

**2/5/09**  
**CITIZEN**  
**REVIEW**  
**PANEL**  
**2008**  
**REPORT**

# ALASKA

## Citizen Review Panel



2008  
Annual Report



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## Mission and Mandate

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### MISSION

The Alaska Citizen Review Panel (CRP) is committed to reviewing and evaluating the practices and procedures of the Office of Children's Services (OCS) and in making recommendations relative to its findings to insure the safety and the well-being of the children of Alaska.

The CRP will achieve this commitment by examining the policies and procedures of the Office of Children's Services and collaborating agencies; examining, where appropriate, specific cases; evaluating the extent to which agencies are carrying out their child protection responsibilities; and preparing and making available to the public an annual report.

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### MANDATE FOR THE GROUP

The Citizens' Review Panel (CRP) is federally mandated through the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA); Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003. The CRP is also mandated through Alaska statute Sec. 47.14.205.

"By allowing the Panels to have complete access to child protection cases, by requiring Panels to publicize their findings, and by requiring states to respond to criticisms and recommendations of the Panels, the Committee intends to subject states to public criticism and political repercussion if they fail to protect children." (United States Congress, House Report 104-081, 1995, p.1)

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### DUTIES ASSIGNED TO THE GROUP

**Summary of duties** The CRP shall examine the policies, procedures, and practices of State and local agencies and where appropriate, specific cases, to evaluate the extent to which State and local child protection system agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities.

## CRP duties

- Evaluate OCS compliance with federal and state laws, examine policies and procedures for consistent statewide implementation, review cases with fatalities or near fatalities. The CRP shall evaluate the extent to which OCS is effectively discharging its child protection responsibilities under:
  1. the State Plan submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under 42 U.S.C. 5106a(b);
  2. Child Protection Standards under federal and state laws; and
  3. any other criteria that the CRP considers important to ensuring the protection of children, including the level and efficiency of coordination of foster care and adoption programs in the state and a review of child fatalities and near fatalities.

In carrying out the responsibilities listed above, the CRP shall examine the policies, procedures, and practices of OCS, and, where appropriate, evaluate specific cases of child abuse or neglect.
- Maintain confidentiality. A person attending a CRP meeting or a CRP member or CRP staff may not make any disclosure related to information obtained during a review by the CRP. A violation is subject to a civil penalty of up to \$2,500 for each violation.
- Conduct public outreach. The CRP shall conduct public outreach and gather public comment on current OCS procedures and practices involving children and family services.
- Produce an annual report. The CRP shall prepare and make available to the governor, the legislature, and the public an annual report containing a summary of its activities and recommendations for the improvement of child protection services in the state.
- Meet at least every three months. The CRP is required by law to meet every three months. Additional meetings and/or teleconferences are scheduled as needed.

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### DUTIES ASSIGNED TO OCS RELATED TO THE CRP

HSS support. The Commissioner shall, by regulation, establish policies and procedures necessary to carrying out the duties of the CRP.

- Cooperation with state panel. OCS shall provide the panel access to information on child abuse or neglect cases that is necessary for the CRP to carry out its duties.
- Report response. Not later than six months after the date on which the report is released, OCS shall submit a written response that describes whether or how OCS will incorporate the recommendations of the CRP (where appropriate) to make *measurable* progress in improving the child protection system.

## Membership and Staff Support

**Required membership** The panel shall be composed of volunteer members who are broadly representative of the state, including members who have expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

### Current membership

Fred Van Wallinga, Chair, Willow  
Carol Olson, Vice Chair, Anchorage  
Pamela Dupras, Kodiak  
Dana W. Hallett, Soldotna  
Arthur S. Hansen, Fairbanks  
Susan Heuer, Anchorage  
Esperanza Redelfs, Ketchikan  
Ralph Taylor, Nome

**Desired membership** The CRP would like to meet its requirement to be broadly representative of the state by widening the geographic and racial and ethnic diversity of the membership. The group is working to recruit new members from underrepresented areas of the state as well as a greater diversity of child-centered expertise and background.

**OCS liaison** Tammy Sandoval, Director, is the current liaison between OCS and the CRP. Richard Nault, Deputy Director, was the liaison for much of the previous year.

**Staff support** Staff support is provided by Sylvan Robb and Nancy Lowe of Information Insights.

## Meetings and Activities

### Group meetings

September 21-22, 2007	In person — Fairbanks
November 10, 2007	In person — Glennallen
December 12, 2007	Teleconference
January 11, 2008	In person — Anchorage
February 15, 2008	In person — Juneau
March 28, 2008	Teleconference
May 1-2, 2008	In person — Anchorage
June 10, 2008	Teleconference

### Other activities

September 20, 2007	Delta Junction: met with local OCS staff and partnering agencies
September 21, 2007	Cantwell and Healy: met with partnering agencies Fairbanks: met with local OCS staff and partnering Agencies
November 8-9, 2007	Chitina, Copper Center, Gakona, Glennallen, Kenny Lake, Northway, Tok and Valdez: met with local OCS
November 13, 2007	Wasilla: Dana Hallett met with James Steele, Children's Services Manager for Southcentral Regional Office and Sue Frisby, Community Care Licensing Supervisor 3 Staff and partnering agencies
November 29, 2007	Anchorage: presented at Alaska Native Indian Child Welfare (Bureau of Indian Affairs) Conference and surveyed attendees
December 19, 2007	Teleconference: Fred Van Wallinga and Sylvan Robb participated in National Citizen Review Panel Conference planning committee
January 9-10, 2008	Anchorage: attended "Pathways to Hope Conference regarding Alaska Native Child Sexual Abuse Anchorage: met with Bethel OCS workers and Paul Burke, Nome Chief of Police and Michelle Krier, Kawerak Child Advocacy Center Director
February 8, 2008	Teleconference: CRP met with Christy Lawton, Children's Services Manager of the Northern Region
February 11-12, 2008	Petersburg, Sitka, and Wrangell: met with local

	OCS staff and partnering agencies
February 13-15, 2008	Juneau: met with local OCS staff and partnering agencies
February 13, 2008	Juneau: met with Lt. Governor Sean Parnell
February 14, 2008	Juneau: met with Commissioner Karleen Jackson, Deputy Commissioner Bill Hogan, and Director Tammy Sandoval
	Juneau: met with Representative John Coghill and chief staffer, Rynnieva Moss
	Juneau: met with Representative Mike Hawker's staff member, Pauly Swanson
	Juneau: testified before House HESS Committee
February 19, 2008	Anchorage: Art Hansen participated in the Community Federal Standards Review
	Glennallen and Gulkana: Fred Van Wallinga and Carol Olson met with current and former OCS workers
February 26, 2008	Teleconference: met with Eileen Lally and Jay C. Bush of the Family and Youth Services Training Academy at the University of Alaska Anchorage regarding TONE training
March 6, 2008	Wasilla: Fred Van Wallinga met with James Steele, Children's Services Manager for Southcentral Regional Office
March 27, 2008	Anchorage: Fred Van Wallinga and Susan Heuer met with Tammy Sandoval, Director of OCS and Christy Lawton, Children's Services Manager for Northern Regional Office
April 8-10, 2008	Anchorage: Art Hansen and Carol Olson attended the Alaska Native Indian Child Welfare Summit
April 14, 2008	Kaltag: Fred Van Wallinga met with school administrator and community resident
April 17, 2008	Fairbanks: Art Hansen attended the Family to Family Conference
	Nulato: Fred Van Wallinga met with school administrator and community residents
	Teleconference: Sylvan Robb participated in National Citizen Review Panel Conference planning committee
April 23, 2008	Fairbanks: Art Hansen attended the Community Cares Conference
	Fairbanks: Fred Van Wallinga met with

May 21-23, 2008

Representative Coghill's staff member, Rynniva Moss  
 St. Paul, Minnesota: Fred Van Wallinga and Carol Olson attended the National Citizen Review Panel conference

### **Annual activities**

Although the CRP was formed in May 2002, the core of its current membership has been in place for roughly four years. The group meets approximately every other month, with every third meeting being a teleconference. Panel membership has remained steady this year with eight members, although there were extended absences during the year. One member missed a portion of the year for health reasons and another member missed nearly the entire year due to a military deployment.

The CRP continued to focus this year on the two areas on which it had previously focused. The first was facilitating an improved relationship between OCS and tribal agencies. The second was facilitating an improved relationship between OCS and foster parents. A large part of this effort continued to be the process of educating people about the existence and role of the CRP. To this end, the group continued to maintain a public website at [www.crpalaska.org](http://www.crpalaska.org) to provide information on Alaska's CRP, as well as citizen review panels in general. The group also distributed its brochures at conferences and made presentations using an existing Power Point presentation to educate more people about the CRP and its mission.

As more people become aware of our existence we receive more calls from dissatisfied citizens. As in the past, we inform people that we do not typically intervene in individual cases, but encourage people to avail themselves of either the OCS grievance process or to open a case with the Ombudsman's Office. When we are aware of cases, we do try to monitor complaints with an eye out for patterns of problems.

Our unofficial theme for this year was data collection. We distributed a survey at the Alaska Native Indian Child Welfare Conference put on by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. We received feedback from over 100 mainly Alaska Native ICWA workers who were attending the conference. Respondents were asked which Native corporation region they were from. There were representatives from all regions except Koniak. Calista had the most representatives among survey respondents with 30%. Calista was followed by 16% from Doyon, 14% from Bristol Bay and 11% from Bering Straits. The other regions each had a handful of respondents.

Respondents were asked if there was good collaboration between OCS and tribal entities in their community. Half of respondents (50%) reported good collaboration, while just under one-quarter (24%) reported that there was not good collaboration. Eight percent of

respondents selected yes and no. Just under one fifth of respondents (18%) selected 'don't know' in response to this question.

Respondents were asked how they would rate the effectiveness of child protection in their community. An equal percentage of respondents selected 'very effective' or 'somewhat effective' and 'very ineffective' or 'somewhat ineffective' with 28% and 27% respectively. Nearly half of respondents (45%) reported that child protection in their community was 'neither effective nor ineffective.'

Respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of foster care in their community. 'Very effective' or 'somewhat effective' were selected by 27% of respondents. More than forty percent (44%) of respondents report that foster care in their community was either 'very ineffective' or 'somewhat ineffective.' Twenty-nine percent of respondents reported foster care in their community was 'neither effective not ineffective.'

Respondents were asked if had anything else to add and 58% of respondents made an additional comment. Among those comments, 40% of them mentioned foster parent issues. Among the 40% who mentioned foster parent issues, 38% mentioned a lack of Native foster parent homes available and the need for tribes being able to license homes. The other 63% of the foster parent comments mentioned lack of support financially and that becoming a foster parent was cumbersome and standards were too strict.

Based on some of the results from the above survey, we were motivated to try and survey foster parents directly. We continue to work on piloting a survey with current and recent foster parents. Our efforts have been hampered by the lack of a strong foster parent group with whom we can work.

We also collected a great deal of regional data in-person through site visits to 20 communities. We interviewed local OCS staff and staff from the following types of partnering agencies about what is working and what needs improvement in their relationship with OCS and how we can help facilitate those efforts.

