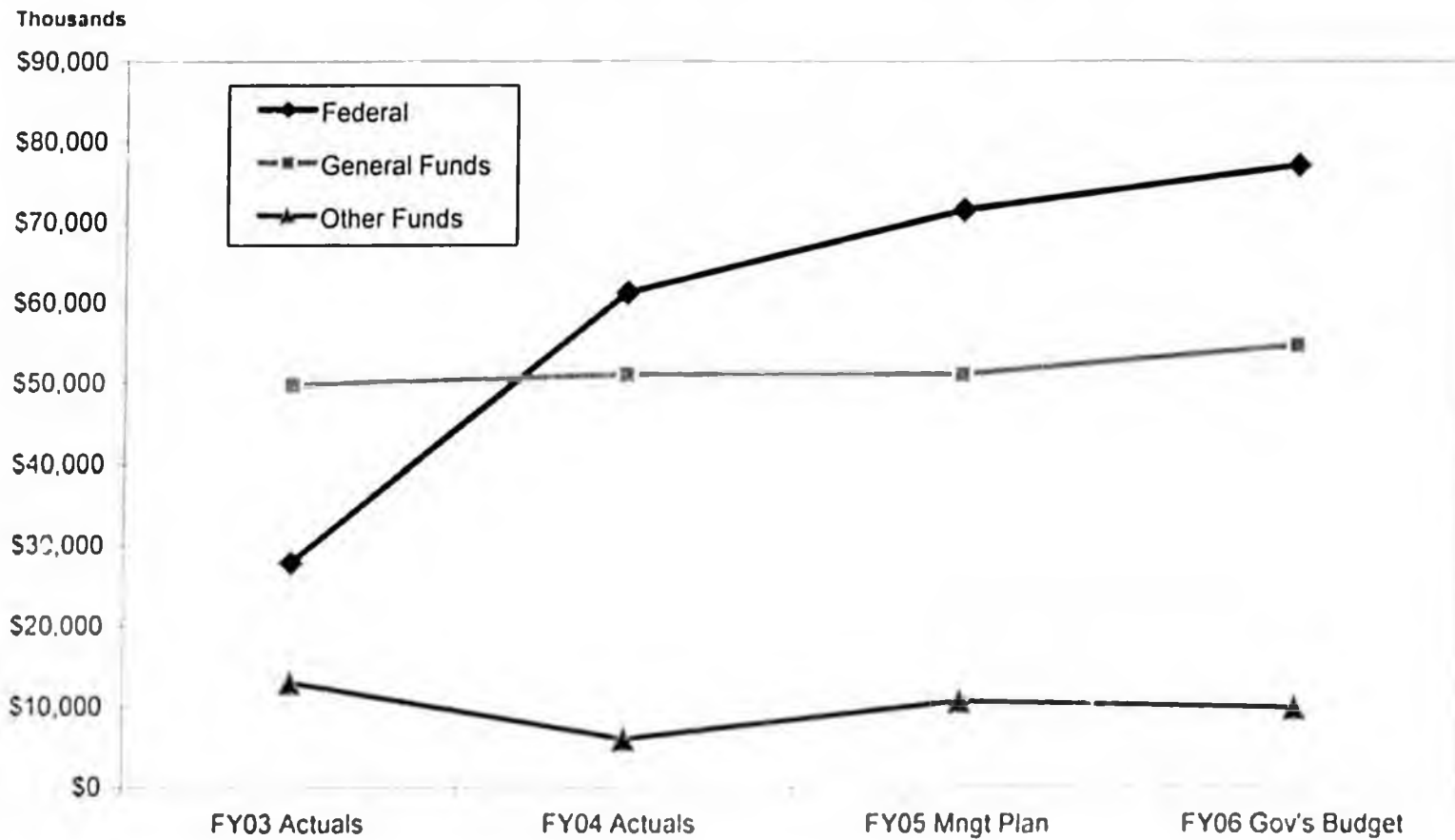


# Number of Cases Per Available Frontline Social Worker

July 2003 and August 2004



## Office of Children's Services Funding Source Comparison FY03 - FY06



FY03 Actuals combine the Family and Youth Services (FYS) and Purchased Services (PS) RDUs  
 In FY04, Office of Children's Services (OCS) RDU was established combining FYS, PS, WIC, Behavioral Rehabilitation Services, Healthy Families and Infant Learning Program