- Coast Guard personnel
- Counseling center staff
- District attorneys
- Foster parents
- Health aides & public health nurses
- ICWA workers
- Local police departments
- OCS staff
- School principals, nurses & counselors
- State troopers
- Tribal representatives
- WIC workers

We also learned a great deal from other people in these same job types when we heard from them at several conferences we attended. We attended the "Pathways to Hope" conference on Alaska Native Child Sexual Abuse. Members also attended the Alaska Native Indian Child Welfare Summit conference. Attendance at these conferences provides extremely valuable networking opportunities, especially to hear from rural residents from many communities. Additionally, they are an excellent way to continue to make people aware of our existence.

We had additional training opportunities this year. Several members attended the National Citizen Review Panel Conference in Minnesota. Attendance at the national conference allows us to learn of any legislative changes that impact citizen review panels and to network with members from other states to exchange ideas. We also received a full day tutorial on the OCS budget from the primary person responsible for the budget. After hearing many comments about worker training from interviewees, we had a teleconference with those responsible for providing training for new OCS employees.

This year, for the first time, we asked OCS staff to conduct a case review in a response to reports we had received about a particular community. We were very pleased with the responsiveness and with the resolution of that situation.

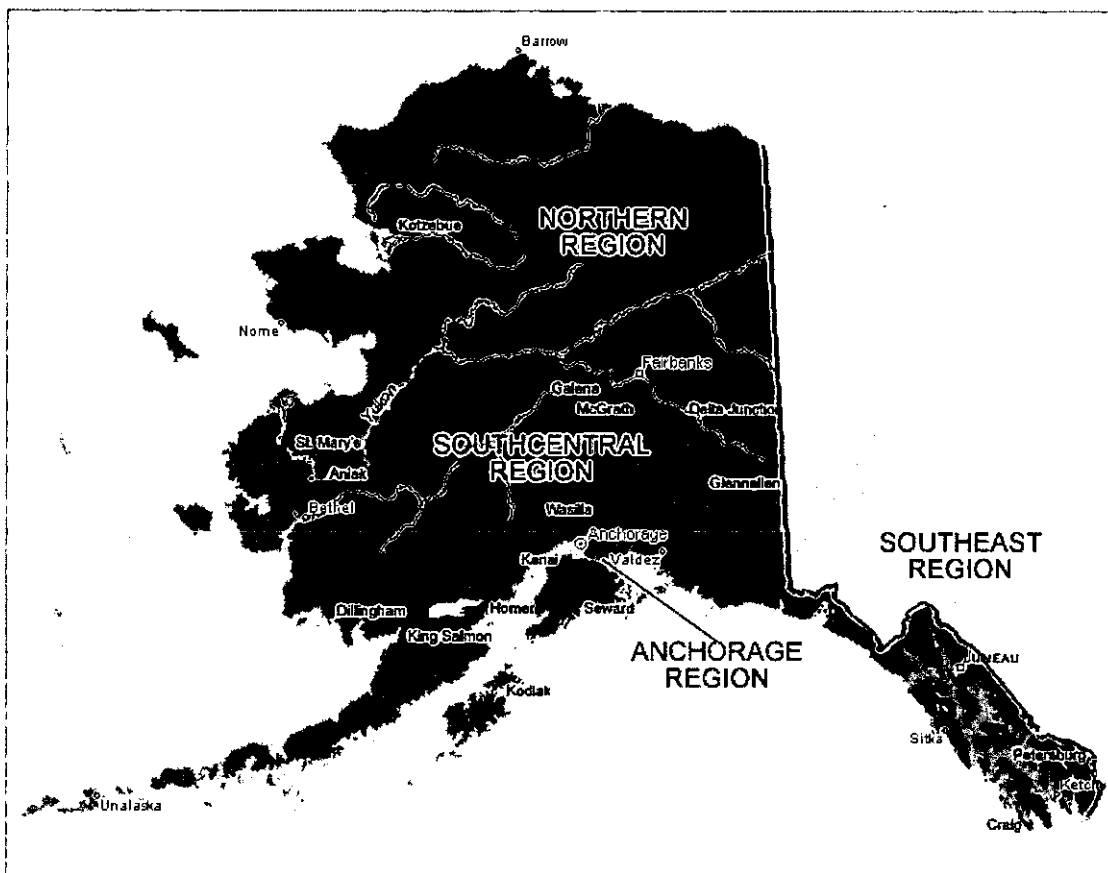
The primary issue we threw ourselves into this year was a recommendation for and strong advocacy of the creation of a fifth OCS region for the state to be headquartered in Bethel. We communicated extensively with Bethel residents involved in the child protection system and presented this recommendation to the House Health, Education, and Social Services Committee. While our request was not immediately acted upon, we continue to feel this is a vital step to enable OCS to provide quality, culturally appropriate services to this region of the state.

## Recommendations

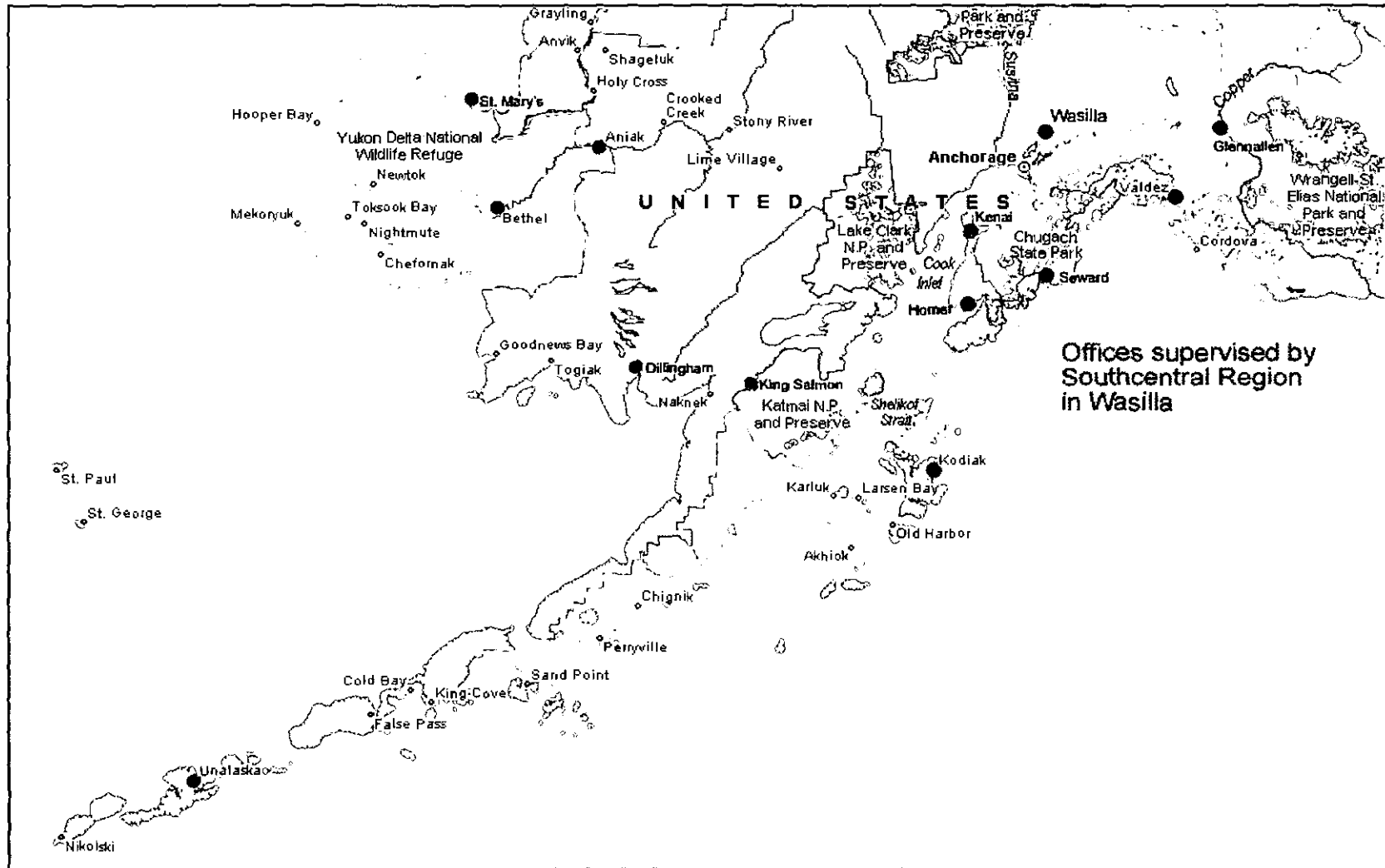
### Recommendation 1. Create a fifth region headquartered in Bethel

#### Population and Land Area

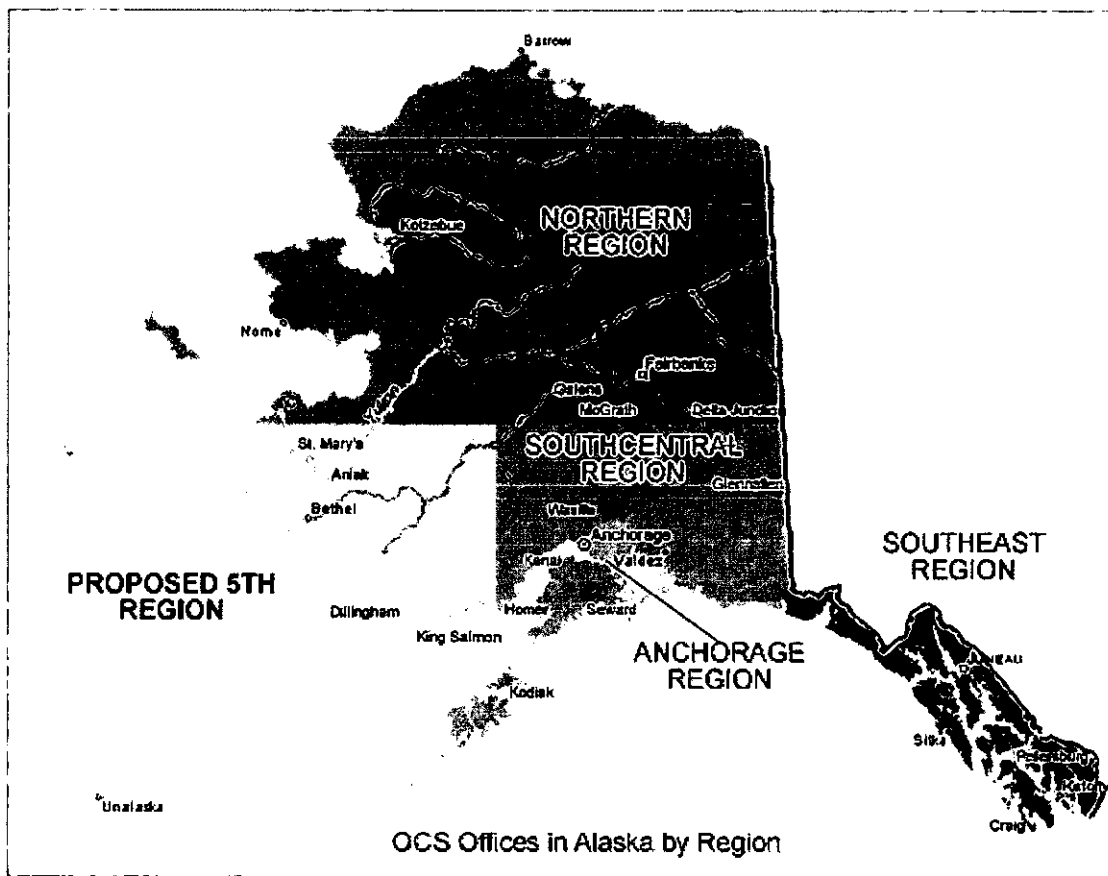
Currently OCS serves the state through four regions: Southeast, Anchorage, the Northern region (which includes the area north of St. Mary's) and the Southcentral region (which is the remainder of the state). The map below shows the existing regions.

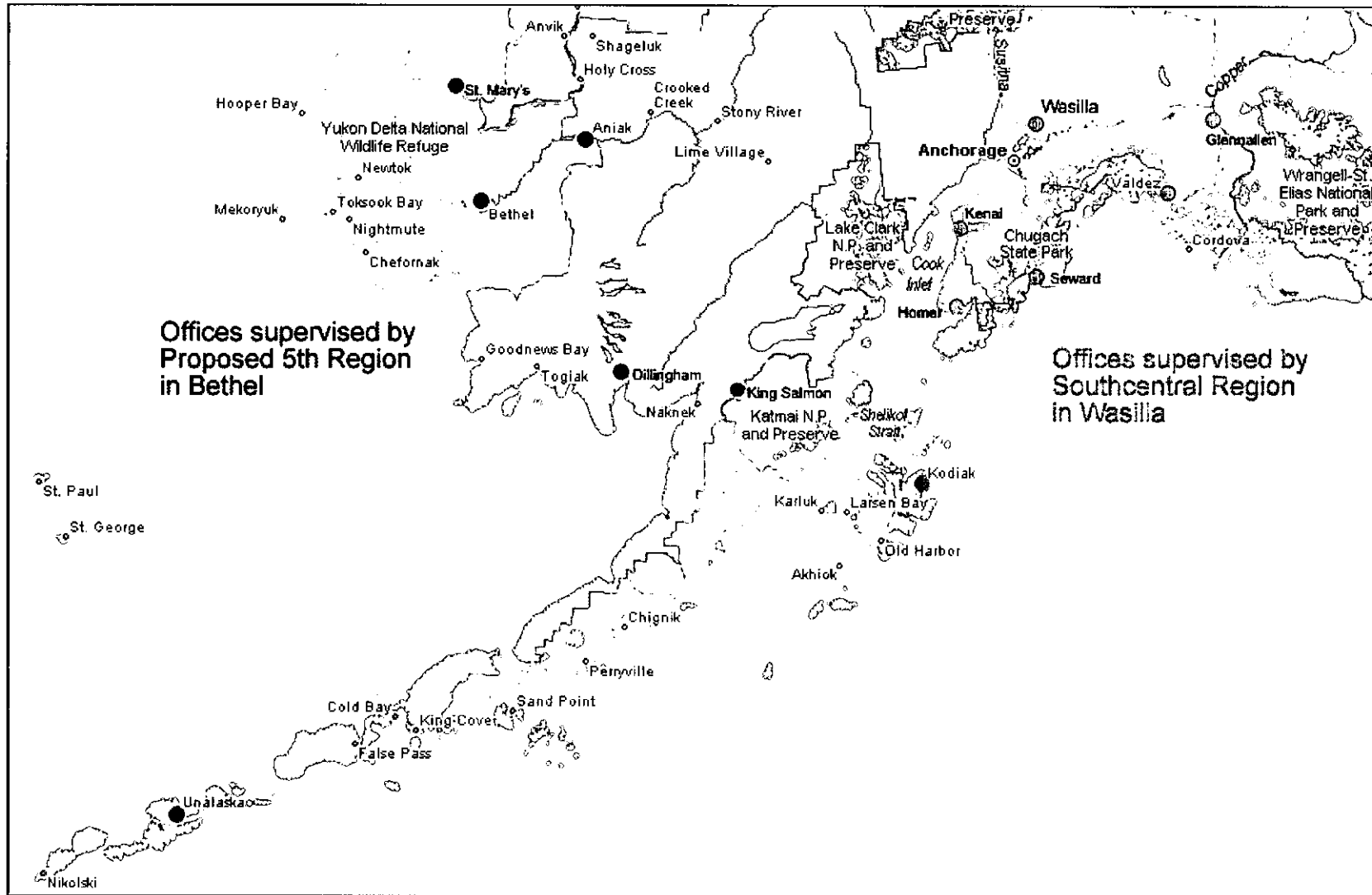


Currently there is one office in the Anchorage region, five offices in the Southeast region, seven offices in the Northern region and 13 offices in the Southcentral region. The existing Southcentral region has 12 field offices which is twice as the region with the next largest number of field offices—six in the Northern region—and three times as many field offices as Southeast (which has four field offices). The following map shows the dozen field offices in the Southcentral region and the regional headquarters in Wasilla.



We propose that in order to better serve the sizable and culturally distinct area of Southwest Alaska, OCS create a fifth region to be headquartered in Bethel. This region would be broken out from the existing Southcentral region (SCRO). It would include the six existing OCS offices in Aniak, Bethel, Dillingham, King Salmon, St. Mary's, and Unalaska. The existing Southcentral region includes 37% of Alaska's land area and 30% of its population. The first map that follows shows the entire state with the proposed five regions. The second map that follows highlights which of the field offices would remain in the Southcentral office and which would become part of the proposed Southwest region.





The table below lists all the boroughs and census areas included in the existing Southcentral region. Those areas above the heavy line are those that would remain in the Southcentral region after the proposed Southwest region is created. Those below the heavy line are the areas that would be in the proposed Southwest region. The existing boundary between the Northern region and SCRO is a straight line east-west across the state, so it does not follow borough or census area boundaries. We have estimated the percentage of the census areas in the proposed Southwest region for those census areas bisected by the boundary.

<b>Borough or Census Area</b>	<b>Population (2006 Census Bureau est.)</b>	<b>% Population Under 5 Years Old</b>	<b>% Population Under 18 Years Old</b>	<b>Land Area (sq. miles)</b>
Kenai Peninsula Borough	52,304	5.8	24.7	16,013
Kodiak Island Borough	13,072	7.7	30.0	6,560
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	80,480	6.4	26.2	24,682
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	9,872	6.2	24.7	34,319
Aleutians East Borough	2,647	3.5	12.1	6,988
Aleutians West Census Area	5,239	3.2	12.8	4,397
Bethel Census Area	17,147	11.2	37.1	40,633
Bristol Bay Borough	1,042	6.5	27.0	505
Dillingham Census Area	4,970	8.7	33.6	18,675
Lake and Peninsula Borough	1,548	8.1	31.2	23,782
Wade Hampton Census Area	6,443*	13.7	42.4	14,614*
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	877**	6.5	27.9	21,885**
<b>Total current SCRO</b>	<b>201,745</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>213,053</b>
<b>Total proposed Southwest region</b>	<b>39,913</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>36.7</b>	<b>131,479</b>
<b>Total remaining SCRO</b>	<b>155,728</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>25.9</b>	<b>81,574</b>
<b>Alaska</b>	<b>670,053</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>27.1</b>	<b>571,951</b>

\* Estimate 85% of Wade Hampton Census Area in proposed Southwest region, figure is 85% of total.

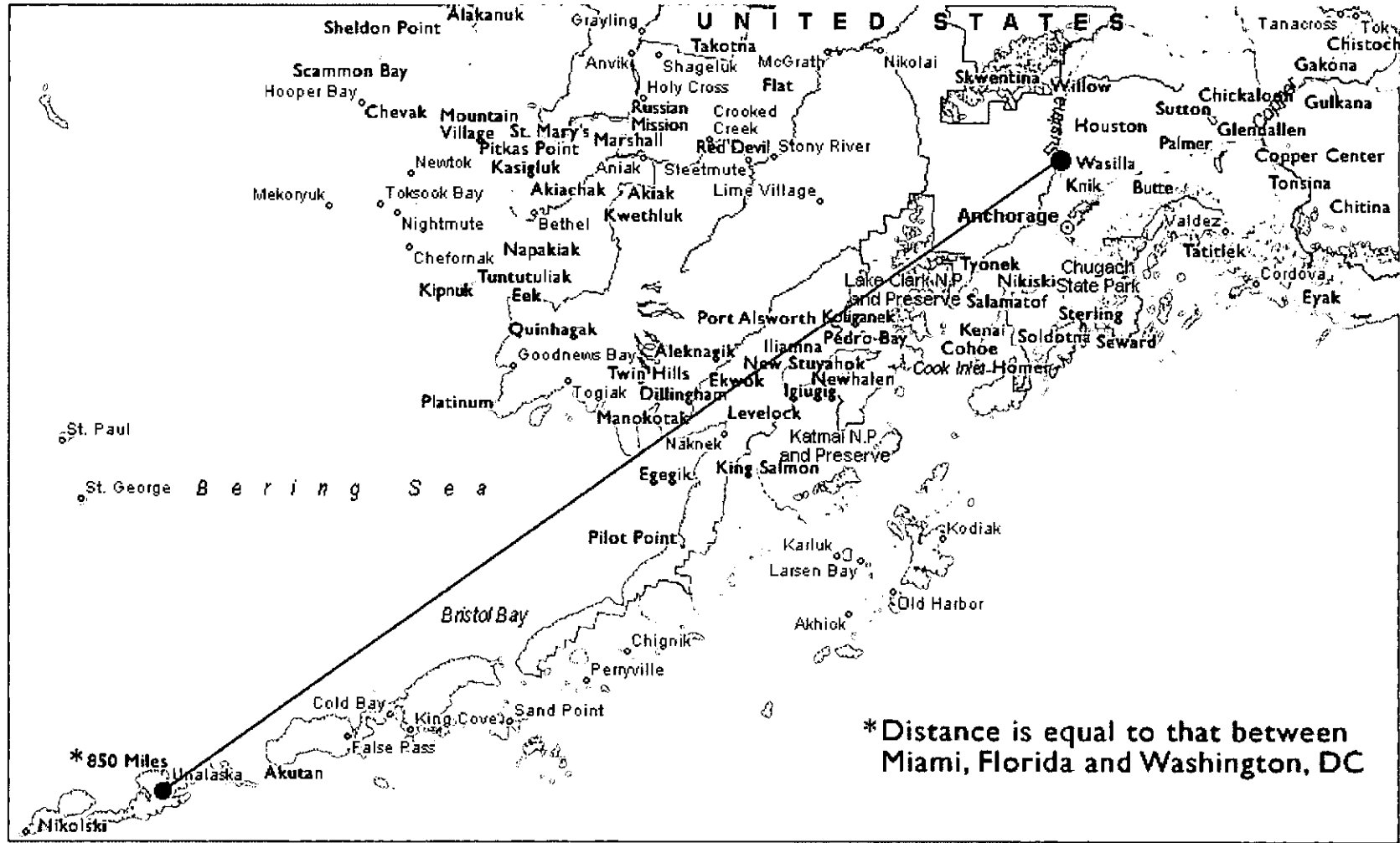
\*\* Estimate 15% of Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area in proposed Southwest region, figure is 15% of total.