Source: ABS

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

# A Legacy for Alaska's Children, Youth and Families



THE NEW OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES  
*A Three-Year Strategic Plan*

*November 2004*



## **OUR MISSION**

OCS works in partnership with families and communities to support the well-being of Alaska's children and youth. Services will enhance families' capacities to give their children a healthy start, to provide them with safe and permanent homes, to maintain cultural connections and to help them realize their potential.

## **OUR VISION**

*Stronger Families,  
Safer Children*

*For more information about the  
Office of Children's Services  
please contact:*

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Health & Social Services,  
Office of Children's Services  
P.O. Box 110630  
(907) 465-3191  
[www.hss.state.ak.us/ocs/](http://www.hss.state.ak.us/ocs/)

Special thanks to the Rasmuson Foundation  
and Casey Family Programs for their  
generosity and funding that supported our  
strategic planning process.

Handout 1-27-05

# A Legacy for Alaska's Children, Youth and Families

The New Office of Children's Services

A Three-Year Strategic Plan  
July 2004



Frank H. Murkowski, Governor  
State of Alaska

Joel Gilbertson, Commissioner  
Department of Health & Social Services

Marcia Kennai, Deputy Commissioner  
Office of Children's Services



Dear Partners:

I am proud to present this important Strategic Plan for the Office of Children's Services (OCS). In the following pages, you will discover the commitment of Alaska's child welfare system to keeping children safe and making families stronger.

This plan represents the culmination of a years' work between tribal leaders, the Division of Juvenile Justice, provider organizations, foster parents, adoptive parents, law enforcement, the Court System, the Office of Public Advocacy, university personnel, the Department of Education, the Division of Behavioral Health, the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, the Rasmuson Foundation, Casey Family Programs, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and OCS staff. It is not comprehensive, but a general plan and vision for pulling together the four programs of OCS — Child Protection, Family Nutrition Services, Healthy Families Alaska, and the Early Intervention Infant Learning Program.

The professionals who manage the Office of Children's Services will use this publication as a working, living document every day for the next three years. It represents our values, objectives and strategies. It represents our dreams for Alaska's children and families.

Please read through this Strategic Plan. As you do, think about how you might share in the ownership and responsibility of helping families to give their children a healthy start, provide them with safe and permanent homes, maintain their cultural connections and help them realize their full potential.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marcia Kennai".

Marcia Kennai  
*Deputy Commissioner*

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## Where do we want to be in 2007?

- Our programs will be aligned under one mission that focuses on building healthy families.
- We will work with our tribal partners and with community groups to provide culturally appropriate services that support happy, healthy and safe families.
- We will routinely use evidence-based best practices in all four programs.
- We will have a continuum of care for children and families that is community-based, family-focused and child-centered.
- We will have a qualified and stable work force with manageable caseloads.
- We will eliminate duplication of services among our four programs.
- We will have enough foster and adoptive homes to meet the needs of our children and we will make a special effort to increase the number of Alaska Native homes.
- We will meet or exceed national standards and benchmarks for all programs.
- We will maximize all sources of revenue so that we can continue to serve the children, youth and families in Alaska.
- We will have an integrated quality assurance and continuous quality improvement process.
- We will gain national recognition for our innovative approaches to keeping children safe and promoting healthy families.