The proposed Southwest region would have 6% of Alaska's population, although it would contain 8% of Alaska's children under 18 years old. While the population in the proposed new region is not sizable, 37% of that population is children. The proposed Southwest region would also include 23% of Alaska's land area. This would leave the remaining SCRO with 23% of Alaska's population, 22% of Alaska's children under 18 years old and 14% of Alaska's land area.

The proposed Southwest region has a large number of communities. There are at least 73 communities that would be served by the new region. All of those communities are substantially closer to Bethel than to Wasilla in many ways. The communities are geographically closer, culturally closer and much closer in lifestyle being all off-road small, rural communities.



Currently the distance between Wasilla, where SCRO is headquartered, and Unalaska is equal to the distance between Miami and Washington, D.C.; it is 850 miles. It is 510 miles from Unalaska to Bethel, the proposed headquarters of the Southwest region. Bethel is two-fifths of the way closer to Unalaska than Wasilla is from Unalaska.



### Caseloads

In terms of caseload for out-of-home cases the proposed Southwest region would not be the smallest region as shown in the table below. Data in the table cover September 2007 through February 2008.

<b>Region</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>	<b>% of State Caseload</b>	<b>Average Cases Per Month</b>	<b>Highest Monthly Caseload</b>
Anchorage	3,313	42.6	552	557
Northern	1,277	16.4	213	223
Southeast	788	10.1	131	137
Southcentral (existing)	2,397	30.8	400	416
<b>State Total</b>	<b>7,775</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,296</b>	<b>1,321</b>
<i>Proposed Southwest</i>	<i>861</i>	<i>11.1</i>	<i>144</i>	<i>146</i>

Data shown below are for opened investigations and also cover the same time period.

<b>Region</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>	<b>% of State Caseload</b>	<b>Average Cases Per Month</b>	<b>Highest Monthly Caseload</b>
Anchorage	1,112	38.1	185	220
Northern	535	18.3	89	109
Southeast	381	13.0	64	74
Southcentral (existing)	893	31.0	149	191
<b>State Total</b>	<b>2,921</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>530</b>
<i>Proposed Southwest</i>	<i>270</i>	<i>9.2</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>57</i>

Among in-home cases for that same time period, the Southcentral region had the highest number of cases with 88 of 205 in the entire state. That's 43% of all in-home cases in Alaska. The field office breakdown of these cases was not available, but it can only help the Southcentral region to halve the number of field offices it serves. When investigations and in-home cases are taken together, Southcentral again has the highest number of cases among the regions. Workers in Southcentral have the most cases per worker for these kinds of cases.

### Great Need—Troubled Region

As reported in the Anchorage Daily News article, *Slowly, Western Alaska starts to break silence on sexual abuse, Children are often victims of relatives* by Alex DeMarban of the Tundra Drums, Bethel has more sexual assaults than Anchorage in absolute numbers (not per capita). This article was published on January 22, 2008. A portion of the article is excerpted below.

## EPICENTER: BETHEL

New statistics from the Alaska State Troopers suggest that Western Alaska leads the state in cases of sexual abuse of a minor -- often when girls are raped or molested by intoxicated adult male relatives and acquaintances -- and cases of sexual assaults against women.

A soon-to-be released study of 989 such cases investigated statewide by troopers in 2003 and 2004 shows that the greatest number -- 476 cases, or 48 percent -- occurred in Western Alaska, said Katie TePas, a troopers program coordinator.

The region is immense -- containing more than one-third of the state's land mass -- and stretches from Kotzebue in the north to Kodiak in the south and out the Aleutian Chain past Unalaska. It's served by 13 trooper posts in what's known as the C Detachment.

But the population is small, represented by dozens of villages -- many with fewer than 500 people -- and a handful of hub communities, such as Kodiak, Bethel or Nome, each with fewer than 6,000 people.

In the vastly more populated regions along the road system -- including Anchorage, Fairbanks and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough -- troopers investigated fewer such cases during the two-year period. Combined, trooper posts in those areas investigated 299 of the studied cases, or 30.2 percent of the total during the two-year period.

Ground zero is the Bethel region, where troopers investigated 17 percent of the cases, more than any other post in the state, TePas said.

"We have an epidemic," she said. "It's a statewide epidemic, but the epicenter, our data shows, is the Bethel region."

## CHILDREN MOST VULNERABLE

TePas presented the numbers at a summit on Alaska Native child sexual abuse in Anchorage earlier this month.

The results are highlights from an 102-page study done by the Justice Center at the University of Alaska Anchorage, she said.

Only trooper cases that entered the justice system during the two-year period and reached a conclusion -- cases that did and did not result in a conviction -- are included in the study, TePas said.

The early figures paint a disturbing picture of rapes and other sexual violence against adults and children in Western Alaska, where the population is largely Alaska Native and villages are often loose extensions of family.

In all the 989 cases, family members and friends sexually abuse or assault each other in more than 90 percent of the incidents, she said.

They're especially hurting children. The most common charge during the two years was second-degree sexual abuse of a minor, a class B felony that generally means the rape or other molestation of someone 16 years old or younger, often by an adult.

Almost one-fourth of the child victims were from ages 13 to 15, she said. Nearly the same number were from ages 6 to 12.

Strangers were the perpetrators in less than 1 percent of the cases involving children, TePas said.

#### Precedent in Other Agencies

There are other state agencies that have more than four regions. The best example is that the Alaska State Troopers divide the state into five detachments (A-E) headquartered in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Ketchikan, Palmer and Soldotna. They have posts in 36 communities. The Troopers are the best agency for OCS to compare itself to because both agencies share a need to be able to respond quickly in emergency situations. Safety requires proximity. Additionally, knowing the community can provide a great benefit in allowing workers to diffuse situations and find the most appropriate outcome. Workers in both agencies need to be culturally competent and familiar with the local services. While the Troopers' detachment C does not mirror exactly the proposed Southwest region, the areas are very similar. This arrangement works well for the Troopers and would work well for OCS. With the Troopers being a primary partner for OCS, it makes good sense to have this region to strengthen the partnership between these agencies.

#### Community Support

Prior to our testimony before the House Health, Education, and Social Services we received letters from residents and agencies in the Bethel area in support of keeping the Supervisor 5 position in Bethel and for the creation of a new region. We received 15 letters of support which may be viewed in their entirety on our website. Below are excerpts from a few of those letters. We wanted to allow people from the area to speak about the situation.

“...the Native – and dominant – culture in Bethel is radically different than the culture in Wasilla, or in any other region of Alaska. That means that people think about things differently here, and the people here face

very different challenges and expect things to be done in different ways...”

---Lauri Owen, Bethel

“The Bethel OCS office needs the Social Worker V position filled and ideally should be the headquarters of their own region. This would increase the ability and opportunity for local staff to work with the strengths and support identified in each of the 57 villages and 7 different school districts that make up the Yukon Kuskokwim region.

OCS, formerly [*sic*] DFYS, has evolved over the years to be known in a better light than just some agency that “takes your kids away”. The region is slowly healing from the negative cultural intervention history in general: forced boarding schools, deadly influenzas that devastated entire communities, priests sexually abusing children, etc. More local hire and higher education and more communication and trust has empowered the people of this region to self determine a better destiny for the next generation. Bethel OCS needs more staff and leadership support to be a proactive part of this. The safety of Alaskan’s children is the number one priority; this agency saves lives.

The OCS staff in Alaska are very dedicated people but it is the ones directly in Bethel and the villages that have the greatest insight on this regions strengths and needs.”

---Susan Taylor, Bethel

“It cannot be argued that safety is one of the most important issues facing Alaska children and families today, as we look at the distressing numbers of families involved in child protection services. Expedient responses from all members of the protective teams are essential and indeed life-saving for some.”

---Alaska Native Indian Child Welfare Association Board of Directors

“Bethel is a unique community that has very high needs for a strong, consistent, locally based child protection work force.

On a recent visit to Bethel I had the opportunity to speak at length with several social workers at OCS about the challenges the community faces with high rates of child neglect and abuse. Bethel is also challenged by some of Alaska’s highest rates of traumatic brain injury and substance abuse. Front line child protection workers need direct available supervision in order to effectively do their demanding daily work. Removing the supervisor from this office will only serve to weaken the child protection services provided in this high needs regional hub.

Currently, social workers in the Bethel OCS office travel to more remote villages than any other region in Alaska. Supervisors must be knowledgeable about the culture and values of the communities in which they serve. Supervisors are responsible for infusing their staff with the importance of culturally relevant family interventions.”

---Summer LeFebvre, MSW

“The work that the Office of Children’s Services does can significantly impact the numbers of youth entering BYF as well as the severity of their social-emotional dysfunction and criminal offending. OCS can intervene early in instances of child neglect and abuse, and their involvement can reduce the numbers of youth being detained at BYF. One disturbing development is that we are seeing younger offenders as well as more assaults and sexual offenses. In addition, the severity of personality, behavioral, and emotional impairments is on the rise. The numbers of youth in the BYF that have mental health diagnoses is well over 75%.

It is my professional opinion that to have the Director of OCS held by someone *not* living in our community will only increase the trends mentioned above. The complexities of making child protection decisions is a difficult one at best. The person in that top position needs to have knowledge and respect for the cultures out here as well as the many challenges and difficulties of living in rural Alaska.”

---Dr. Valerie Warren, Bethel

### Conclusion

There are many strong reasons for creating this new region.

- The area is 23% of Alaska. If it were a state, it would be the fifth largest state just behind Montana, but ahead of New Mexico.
- The area is entirely off the road system, complicating travel and creating different circumstances than on-road communities face.
- The area has a higher percentage of the population who are children than the state overall.
- The area will have a larger out-of-home caseload than existing regions.
- The area has a great need having the highest rates of sexual assault.
- The area is culturally distinct due to the large, strong Yup’ik population.
- The Alaska State Troopers, who also provide public safety, serve the state through five regions.
- The community supports the effort.
- The OCS offices and staff are already in place. Only four new positions need to be added.

In addition to serving this culturally distinct area that comprises nearly one quarter of Alaska much better, removing responsibility for this area would allow the currently over-stretched SCRO to provide better services to all those children and families remaining in its area. SCRO has many challenges and would greatly benefit from having less on its plate. There are so many good reasons to do this. We have yet to find anyone who does not support the idea.

**Recommendation 2. Implement workload study recommendations**

In May 2006 OCS received the final report on a statewide workload study conducted by Hornby Zeller Associates, an Outside consulting firm. The study involved a great deal of work examining workers' caseloads and how their time was spent. The study also included four recommendations; the full text of the recommendations is included below. Hornby Zeller Associates' full report on the statewide workload study may be viewed at our website, [www.crp.alaska.org](http://www.crp.alaska.org).

From Hornby Zeller Associates *Statewide Workload Study*, May 2006.

In response to this study OCS should make a plan for filling existing vacancies and monitoring workloads over time in an effort to increase staff resources as the agency can absorb them. Some aspects of the plan should be:

1. Fill the positions that are authorized but vacant, shifting the bulk of those positions to Anchorage.
2. OCS should recalculate the staffing needs by office every month for a year and plot the results by counting cases and applying the weights each month to identify patterns of under- and over-burden among the offices. These data will provide a reliable direction for shifting current staff to better meet the caseload burden where it is shown to exist over time and for targeting new positions that may be authorized on the weight of this study's results.
3. Once the vacancies are filled, OCS should make an effort to attain additional positions at whatever speed they can be absorbed from both a political and an agency standpoint using the evidence contained in this study. Part of that evidence is the very basic standard used in the study to determine if a case is handled appropriately and the amount of time it takes to handle it appropriately. Those standards are spelled out in Appendix D for each case type.
4. To produce the most equitable distribution of workload for current staff and cases on an ongoing basis, OCS could also provide supervisors making assignments a workload monitoring program through ORCA, as described in Appendix F. These procedures should help supervisors achieve the proper allocation of cases to existing workers based on the case weights or workload standards established by this study.

In the two years since this study was received by OCS, we believe staff have been working to address this problem. However, the situation is still quite grave in many locations. Appendix A of this report is a letter from a guardian ad litem working on the Kenai Peninsula who documents and eloquently makes the case for more workers. As she notes, the Child Welfare League of America recommends caseloads of between 12 and 15 children for social workers doing child protection work. In January 2008 the Kenai permanency social workers were averaging 22.4 families and 38 children. Workers in this one office have caseloads nearly triple the recommended size and are working extraordinary hours trying to make sure no children fall through the cracks. However, inevitably children fall through the cracks and become headline news when a preventable tragedy occurs. A less dramatic, but very harmful outcome is that workers leave when they reach their breaking point.

OCS needs to implement these recommendations immediately. Caseloads must come down so social workers can do social work. During a site visit in Southeast a social worker told us she objected to having her job titled Social Worker since she never got to do social work. She described her job as filling out forms and trying to keep her head above water.

We do want to recognize that the Director of OCS, Tammy Sandoval, is working on these priorities. The Governor approved several OCS increment requests in the fiscal year 2009 operating budget including \$860,900 of funding to comply with the OCS Workload Study. This funding adds seven new caseworker positions and three new support staff positions to the OCS team. Every additional employee is a step in the right direction toward reasonable caseloads and workers with time to do social work.

### **Recommendation 3. Fix the telephone system**

Currently the telephone in a number of small offices is not answered if staff are out of the office. Thus someone calling the Glennallen or Delta Junction office, for example, either get voicemail or are told to hang up and contact another office (e.g., in Glennallen callers are given the number of the Wasilla office while in Delta Junction callers are given the number for the Fairbanks office). The phone system needs to be upgraded in these locations so that the phone transfers automatically to the other office (e.g., Wasilla or Fairbanks). We understand that this may be problematic in very small communities operating with local telephone carriers, however, it should be possible in more places than not. This feature is certainly available and in use in some parts of the state already. If a call to the Director's line is not answered by her in Anchorage the phone is then answered by someone in the main OCS office in Juneau.

The goal is that the main telephone number of every OCS office should be answered by a live person during business hours. People should not have to hang up and place a long distance call if they want to speak with someone. A complaint we have heard from a variety of partners in many locations is that OCS is hard to contact. It should not be

difficult to reach OCS. Some people might be calling to report abuse after having talked themselves into making the call. If told to hang up and call another number, they may feel like they tried and let it go.

**Recommendation 4. Publicize and staff the toll free number**

The toll free number to report child abuse (1-800-478-4444) is poorly publicized and not well staffed. Several members of the Citizen Review Panel were not even aware of its existence, including a member who is a Guardian Ad Litem. The number is not even prominent on the OCS homepage. OCS should partner with the Alaska Children's Trust to increase publicity for this number. While a large portion of the general public is not likely to have the number memorized, a large portion should know that the number exists. This seems certain to result in increased reporting and yield better protection for children. An advertising campaign that emphasizes that the number is available statewide, 24 hours a day and that callers may be anonymous would help a great deal. Additionally, the advertising should stress that people don't have to *know* whether a child is being abused or neglected. If they have concerns, they should call and professionals will investigate the situation. The ads should stress that it is everyone's business to report suspected abuse.

A good model for the number might be the Alaska Tobacco Control Alliance's Quit Line. The Quit Line phone number is well publicized through television and radio public service announcements and print ads. The Quit Line number is on the front of the Fairbanks ACS Telephone Directory. In reviewing the Information Pages at the front of the Fairbanks ACS Telephone directory, the first page has emergency numbers that includes 911 and the poison control number in large print. In smaller print are numbers for a variety of services including the domestic violence hotline, but nothing for OCS. Further into the Information Pages are two pages of Community Service Numbers. The Family/Youth Services Category of these pages includes listings for 16 agencies, including two 800 numbers (the runaway hotline and the Alaska Center for Resource Families). The only listing for OCS is for the old "Division of Family and Youth Services." When attempting to look up any phone number for OCS, the only listing found was in the Government Listings. There is nothing listed under State of Alaska, Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services, Health and Social Services, Office of Children's Services, or Children's Services. There is a listing in the white pages for Child Abuse Information and Referral that lists the number for the Resource Center for Parents and Children. It should be easier to find a number to call. The number should also be much more prominent on the OCS homepage. It would be nice if the number were listed on the homepage of the Department of Health and Social Services.

Currently staff at the Anchorage office answer the 800 number. If staff are busy, callers are transferred to an auto-attend system and a recording provides the hours of the Anchorage office while they hold. This may confuse callers who thought they had called a hotline. When the phone is answered during business hours, the staffer does not know

that the caller has contacted the hotline. Callers are then transferred to someone in investigations. During several test calls, we were not told that we were being transferred to "John Doe who investigates these cases" and that he would take our information. Additionally, if the individual is not at his/her desk the call goes to 'John Doe's' voicemail. Thus anyone who wishes to make an anonymous report must either continue to call back until the call is answered or leave a message that is not likely to contain all the necessary information, or will not be anonymous.

When the 800 number is called after business hours or on a holiday, a recording answers with the message, "If a child is in danger right now, hang up and call 911." The message then goes on to say, "Your call will be answered in the order in which it was received by a message secretary." This line should be staffed 24 hours a day with someone trained to take a caller's information and to ask the necessary questions.

#### **Recommendation 5. Collocation of OCS Workers**

In several locations around the state, OCS workers are collocated with partnering agencies. We have yet to hear anything but positive comments about these situations. Having an OCS worker located in a law enforcement office or at a child advocacy center or school allows OCS workers to collaborate more fully with these partners. OCS workers can be more responsive and develop the strong relationships that will sustain these partnerships through challenging times.

We understand that collocation is not practical in all circumstances; other agencies may not have room to spare. Additionally, we know that OCS has long-term leases in many locations. As these leases end and OCS is revisiting office space, we strongly encourage OCS to pursue collocation wherever feasible. We feel collocation should be a very high priority for OCS offices that have just a single staff person assigned to them. Enabling a lone staffer in an outpost to have the support of the "colleagues" who would be gained through collocation would enable OCS to better retain workers in these especially challenging locations. The OCS office in Glennallen would be an excellent place to start this collocation effort. The Glennallen region is in the process of starting a child advocacy center and it would be ideal for the OCS worker to be located in the CAC facility.

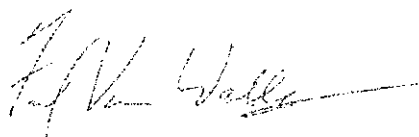
#### **Recommendation 6. Support for Front Line Workers**

In the course of talking to many front line OCS workers around the state, we have found workers to be stressed to the point of disability. Many workers are at their breaking point with demanding caseloads and insufficient support services in their areas to offer their clients. Very few OCS offices have enough staff either due to existing positions being vacant or funding that is inadequate to hire the necessary number of workers. Consequently, some workers are stressed to the point of having post traumatic stress disorder. Other workers are losing sleep and are very anxious about the welfare of their clients. Counseling and stress management classes should be available to all workers.

## Commendations

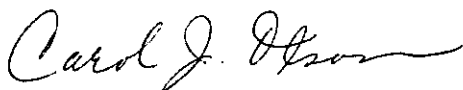
We commend those individuals who courageously spoke up for children when there were potentially negative personal consequences.

Respectfully submitted by the Citizen Review Panel:



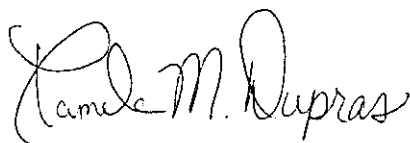
Electronically signed  
June 30, 2008

Fred Van Wallinga, Chair



Electronically signed  
June 30, 2008

Carol J. Olson, Vice Chair



Electronically signed  
June 30, 2008

Pamela M. Dupras, Member



Electronically signed  
June 30, 2008

Dana W. Hallett, Member



Electronically signed  
June 30, 2008

Arthur S. Hansen, Member



Electronically signed  
June 30, 2008

Susan Heuer, Member



Electronically signed  
June 30, 2008

Esperanza M. Redelfs, Member



Electronically signed  
June 30, 2008

Ralph D. Taylor, Member

*Never doubt that a small, dedicated group of citizens can make a difference.  
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has...  
~ Margaret Mead*

## Appendix A

### **KATE TEA, LCSW, GAL**

130 Trading Bay Road, Suite 310

Kenai, Alaska 99611

Office 907.283.6551 Fax 907.283.6553

katetea@alaska.net

March 17, 2008

Ms. Tammy Sandoval  
Division of Health & Social Services  
Office of Children's Services  
323 East 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue; McKay Annex  
Anchorage, AK 99501

Ms. Sandoval,

I am a Kenai contract guardian ad litem with the Office of Public Advocacy. We have met on at least two occasions in Anchorage; once for Dianne Olsen's retirement party when we both spoke and again at the last CASA/GAL Conference this past fall. We may have also spoken together at the ICWA training last October. At any rate, I hope that you remember meeting me.

I am writing to you not only as a children's advocate but also in my broader obligation as a social worker to work for change as delineated in the National Association of Social Workers, Code of Ethics. I believe I have a responsibility to my social work colleagues, the families and children we serve, and to advocate for resource allocation when necessary. It is in the spirit mutual concern and sharing common goals as social workers that I am approaching you.