*Imagine if all  
Alaskan children...*

**...had a healthy, happy and safe  
childhood**

**...had permanent, caring homes**

**...had connections to their own  
community and cultural heritage**

**...had support to help them reach  
their maximum potential**

*Imagine if these dreams  
were a reality...*

This is the 'New'  
**Office of Children's  
Services:**

*Child Protection  
and Permanency...*

*Family Nutrition Services...*

*Healthy Families Alaska...*

*Early Intervention/  
Infant Learning Program...*



## Holding Hands: Who Are We Now?

The new Office of Children's Services (OCS) reflects the strengths of the past and the opportunities of the future. Formerly known as the Division of Family and Youth Services, OCS reorganized in July 2003, bringing together under one roof four programs that support children, youth and families.

In the past, we focused mainly on child protection and permanency. Now our mandate also includes healthy families' services, family nutrition and infant learning. Standing shoulder to shoulder, we are committed to the well-being of Alaska's families, celebrating their resilience and our own as we embark on a voyage of change.

The new OCS is...

**Child Protection and Permanency:** We are committed to safety, permanency and well-being for Alaska's vulnerable children, youth and families. We assess allegations of abuse and neglect and provide family preservation services in the home when appropriate. If necessary, we provide out-of-home care to protect the child. Our goal is a permanent home for every child through reunification, adoption or guardianship. We recruit adoptive and foster homes and help older teens in care prepare for independent living.

**Family Nutrition Services:** Through the Women Infants and Children Program (WIC), we support delivery of free nutritious foods and information on healthy eating for low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women and their children. We also offer WIC participants and eligible seniors fresh fruits and vegetables through the Alaska Farmers' Market program in the summer. In addition, we have a teen nutrition program that operates in schools to promote healthy eating and decrease teenage obesity.

**Healthy Families Alaska:** We provide new parents with services to help their babies thrive and to build family self-sufficiency. We reach out to women during pregnancy or at birth, using a Family Stress Check List to identify those most in need of support. We address challenges such as parenting, housing, finances, social isolation, substance abuse, domestic violence and mental health issues. The program is voluntary, and families can participate until the children are age 5.

**Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program:** We provide an array of flexible services to infants and toddlers with disabilities or special developmental needs. Within the family setting, we help parents and children under age 3 with instruction, therapy and other support services. Our services are flexible and tailored to the circumstances of each family.

### Connections: What the Four Programs of OCS Have in Common

- We all work to enhance a family's capacity to raise healthy and safe children.
- We all provide critical services for families and children that are delivered in the communities where children live.
- We all provide parenting education around children's basic needs.
- We all work with vulnerable families and children.
- We cross-refer families across our four programs.
- We all connect families with community support.
- We all work to maintain families' ties to their cultural and tribal heritage.
- We all want to see children reach their full potential.
- We all believe that by working together, we can make Alaska the greatest state in which to raise a child.
- We all want to see stronger families and safer children.

## Facing Forward

### THE MISSION OF THE NEW OCS

OCS works in partnership with families and communities to support the well-being of Alaska's children and youth. Services will enhance families' capacities to give their children a healthy start, to provide them with safe and permanent homes, to maintain cultural connections and to help them realize their potential.

### THE VALUES OF THE NEW OCS

A core set of values will drive our work.

We believe:

- All people should be treated with respect and dignity.
- All children deserve safe, stable, loving and permanent families.
- Every family has unique and inherent strengths.
- The success of our interventions rests with the family, therefore, families should be included in making decisions about their children.
- Community partners are essential to ensure healthy, safe families.
- Services should enhance cultural and family values.
- Services should be timely, accessible and coordinated.
- Services related to parenting, health and nutrition are essential to strengthen the growth and development of children and to prevent abuse and neglect.
- Data should drive our decisions about how and where we allocate resources and services.

In early January 2004, the Office of Children's Services met to chart a new beginning — a future as an organization with four active programs and a future of collaboration with families, children, youth and tribal and community groups.