On the occasions that I have had the opportunity to speak with you, I have shared my sincere appreciation for the supervisors and line staff social workers in our Kenai OCS office. I have been a social worker for 20 and guardian ad litem for 10 years. Over this period of time I have experienced many changes in the law, procedures, and personnel in the Department of Law and the Office of Children's Services. Over this same period of time it has been my observation that the quality of social work being performed in the Kenai office has steadily improved. The caliber of social work in the Kenai office is overall excellent in both the intake/investigations and permanency units.

My concern and the purpose of this letter is to bring your attention to the extreme shortage of personnel in the Kenai office which is compromising the ability of the social workers to adequately manage their caseloads. The Kenai caseload numbers have grown to the breaking point and have become intolerable.

I am not as familiar with the intake/investigations unit caseload or staffing needs as I am with the permanency unit due to my duties as a GAL. However, I have observed that all of the intake/investigations social workers are always working at an exhausting pace. I am aware that the intake/investigations unit has been working hard to implement the new "Intake Assessment" model which has placed a significant increase in the demands on their time. These types of changes, while having overall benefit to casework, can become hidden variables that further stretch overworked social workers that are difficult to measure.

At this time, there is "real" social work taking place in the intake/investigations unit with the result that the situations that are more amenable to change never reach the petition/custody stage and only the more complex cases reach the permanency unit. The cases that are transferred into the permanency unit are more complex and the families are much more entrenched in the behaviors that harm their children. The social workers in the permanency unit in Kenai have become completely overwhelmed with the numbers and needs of the families they are serving. The most recent numbers I have obtained from Ms. Abigale Henderson demonstrate what I have been hearing for some time; our social workers in Kenai have caseloads in numbers three times those recommended by the Child Welfare League of America as caseload/workload standards. My research through the NASW web site brought to light information that not only are caseloads high but that "workloads" are even higher due to the growing complexity of the cases. CWLA recommends caseloads of between 12 and 15 children (I have also read 12-14 children) and our Kenai permanency social workers are averaging 22.4 families and 38 children (using figures from January 2008 only).

While every office experiences turnover from time to time, we have been fortunate to have been able to maintain a stable social work staff. This is rapidly changing as the well-trained, committed, and excellent social workers remaining begin to buckle under the extreme burden of so many cases, vacant positions, and the ever increasing number of mandated tasks and procedures that are implemented both internally and most recently externally from the Kenai Court System.

Kenai is at the breaking point. If more positions are not allocated to this office we will begin experiencing more turnover, which will compound every challenge placed upon the remaining social workers leading to the spiral of increasingly compromised casework. There comes a time when no amount of organizational or time management skill can compensate for an unmanageable workload. The dedicated social workers in Kenai have resorted to working late hours, weekends, and holidays in their efforts to address the

demands of their work. Most of them look forward to a holiday as an opportunity to have a “quieter” time to work. The late evenings, weekends, and holiday work schedule has become the norm rather than the exception. We will not be able to retain seasoned social workers or attract new qualified social workers as long as this office remains severely understaffed.

I have been reviewing literature about the impact of social worker turnover on outcomes in child protection. Of interest is an article that can be reviewed at <http://www.uky.edu/SocialWork/cswe/documents/turnoverstudy.pdf> The study looked at the correlation between continuity in the social work relationship and permanency. In this study, the researchers determined that foster children with only one social worker were returned to their family 75% of the time but that this number dropped to about 18% when there were two workers and then to almost zero when there were 6 or 7 workers. I am sure that you are also painfully aware of numerous studies demonstrating the deleterious effects of social worker turnover on outcomes.

There are real overt and covert risks inherent to the conditions that currently exist in the Kenai OCS office. Everyone there is doing all that they can to meet the needs of the families but even with their “regular” extended hours, they are unable to keep up. More positions are needed to maintain even minimally acceptable casework; the current situation is an accident waiting to happen. It is my ethical responsibility as a social worker to advocate for our families and my colleagues; dedicated social workers who are not able to fulfill their obligations and responsibilities due to severe understaffing in their office. We all are responsible for advocating within and outside our agencies for adequate resources to meet clients’ needs. I urge you to please allocate several new social worker positions to the Kenai OCS office as soon as possible.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Kate Tea, LCSW, GAL  
 Licensed Clinical Social Worker, #196  
 Certified Chemical Dependency Counselor, Level II  
 Guardian ad litem

cc. Mr. James Steele, SCRO Children’s Services Manager  
 Ms. Abigale Henderson, SW V, SCRO Staff Manager  
 Ms. Katie Stafford, Kenai Supervisor  
 Mr. Bill Galic, Kenai Supervisor  
 Ms. Michelle Higuchi, Kenai Office AAG

## Appendix C

### Office of Children's Services *Stronger Families, Safer Children*

## Manager's Training Outline 2008

According to Team Leadership in the First Ninety Days by Maynard Brusman - *the first weeks are crucial for learning and evaluating. Leaders must maintain the right balance of confidence and humility, while asking probing questions and actively listening. They need a firm support network in place; they must learn everything they can about the organization, its strategies, and customers. Leaders must dedicate a large percentage of learning time to getting to know existing team members in the shortest possible time-frame. Transition from the outside and you face the task of identifying and placing the right people into the right positions, which is a much greater challenge.*

Accordingly, within 90 days of employment new manager will meet with each member of Statewide Management Team for orientation to each domain within the Office of Children's Services. Statewide Management Team members will provide an overview regarding the following:

#### Director

- DHSS Leadership
- Mission
- Vision
- Values
- 5 Goals
- Prevention
- Quality Assurance
- Citizen Review Panel

#### Deputy Director

- Role of Deputy Director
- Role of manager in utilizing available human, financial and tangible resources to accomplish OCS' mission
- Philosophy of residential care
- Psych nurses
- Solution focused problem solving
- How this position fits into the OCS manager structure
- DHSS Joint Management Team
- Bring the Kids Home

## Appendix C

### Administrative Manager

- Organization Structures
  - State, Department, Division, Region, Field
  - Authorities and delegations
- Budget/Funds
  - When, Where, and How We are Funded
  - Applicable Rules that Follow the Funding
  - Regional Allocations
- Personnel P&P
  - Roles & Responsibility
  - Workplace Alaska & the Hiring Process
  - Use of Non Perms
  - Alternate Work Weeks
  - Reclassifications
  - Disciplinary Actions - Authorization Levels
- Travel Do's and Don'ts/Credit Card Use
- ORCA and Finance - Provider Payments
  - Policy, Procedure, Regulations
  - QA Purpose and Process
  - Matrix Expenditures
  - Audit Exceptions
  - Why ORCA Entries Dictate Allowable Expenditures
  - Your Responsibility/ Accountability for Expenditures Approvals
- Manager's Responsibilities re: Revenue
  - IV-E and the Penetration Rate
  - RMTS
  - Other Revenue Sources

### Program Administrator

- Policy
- Child & Family Services Review
- Child & Family Services Plan
- Annual Services Progress Report
- Title IV-E State Plan
- Tribal Title IV-E
- Service Array Section (Programs)
- Resource Family Section (Foster Care & Adoption)
- State office and field offices - one agency

## Appendix C

### Child Welfare Administrator

- Standardizing Safety Decision Making Practice  
Tying safety decision making to division goals
- Family to Family Initiative
- Partnership w/Casey Family Programs & Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Training Academy
- Tips/Lessons learned for management

### ORCA Administrator

- ORCA - System of Record
- ORCA as Supervision tool
- ORCA enhancements/improvements
- ORCA Help
- Future of ORCA
- Reports
- ORCA Demonstration

### Community Relations/Legislative Liaison

- Legislative Session
- Constituent Relations
- Media responses
- PIT work
- OCS website
- Retention & Recruitment efforts
- The ACT
- The CJA

If the manager comes to OCS with no previous child protective services experience, the manager will make every attempt to attend TONE within their first 60 days of employment.

If the manager comes to OCS with no previous State of Alaska experience, the manager will make every attempt possible to attend the Division of Personnel - Supervisory Training within 120 days of employment.

## Appendix B

## OCS WORKFORCE GOALS & STRATEGIES

GOAL STRATEGY ACTIVITY	START	FINISH	% COMPLETE	STAFF RESPONSIBLE	COMMENTS / PROGRESS
<b>GOAL #1 - ORGICULTURE / VALUES: Improve public, partner, stakeholder and staff understanding of OCS' mission, vision, values and desired outcomes.</b>					
<b>Strategy A</b>	<b>Increase Public Education Efforts</b>				
Activity 1	Social Norms Marketing Campaign	9/30/2008	3/31/09	25%	Mike R&R Workgroup Developing proposal; schedule meeting with Jeff Linkenback; pursue with Nat'l Alliance/ACT
<b>Strategy B</b>	<b>Develop a comprehensive and consistently implemented New Staff Orientation Plan</b>				
Activity 1	Develop and implement new employee orientation training program.	10/24/08	1/31/2009	25%	Travis; R&R Workgroup Travis presented Anch New EE Orientation program implementation to Mgrs during Mgmt Team Mtg in November
Activity 2	Create a Development Plan for New Staff Mgrs & CSMs.	8/20/08	9/9/2008	100%	SLT Distributed to current CSMs and Staff Managers as an FYI
<b>Strategy C</b>	<b>Communication Plan</b>				
Activity 1	Create a "Communications Guidelines" document for staff use.	6/18/08	9/22/2008	100%	SLT Distributed to Statewide Mgmt Team with directive to discuss / distribute to staff.
<b>Strategy D</b>	<b>Appreciative Inquiry</b>				
Activity 1	Deliver Intro to Appreciative Inquiry presentation	10/6/08	12/31/2008	20%	SLT Senior Leadership Team reviewing

## Appendix B

GOAL STRATEGY ACTIVITY	START	FINISH	% COMPLETE	STAFF RESPONSIBLE	COMMENTS / PROGRESS	
<b>GOAL #2 - TRAINING: Provide comprehensive and on-going, culturally-competent and current best practices training.</b>						
<b>Strategy A</b>	<b>Incorporate Mission, Vision and Values into Supervisor's Curriculum</b>					
Activity 1	Train on the importance of supervisory role in supporting MVV among their staff	9/1/2008	11/18/2008	95%	Jay C	In process
<b>Strategy B</b>	<b>Cadre of Supervisors / Facilitators (based on need)</b>					
Activity 1	Canvass supervisors who have completed Supervisor Training to select those who are willing to provide ongoing training for OCS employees.	4/1/2009	7/1/2009	0%	Jay C	Work not yet started
<b>Strategy C</b>	<b>Review Curriculum and Decide Implementation Plan</b>					
Activity 1	Develop proposal				Jay C	
<b>Strategy D</b>	<b>Become a "Learning System Rather Than a Training System"</b>					
Activity 1	Develop proposal				Jay C	
<b>GOAL #3 - RECRUITMENT: Expand the OCS recruitment message, target those applicants most fit for child welfare duty and utilize their talents whenever and wherever possible.</b>						
<b>Strategy A</b>	<b>RJP</b>					
Activity 1	Produce an OCS-featured Realistic Job Profile DVD to be incorporated into OCS hiring procedures.	11/1/07	1/31/2009	50%	Mike; David	Urban taping and staff interviews complete; David Caldwell has yet to interview rural staff and capture 'B Roll'
<b>Strategy B</b>	<b>High School / College Interns</b>					
Activity 1	Implement State of Alaska's Intern Program into OCS offices				Maritt	