This strategic planning meeting was a historic occasion. OCS staff at all levels sat down with our stakeholders and (metaphorically) rolled up our sleeves. We held a facilitated conversation with tribal leaders, juvenile justice representatives, provider organizations, foster parents, adoptive parents, law enforcement, university personnel and our own staff. We included partners from the Department of Education, the Department of Health & Social Services Division of Behavioral Health, the Governor's Council on Disabilities, the Rasmuson Foundation, Casey Family Programs and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The meeting was a gift of time that took us outside the constraints of our day-to-day responsibilities. Over three days, we articulated our hopes for the families and children of Alaska. What is our mission? What are the core values that will drive our work together? What is our vision for this new OCS over the next three years? What are our objectives and how will we meet them?

Alaska is a big state with a small population. We have serious problems of child abuse and neglect. During 2003, OCS investigated 11,222 reports of harm. Forty percent of those reports were substantiated. The average number of children in out-of-home care on the first day of each month in 2003 was 1,983. This average represents 10.1 children for every 1,000 Alaskan children under age 18. The national average of children in out-of-home care is 7.4 per 1,000 children under age 18. Our resources for children do not always meet their needs. We place many children in care outside the state. Those we place inside the state often must leave their home communities. Responding to child maltreatment reports can be difficult in Alaska, especially in rural areas where workers face challenges of distance and weather.

Yet we have a dream for the children of Alaska. We want children to be safe in their homes. We want to help families remain together in their own communities to keep their cultural connections vibrant and supportive. We want to bring our out-of-state children home. We want to provide prenatal care for mothers and nutritional education for families. We want to identify developmental delays and disabilities early so that families can get maximum support. We want a strong and secure safety net for our most vulnerable families and children.

We can achieve this dream. The strategic plan forged from the January gathering is a promise we make to ourselves as well as to our stakeholders and to the citizens of Alaska. We have charted a common purpose of trust and shared responsibility between the state and our communities, tribal groups and families.

This strategic plan is also our pledge to Alaska's families that they are not alone. We are here to support them and we will hold ourselves accountable for bringing to life what we have in the past only been able to imagine.



It is often said that the children are our future. But who are Alaska's children? And what is the current state of children, youth and families in our communities?

- Children and youth under age 18 make up 30.4 percent of the state's total population of 627,000. (2000 census)
- Alaskan Natives make up 15.6 percent of the population; African Americans, 3.5 percent; Hispanics, 4.1 percent. (2000 census)
- In Federal Fiscal Year 2003, there were 13,975 reports of child abuse or neglect.
- On Dec. 1, 2003, 2,072 children were in out-of-home care.
- 65 percent of those children in care on December 1, 2003, were Alaska Natives.
- 25 percent of the foster homes are Alaska Native homes.
- Of all children in out-of-home care in December 2003, 11.1 percent were less than 2 years old; 23.4 percent were from age 2 to 5 years; 27.1 percent were 6 to 10 years; 22.9 percent 11 to 14 years; 13.9 percent 15 to 17 years; and 1.6 percent age 18 or older.
- WIC programs serve about 26,000 individuals a month: 6,000 women, 6,000 infants and 14,000 children
- The WIC and Senior Farmers' Market program together serve a total of 21,000 individuals per summer season.
- There are six Healthy Families programs in the state, serving 427 families in fy 2003. Workers made 5,577 home visits, and 2,688 referrals to community resources.
- In fy 2003, there were 1,721 children enrolled in the Early Intervention Infant Learning Program - 148 of those were in foster care and 566 were Alaska Native.

## THE VISION OF THE NEW OCS

*Stronger Families,  
Safer Children*

*"My hopes  
for Alaska's  
children: All  
children in  
Alaska will  
have full bellies,  
a safe home  
and the strong,  
loving arms of a  
healthy secure  
family wrapped  
around them  
each day."*

JESSICA STEPHENSON  
(WIC)

## Bringing Our Vision to Life

This is a three-year strategic plan. To make our vision of stronger families and safer children a reality, we must set specific measurable goals.

### Where Are We Now?

OCS has many strengths. Support from our legislators, private foundations and community partners is helping us build on those strengths. We have a dedicated staff that is re-energized by the consolidation of primary prevention programs within OCS. Nevertheless, we have a number of challenges, including:

- We have four diverse programs that are just beginning to align under a common mission.
- We are sending too many children out of state for placement.
- Our current data system restricts our ability to utilize data to make program improvements.
- Our case plans reflect services that are *available* and not what is *necessary* for families and children to achieve their goals.
- We need to improve our communication with and involvement of parents in the system.
- We need to educate our providers about the outcomes we want to achieve for families and children.
- We need regular contact with our communities so that they can formally communicate local needs to the state.

OCS is not satisfied with this status quo. Our strategic plan will guide us as we move forward to make major changes.

### Objectives: What We Plan to Achieve

We know a strategic plan is just a piece of paper if we cannot bring our vision to life. In order to make a strategic plan live, we need to get specific. What are our objectives? What specifically do we need to change to get to where we want to go?

We looked at our objectives from four perspectives:

1. Internal to our staff and organization: What structural changes are important to successfully meet our goals?
2. Our impact on the families and our communities: What practice changes do we need to make?
3. How will we communicate our vision and help others understand our goals?
4. What is the return on our investment and how can we hold ourselves accountable?

Using a methodology called the "balanced scorecard," we went to work to make our vision real. This is what we want to achieve:

#### Staff organization

- We will achieve manageable caseloads.
- We will build a well-trained and stable workforce.
- We will have clear performance standards for our grantees and for our staff.
- We will use evidence-based practice.
- We will reduce duplication among programs.

*"My hope for Alaska's children is that they have happy, safe childhoods. I hope they develop to their full potential and that they feel loved and cared for by their tribes, communities and families."*

—RUTH HOLLIST

*(Staff organization continued)*

- We will seek other organizations as partners in prevention and well-being.

*Impact on the families and communities we serve:*

- We will reach all Alaskan families who need our help.
- Fewer Alaska children will be victims of child abuse and neglect.
- Children and families will be served in their own communities.
- Services will preserve family and cultural connections.
- We will have a system of supports for relatives who are caring for children.
- We will meet or exceed the national standards for safety, permanency and well-being of Alaska's children.
- An array of services will be available in all regions of the state.
- Families will be engaged in planning for their children.
- We will have a state plan to address the specific needs of children from infancy to 8 years old.
- We will collaborate with other organizations, such as education, mental health and public health, for the families we serve jointly.
- We will support more Alaska families in eating a healthy diet.
- We will extend prenatal care to more Alaska women.
- We will identify disabilities and developmental delays earlier so that families can help their children reach their full potential.

*External communications:*

- OCS will be seen as an inclusive leader in collaboration with communities and other agencies.
- OCS will be understood as a positive force by our client families, tribal groups and communities.
- OCS will have an internal and external communications plans.
- We will report regularly to the public on our progress toward our goals.
- We will work to educate our legislators, and community leaders about our goals and our hopes for the future.

*Return on investment accountability:*

- We will target resources to areas that have the greatest positive impact on children and families.
- We will move to performance-based contracting.
- We will incorporate evidence-based practice into our prevention and intervention programs.
- We will meet or exceed all national standards and benchmarks for all programs.
- We will have coordinated quality assurance and continuous quality improvement processes for all four programs.

**Strategies: Getting from Here to There**

Just as a vision must be bolstered with objectives, our objectives must be supported by strategies that help us meet them. In this section of our plan, we get specific.

Informed by facts and fueled by compassion, we look at priorities from the specific viewpoint of each program. These are the changes we can make now, changes big and small that will make a difference

*"Communication, partnership, caring, belief in the good, and a commitment to positive change are key elements to continued growth."*

—DORIS BERGERON

in the lives of the children, youth and families of Alaska. These are the changes that bring the "strategic" in a strategic plan to life.