## Appendix B

GOAL STRATEGY ACTIVITY		START	FINISH	% COMPLETE	STAFF RESPONSIBLE	COMMENTS / PROGRESS
<b>Strategy C</b>	<b>Double Fills</b>					
Activity 1						
<b>Strategy D</b>	<b>On-Calls</b>					
Activity 1						
<b>Strategy E</b>	<b>5 Step Interviewing Process</b>					
Activity 1						
<b>Strategy F</b>	<b>Job Fairs</b>					
Activity 1						
<b>GOAL #4 - RETENTION (cont.): Create a work environment that includes the types of relationships, support, opportunities for growth, workload expectations and compensation that employees do not want to leave.</b>						
<b>Strategy A</b>	<b>AWW Agreements*</b>					
Activity 1						
<b>Strategy B</b>	<b>Telecommuting Agreements*</b>					
Activity 1						
<b>Strategy C</b>	<b>Job Share Agreements*</b>					
Activity 1						

## Appendix B

GOAL STRATEGY ACTIVITY		START	FINISH	% COMPLETE	STAFF RESPONSIBLE	COMMENTS / PROGRESS
<b>Strategy D</b>	<b>Lunch and Learns</b>					
Activity 1						
<b>Strategy E</b>	<b>On-going Training</b>					
Activity 1						
<b>Strategy F</b>	<b>Team Building</b>					
Activity 1						
<b>Strategy G</b>	<b>Continue Implementing Workload Study Results</b>					
Activity 1						
<b>Strategy H</b>	<b>Student Loan Forgiveness</b>					
Activity 1	Add OCS caseworkers to any 2009 legislation related to a loan forgiveness program	10/3/08	4/20/2009	10%	Mike	Mike networking with DHSS staff on the DHSS leg proposal
<b>Strategy I</b>	<b>Recognition Program</b>					
Activity 1	Implement and use latest departmental program for all OCS staff	10/1/08		20%	Everyone	DHSS Recognition Program being reviewed by DOA as of 11/10/08
Activity 2	Welcome and congratulate new employees at completion of TONE with OCS t-shirts	10/13/08			Jay C	Funding to come from the contract amount in the FYSTA budget?

## Appendix B

GOAL STRATEGY ACTIVITY	START	FINISH	% COMPLETE	STAFF RESPONSIBLE	COMMENTS / PROGRESS	
<b>GOAL #5 - Stipend Program: Create a new employee stipend program that effectively attracts staff, educationally nurtures staff and successfully binds the employee/employer agreement.</b>						
<b>Strategy A</b>	<b>Evaluation of Current Stipend Program</b>					
Activity 1	Contractor Don Schmid will review effectiveness of stipend program for past 3 years.	9/1/08	11/1/2008	90%	Contractor Schmid	D. Schmid has given preliminary findings to N. Rolfzen, T. Sandoval & C. Lawton
<b>Strategy B</b>	<b>Implement Recommendations from Evaluation</b>					
Activity 1	Begin to implement recommendations to revise stipend program beginning 2009	11/1/08	4/1/2009	30%	Christy Lawton	
<b>GOAL #6 - Human Resources: Utilize all tools, knowledge and assistance that is available within the Dept. of Administration, Division of Personnel, and effective in meeting staff recruitment and retention goals.</b>						
<b>Strategy A</b>	<b>Data to Manage / Decisions</b>					
Activity 1						
<b>Strategy B</b>	<b>Competencies for Positions</b>					
Activity 1						
<b>Strategy C</b>	<b>Performance to Appraisals Re: Competencies</b>					
Activity 1						

## Appendix B

GOAL STRATEGY ACTIVITY		START	FINISH	% COMPLETE	STAFF RESPONSIBLE	COMMENTS / PROGRESS
<b>Strategy D</b>	<b>Knowledge Transfer Plans</b>					
Activity 1	Develop Knowledge of Transfer Plans per Admin. Order 237 deadline				Maritt	Maritt to provide 'Getting Started' presentation to Mgrs TBA
<b>Strategy E</b>	<b>Performance Coaching</b>					
Activity 1	Expand recent DOP-delivered trainings received in Anchorage & Wasilla to entire agency	11/13/08			Mike	Travis presented to Mgrs at statewide Mgmt Team Mtg in Anchorage in November on 11/13
<b>Strategy F</b>	<b>Union Meetings</b>					
Activity 1	Schedule meetings with Union Reps to help reframe their paradigm of OCS workload	9/23/08	50%		Mike Maritt Tammy	Set meeting with ASEA Business Rep Toya Winton to discuss OCS caseload count and '08 Staff Survey results
<b>GOAL #7 - UAA / UAF: Collaborate with the University system to expand and prepare an applicant pool that is fit for child welfare work in Alaska and exceeds the staffing needs of the OCS program.</b>						
<b>Strategy A</b>	<b>Kentucky's Public Child Welfare Certificate Program</b>					
Activity 1						
<b>GOAL #8 - Other: These must be categorized as 'Other', or miscellaneous goals at this time.</b>						
<b>Strategy A</b>	<b>Review Work Group Membership</b>					
Activity 1	Reestablish membership of the R&R workgroup	11/13/08	12/15/2008	75%	Mike	Mike obtained CSM participation during statewide Mgmt Team Mtg in Anchorage in November; CSMs to appoint others from Region

## Appendix B

GOAL STRATEGY ACTIVITY	START	FINISH	% COMPLETE	STAFF RESPONSIBLE	COMMENTS / PROGRESS
<b>Strategy B</b>	<b>Break Out into Subcommittees</b>				
Activity 1	Direct tasks of R&R workgroup to smaller subcommittees when appropriate			Mike	
<b>Strategy C</b>	<b>"Training" Becomes "Learning"</b>				
Activity 1					

The Office of Children's Services (OCS) wishes to thank the Alaska Citizen Review Panel (CRP) for its work in the past year to ensure the safety and well being of the children of Alaska. We know that we cannot do the work necessary to prevent and reduce child maltreatment without the assistance of all of our community partners. We appreciate the CRP for their diligence in examining policies and procedures and practices that then inform recommendations toward systems improvement of the OCS.

It has been another industrious year for OCS. We continued to work diligently on improving and standardizing practice across the state related to child safety decision making and we were able to roll out *Family to Family* from Anchorage to Fairbanks. We were able to increase new worker training from 2 weeks to 4 weeks to better prepare staff to do child protective services. We were able to implement a competency-based curriculum for supervisors to strengthen their ability to better support their staff. We strengthened partnerships with other divisions within the Department of Health and Social Services to provide a better service delivery system to families that come to the Department's attention through several different doors – Public Assistance, Behavioral Health and Juvenile Justice. We spent more time and effort on the prevention of child maltreatment to combat child abuse and the need for intervention from protective services.

The biggest event to happen within OCS in the past year was the Federal Child and Family Review (CFSR) in September. A great deal of time and effort went into the planning and preparation for the CFSR. That work began with the completion of a Statewide Assessment. A copy of the document can be viewed at - <http://hss.state.ak.us/ocs/Publications/CFSRstateAssessment.pdf>. The final CFSR report has not yet been received from the Administration for Children and Families, but strategic planning for the Performance Improvement Plan has begun.

Again this year, OCS concentrated a lot of effort on Continuous Quality Improvement, including conducting statewide case reviews, quality assurance of our safety assessment implementation and the annual stakeholder surveys. The survey results can be viewed at <http://hss.state.ak.us/ocs/QualityImprovement/QualityImprovement.htm>. The stakeholder surveys also included our annual staff survey. The staff survey produced a 77% response rate this year and a wealth of insightful comments. This year's staff survey truly indicates that OCS staff is committed to the organization's success and invested in improving service delivery to children and families!

The revision of Policy and Procedures (P/P) is a continual process within the OCS. Last year the format of our P/P was revised to become more user-friendly. This year the focus was on revisions to update P/P. A copy of all the revisions is included in Appendix A.

The following are the responses to the specific recommendations made in the CRP 2008 Annual Report:

**Recommendation 1 - Create a fifth region headquartered in Bethel.**

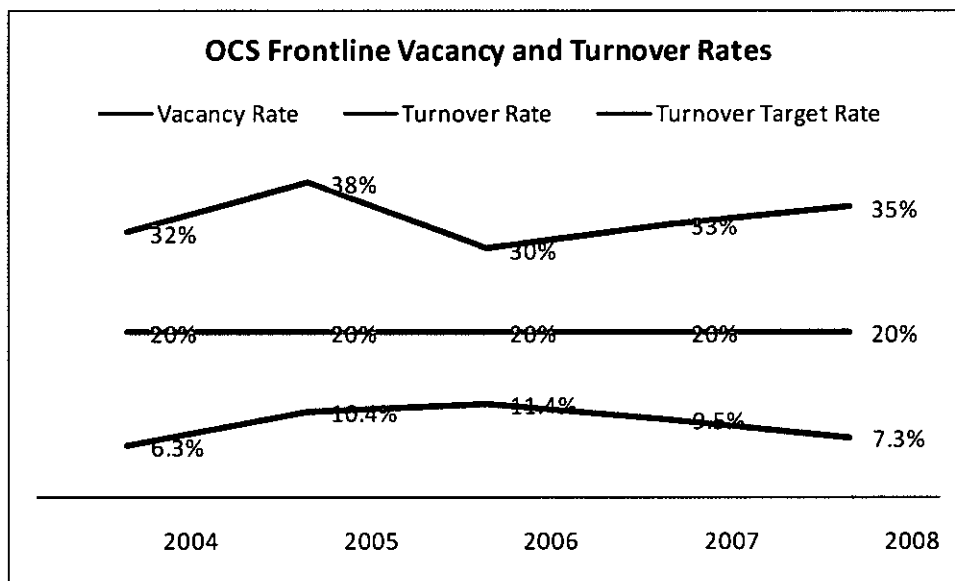
The Governor's Proposed FY2010 Budget was released on December 15, 2008, and does not include a request for funding a 5<sup>th</sup> region within OCS. OCS has made some changes that are proving to be of assistance though. There is a new Staff Manager in Bethel and a new dynamic South Central Regional (SCRO) Children's Services Manager (CSM) with several years of child protective services expertise. Additionally, an experienced supervisor transferred from Wasilla to Bethel to fill a vacancy. Teamwork within the region is more apparent than ever before and issues are being dealt with as a region, rather than Bethel standing alone as it has at times in the past. The SCRO CSM is soliciting assistance from his co-managers around the state to stand in and help with the work until vacancies can be filled.

In an effort to draw more attention and gain more information, Bethel was selected as a sight to be reviewed in the Federal CFSR in September 2008. While the final report has not yet been issued, regional management has begun to follow up on areas in need of most attention. The focus has been on recruitment and hiring of new staff to fill vacancies; strengthening partnerships with tribal organizations; strengthening community partnerships; creating new ways to increase and improve communication between ICWA workers and OCS staff; and planning for cultural awareness training in January of 2009. Additionally, regional management is working with OCS licensing staff to develop a plan to fully train and license foster families in the Bethel region.