#### **Infant Learning Program (ILP) and Healthy Families Alaska (HFAK) Strategies**

We will work for stronger families and safer children by implementing the following strategies:

##### *Staff and organizational issues:*

- We will provide training and leadership opportunities for staff.
- We will work with the University Training Academy to include information about ILP and Healthy Families.
- We will make sure that each staff person and grantee agency understands their role in achieving the OCS mission and goals as well as the individual program's strategic plan.
- We will participate in the OCS staff recruitment and retention committee to reduce staff turnover.
- We will consolidate research and evaluation functions so that we can look at all outcome data to see how we want to make system improvements.

##### *• We will develop cross-training programs: Impact on the communities and families we serve:*

- We will develop cross-training programs for providers in order to increase their understanding of child safety assessment and referral processes.
- The Infant Learning Program will ensure timely screening and assessment of 100 percent of children under age 3 who have a substantiated abuse or neglect referral.
- We will develop community teams with relevant partners to improve coordination of services to families.
- We will involve CPS social workers in all community-based training and teams.
- We will lead the effort to have a cross-system conference that includes the four program areas of OCS.
- We will include foster children in the Health Passports system so Healthy Families can continue serving children if they are placed in out-of-home care.
- Families will be seen and children assessed within forty-five days of referral.
- We will revise the model for Healthy Families to include a stronger focus on child protection and prevention of abuse and neglect.

##### *External communications:*

- Staff will share with all providers the new mission of the Office of Children's Services and help them understand how they fit into that mission.
- Our materials will reflect the Office of Children's Services vision.
- Infant Learning Program and Healthy Families providers will educate families about shaken-baby syndrome, the dangers of co-sleeping and positive parenting programs that are available in the communities they serve.
- Providers will be monitored to see that families are receiving services within the required time periods.

*"Let us put our  
minds together  
and see what  
kind of future  
we can build for  
our children."*

—Sitting Bull

*Return on investment/accountability:*

- A steering committee will oversee the planning and implementation of an Early Childhood Comprehensive System to improve services to families and their children, 0 to 8 years old.
- Waiting lists for Infant Learning Program will be reduced as providers see families within the required timeframes.
- Timely family service plans will identify needs and assure that children receive services by age 3.
- Our provider agencies will have plans of improvement that are regularly monitored.
- Healthy Families will use results of the Johns Hopkins Study to make program improvements that more effectively reduce child abuse and neglect.
- The Infant Learning Program will meet the requirements of the federally required Plan of Improvement. Infant Learning Program and Healthy Families Alaska will develop and implement performance based contracts.
- We will have quarterly reviews of ILP and HFAR strategic plans.

**Family Nutrition Program Strategies**

We will work for stronger families and safer children by implementing the following strategies:

*Staff and organizational issues:*

- We will increase the use of technology to support program activities.
- We will develop a well-trained and stable workforce by providing training opportunities for staff.
- We will provide nutrition education for our colleagues at OCS and for foster parents to help them understand that nutrition is linked to healthy children and healthy families.

*Impact on the families and communities we serve:*

- We will ensure equal access to services for all participants by asking providers to conduct more outreach.
- We will engage our partners and families in becoming more aware of child abuse and neglect issues by asking our providers to distribute information to the families they serve.
- We will reach out to include more families in our programs and train providers to be more vigilant about signs of abuse or neglect.
- We will provide families with nutritional education that encourages a healthy life style.
- We will help our providers explore alternative sources of funding to increase programs for young children.
- We will assure that there are WIC vendors to serve all eligible families in Alaska.

*External communications*

- We will promote our programs and initiatives to the community and to our colleagues in other agencies.
- We will work with our food package vendors to provide quality customer services.

*"My hope for Alaska's children is that they can be children — healthy, happy, with opportunities to play, learn, and be loved."*

—ANONYMOUS

*[External communications continued]*

- We will distribute information on child abuse and neglect, Infant Learning and Healthy Families Alaska through our WIC clinics.
- We will continue to conduct outreach to increase WIC participation around the state.



*"We are a new family here to protect the children of Alaska."*

—John Lovering

*Return on investment accountability:*

- We will track improvements in the health of babies born in Alaska and report that data to the public.
- Our grants and contracts will reflect our focus on culturally appropriate resources.
- WIC clinics will serve as a distribution point for community education materials related to all programs.
- We will measure the impact of the Breastfeeding Support Program as it relates to child abuse and neglect.
- Our grants and contracts will reflect the performance measures that WIC would like to achieve.

**Child Protection and Permanency Strategies**

We will work for stronger families and safer children by implementing the following strategies:

*Staff and organizational issues*

- We will establish a quality assurance system that includes monthly monitoring of case activity. We will develop state and regional self-evaluation teams that examine data and use it to make organizational and program improvements.
- A stipend program will be expanded to encourage recruitment and retention of child welfare staff.

*[Staff and organization issues continued]*

- We will establish clear performance standards for all staff.
- A task force on staff retention and recruitment will meet regularly and make recommendations to the Deputy Commissioner.
- Online Resources for the Children of Alaska (ORCA), the automated case management system, will be implemented statewide.

*Impact on the families and communities we serve:*

- OCS will convene a task force that will develop recommendations to address the disproportionate number of Alaska Native Children who are in the Child Welfare system.
- We will investigate reports of harm within the required timeframes.
- We will expand the use of Alternative Response Contracts to assess low level reports of harm so that OCS staff can respond to higher risk cases.
- Parents and youth will be involved in the development of their case plans. Team Decision Making and other family meetings will become standard practice.
- OCS workers will comply with the current policy of making monthly home visits, but will also advocate with federal officials so that home visits by our tribal partners can be counted.
- We will increase the number of children who remain safely at home by focusing on prevention of child abuse and neglect and by funding providers who are willing to do in-home services.
- We will actively recruit tribal foster homes to increase culturally appropriate resources for children who must come into state custody.
- We will assure the safety of children in foster care by requiring that home studies be done prior to licensing of any foster home.
- We will train our foster parents to work with birth parents.
- We will implement procedures for doing a "unified homestudy" on both adoptive and foster home applicants.

*External communications:*

- We will work with the Alaska Children's Trust to develop a community education campaign to prevent child abuse and neglect.
- Regional managers will have twice yearly meetings with the community to share local child abuse and neglect data, begin to build community solutions and to get feedback on our performance.
- We will include the community in our quality assurance process to increase understanding of what we do.
- We will develop professional materials to describe our services.
- We will hold regional stakeholder meetings to get feedback on our programs and our performance.

*Return on our investment accountability:*

- We will meet the national standards for safety and permanence by engaging our tribal partners, our grantees and our contract providers in developing solutions to Alaska's serious problems related to abuse and neglect.

*"Being a foster parent is making a difference for the moment in time that will last for a child's lifetime."*

*—Tammy Keerch*

*"The future of Alaska's families, children, and youth is in the hands of its communities and tribes. The mission of OCS can only be accomplished if all Alaskans reach out and join hands in getting the job done."*

—Don Shirel

*[Return on investment accountability continued]*

- We will fund performance based grants and contracts that can show results and move us toward the outcomes we want to achieve.
- We will work with other DHSS divisions and other state departments and our grantees to develop a service array that includes mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence treatment services for the families that come to our attention.
- We will join our tribal partners to focus on prevention of abuse and neglect in the Alaska Native villages by including them in the planning process and sharing training resources.
- We will reduce recurrence of maltreatment in foster care by better preparing foster parents prior to licensure and by supporting relatives who are caring for kin.
- We will reduce length of stay in foster care by increasing the use of concurrent planning, locating relatives, resolving court delays and working with others to provide treatment resources for the families we serve.
- We will report to the public annually on our progress and place this plan and Program Improvement Plan progress reports on our website ([www.hss.state.ak.us/ocs/publications](http://www.hss.state.ak.us/ocs/publications)).
- We will use data to drive our management decisions and share that data with communities so that they can monitor not only our progress, but also their own.
- Every OCS region will be required to have a Program Improvement Plan.

#### Cross Program Team Strategies

- We will build our research and analysis capacity and use data to drive our decisions.
- We will cross-train all OCS workers in the services provided by all four of our programs so that cross-referral will be a natural outcome.
- We will develop materials that are relevant to all programs.
- We will meet the national standards that have been set for all four programs by implementing our plans of improvement and monitoring our progress.
- We will move to performance based contracting.
- We will publish an annual report each year to show how we are doing.
- We will have quarterly progress meetings and biannual town hall meetings in our regions in order to engage our stakeholders and get their input.
- We will maximize federal revenue.
- We will look at quality assurance across our four programs.
- We will identify and integrate information on families that our programs have in common.

We are committed to implementing these strategies over the next three years — both for OCS as a whole and for the individual programs that now make up OCS. We are convinced that our hard work will lead to improvements and results in the future, so that the children who touch our system will be safer and the families who touch our system will be stronger.

## Conclusion

We are presenting a "living" strategic plan. We will revisit it regularly, assess our progress and make necessary changes to stay the course.

Our work is on the table. We are ready to go. We have articulated a mission and a vision for what we want our agency and our state to look like in 2007. We have objectives and strategies to help us get there. The four programs of OCS, along with our partners in the community and tribal organizations, share ownership and responsibility for this plan. We are truly more than the sum of our parts.

At the beginning of our strategic planning meeting, we asked ourselves what we hoped to get from the sessions. We wanted clarity, direction and a call for change. We wanted to build bridges and partnerships within OCS and with our stakeholders. We wanted a better understanding of the relationships among our four programs. Most of all, we wanted a better way to do our work in order to see more positive outcomes among our families.

We left with the belief that our work will translate to action that will mean safer and healthier children, youth and families in Alaska — a legacy for the future that will pay off for generations.

We left knowing that what we thought we could only imagine can really come true.



### For More Information:

Each program has a detailed plan that they will use to achieve the outcomes that are identified in this plan. Please contact the program directly or call (907) 465-3191 for more information.

Information on all Office of Children's Services Programs may be found at [www.lss.state.ak.us/ocs](http://www.lss.state.ak.us/ocs)

*"We will not  
let this plan sit  
on the shelf."*

—Marcia Kennai,  
Deputy Commissioner

## For More Information About the Office of Children's Services

### Office of Children's Services

130 Seward Street,  
Room 406

P.O. Box 110630

Juneau, AK 99811-0630

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**Juneau Family Nutrition  
Services (WIC)**  
130 Seward St., 5/FI;  
Goldstein Bldg.  
P.O. Box 110612  
Juneau, AK 99811-0612  
Phone: (907) 465-3100  
Fax: (907) 465-3416

**Anchorage Family Nutrition  
Services (WIC)**  
3601 C Street, Suite 934  
Anchorage, AK  
Phone: (907) 269-3400  
Fax: (907) 269-3497

**Infant Learning Program,  
Healthy Families, Data  
Management**  
3601 C Street, Suite 934  
Anchorage, AK  
Phone: (907) 269-3400  
Fax: (907) 269-3497

To report child abuse call:  
1-800-478-4444  
or  
907-269-3900  
(outside of Alaska)

## For Contact Information for Southeastern Region

### Southeastern Regional Office

3025 Clinton Dr.,  
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Juneau, AK 99801

Phone: (907) 465-3235

Fax: (907) 465-1669

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3025 Clinton Dr., First Floor  
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**Ketchikan Field Office**  
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Fax: (907) 235-2484

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**Seward Field Office**  
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Fairbanks, AK 99701  
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McGrath Field Office  
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McGrath, AK 99627  
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Fax: (907) 524-3610

Nome Field Office  
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### Anchorage Regional Office

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*Child Protection & Permanency...*

*Family Nutrition Services...*

*Healthy Families Alaska...*

*Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program...*

**2004**

This is the 'New' Office of Children's Services.