**Recommendation 2 - Implement workload study recommendations.**

The Governor has included 5 new positions for OCS in the proposed FY 2010 budget. Pending approval from the Legislature, the final phase of the recommendations from the Hornsby Zeller Associates workload study report of 2006 will be complete.

Child Protective Services is an emotionally demanding vocation. Across the nation, compassion, fatigue and vicarious trauma lead to high turnover and vacancy rates among caseworkers. In Alaska, fifty percent of the OCS front-line caseworkers have been employed with the agency for less than two years, and 20 percent have less than one year of experience. While vacancy rates have improved since 2006, turnover rates continue to slowly increase.



To institutionalize a mindful and daily focus on workforce development, the OCS formed an internal work group in the fall of 2007 to focus on retention and recruitment strategies. Workforce Goals and Strategies were developed and put into a written work plan that is constantly being revised and added to as the work evolves. (See Appendix B). The workgroup includes a representative from the University of Alaska Family and Youth Services Training Academy, the Division of Personnel, several OCS staff at all levels within the division, and a member from the Annie E. Casey Foundation that is providing technical

assistance. In addition, an executive steering committee was created in August of 2008 to provide guidance and oversight of the workgroup. Two of the members have also joined a DHSS Workforce Development Team created by Commissioner Hogan in November 2008.

The OCS internal work group has begun development of a realistic job profile DVD, intended to minimize turnover through recruitment processes that better inform applicants. A candidate for hire is sent a DVD and asked to sign a simple attestation form which states 1) they have watched the video; and 2) they *still* want to be interviewed and considered for the OCS frontline position. While this is a relatively new technique, states that have already implemented such a process are seeing an increase of new employees that truly have the competencies and the heart to do child protective services work, and a decrease of early resignations/dismissals. The OCS is also adapting its website to include virtual, realistic job profiles of current OCS employees to help job applicants understand what the job entails *before* applying for positions with the division.

A new employee exit survey was created and protocol implemented to help determine why so many workers leave service. Employee incentive techniques are being explored and alternative work weeks are being encouraged. Other strategies related to salaries, student loan forgiveness programs, and telecommuting agreements are also being explored.

The OCS is focusing on several other strategies to increase staff retention. Some of those strategies include increasing new employee training from 2 to 4 weeks to better prepare and equip new front-line workers with the skills and tools they need to do their complicated and demanding jobs. A supervisory competencies curriculum was developed and has begun to be delivered to child protective services supervisory staff. The curriculum has received rave reviews from those in attendance. The Anchorage Field Office has developed and implemented an extensive new employee orientation to supplement new worker training. This new employee orientation model has been shared with the regional managers and is expected to be adapted and implemented in the other regions as well. Due to the number of new field managers coming on board in the past year, an Orientation and Development Plan for New Managers was also developed and implemented. (See Appendix C).

The OCS used its Title IV-E contractor to thoroughly evaluate our current student stipend program with the Universities as the program has not lived up to its expectations for the retention of staff that have been paid to receive an advanced degree. That evaluation has been completed. Based on the contractor's recommendations, revisions and development of policy and procedures is underway so that a stronger and more successful stipend program is in place by the fall of 2009.

The OCS Management Information System, ORCA, is producing more management reports than ever before. One of those reports includes case load data by case worker, office and region. Assignment of new positions and reallocation of existing positions is based on that data and watching the trends of new reports and case assignments each month. Managerial reports have recently been shared with all managers in face-to-face statewide meetings. Managers have been trained how to access and interpret the reports. These ORCA reports have just recently been made available to all staff - not just managers - to encourage all staff to monitor data around the state. OCS has observed that our caseloads have come down over the past year and are far more manageable than in recent years.

The OCS has formed a stronger working relationship with the Division of Personnel (DOP) and has requested Performance Coaching training in field offices. The DOP will accompany OCS to meet with staff and union representatives in an effort to discuss and resolve work load issues. Once the DHSS Employee Recognition Program is approved by the Department of Administration, OCS will adopt and

implement those policy and procedures in their entirety. Retention and recruitment of OCS staff is a systemic challenge. Many of the options determined viable are unattainable by OCS alone and must be supported at the state level.

**Recommendation 3 - Fix the telephone system.**

In planning for FY09, OCS had put in a capital request specifically to repair/replace antiquated phone systems in field offices. We were allocated \$136,000 to do so and began the repairs in July 2008, once the funding was received. To date, the necessary repairs and/or upgrades have been completed in Barrow, St. Mary's and Aniak. In various stages of being repair and/or upgrade are Kotzebue, Ketchikan, King Salmon, Glennallen, Kodiak, Wasilla, Bethel, Dillingham, Kenai, Seward and Unalaska.

Telephone systems functionality solves many of the issues. However, as is noted in your report, adequate staffing of OCS phones is also a concern. While the preference is that a live voice always responds to the public's calls, protocols about how that happens in each field office, including the small communities with one/two person offices, will be finalized and in place by February 1, 2009.

**Recommendation 4 - Publicize and staff the toll free number.**

As recommended, the toll free number to report child abuse and neglect has been more prominently displayed on the OCS website. It will also be posted to the DHSS website on a rotating basis with other DHSS divisional information. Additionally, the toll free number has been added to the home page of the Alaska Children's Trust website. To capitalize on cost-free advertising and better inform the public, the OCS shares the toll-free reporting number (as well as the Children's Trust Parent line) with the media whenever the OCS responds to media inquiries about child abuse and child neglect issues.

Currently, the toll free reporting line operates out of Anchorage and was set up to handle primarily Anchorage business. However, if the Anchorage Intake Unit receives a call from another part of the state during business hours, they are able to take the call and transfer the information to the correct field office. After business hours, the calls to the toll-free line are transferred to an answering service. It is agreed that there needs to be continued improvements to all aspects of intake and efforts will continue in the coming year.

In the past year, the entire intake process has been evaluated and is currently under reconstruction. The National Resource Center for Child Protective Services was enlisted to provide technical assistance on this topic. They have evaluated all business processes related to receiving and screening reports of maltreatment. Focus groups were held with staff; intakes were reviewed across the state; and intake workers were shadowed to learn more about our intake processes. We learned that intake has not received the attention and focus it so richly deserves as a separate area in need of expertise. Results from the program evaluation were shared in a face-to-face managers' meeting and planning began to make short term and long term improvements. It was decided that intake policy and procedures needed a major overhaul. Revisions are currently in final draft and will be released as soon as possible in the new year.

Longer term improvements include completely revamping how intake is conducted in the state. OCS staff prefer we move to either a statewide or regional hotline system, whereby all calls would be handled by designated intake staff who specialize in doing the work full time. Case carrying workers would not be expected to perform intake in their individual offices, but rather could concentrate exclusively on their investigative and ongoing work. Ideally, the statewide intake system would be

manned 24 hours a day/7 days a week. However, it will take many more resources, i.e., staff, space and increased information technology, than OCS currently has available.

**Recommendation 5 - Collocation of OCS Workers**

The OCS wholeheartedly agrees with this recommendation. Collocation is achieved whenever and wherever possible with a variety of different partners, including Child Advocacy Centers, Tribal Agencies, Law Enforcement, Mental Health, Infant Learning Program and others around the state. Whenever there is an opportunity to collocate with our community partners, the opportunity is explored and if feasible, is approved.

**Recommendation 6 - Support for Front Line Workers**

OCS Administrators and Managers concur that there can never be enough support given to front-line workers. As stated above, in the response regarding the work load study, there has much effort toward the retention and recruitment of staff in the past year.

New efforts to respond to this recommendation include training all managers on the services provided by the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), including the individual counseling and critical stress debriefings that are available to all state employees. The managers were asked to provide the latest information learned about the EAP with all staff in their regions. In response to tragedies involving both clients and a co-worker, OCS made several requests for EAP critical stress debriefings this past year.

In 2008, the Director began attending the last day of new worker training to welcome new staff, share the agency's vision and mission and answer questions. A large part of the Director's welcome to new staff is focused on encouraging them to engage in self care so that they stay mentally fit and capable of performing this demanding work.

The recently (November 2008) unveiled Supervisory Competencies Curriculum training being offered to all social worker supervisors through the Family & Youth Services Training Academy is a very directed effort to ensure that front-line staff are receiving better support through better supervision.

OCS managers and supervisors are increasingly cognizant of the complex personal and familial responsibilities that young workers juggle in today's world. Through our annual staff surveys and employee exit surveys, OCS staff is reporting how much they value the opportunity to work for an employer that offers flexible work schedules.

As stated above, vacancy rates are decreasing. With the number of new staff being added in the past several years, caseload sizes have gone down. Managers have more management reports available to them than ever before with which to equalize caseloads and watch trends within their regions.

In summary, the OCS continues to strive toward improving in its organizational development, better equip its staff with the skills and resources needed for the job, implement best practice standards and streamline processes whenever possible. Retention and recruitment of quality staff remains a top priority. 2008 has been an exceptional year of positive institutional changes, but systems reform will continue within OCS during 2009 and each year thereafter. Alaska's children and their families deserve nothing less.

## **CPS Manual Revisions Finalized in 2008**

### **2.1.2 Protective Services Alerts.**

The title of the section has been changed from "Out of Town Inquiries" to "Protective Services Alerts", and this section now addresses solely the procedures for responding to Protective Services Alerts (PSA) received from other states.

### **2.2.5 Conducting an Investigation; Assessing for Child Safety**

The section has been revised to reflect the safety assessment methodology that is now used by OCS.

### **2.7 Placement Preferences.**

The following requirements have been added:

- When an adult family member or family friend has requested placement of a child in their home, the worker will make every effort to make a placement decision within 45 days of the request.
- If the placement request is denied, the worker will notify the family member or family friend of the denial within five business days following the denial, using a form specified in the policy.
- The worker will document all potential placement resources, consideration of placement resources, and decisions regarding placement in relative/placement search case note in ORCA.

### **3.5.5 Background Checks for Placement Resources and Interstate Requests for Child Protection Records.**

This is a new section that includes the policy and procedures on fingerprinting requirements that were previously located in section 6.8.4. In addition, the revisions address requirements in recent federal legislation (the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act). The following revisions have been made:

- The requirements has been added that:
  - Child protection records (ORCA and Prober), the Juvenile Offender Management Information System (JOMIS), and the Sex Offender Registry must be checked for each household member 16 or older in the home of an unlicensed placement resource (unlicensed relative and prospective adoptive parents or guardians).
  - If the prospective adoptive parents or any other adult in the home have lived in another state in the preceding five years, OCS must request information from the child abuse and neglect registry from each state of residence during the five-year period.
  - New fingerprint based criminal background checks are required for individuals who previously completed fingerprint based criminal background checks as unlicensed relatives or foster parents and now are applying to become adoptive parents or guardians.
  - OCS is required to respond to requests from other states for child abuse and neglect registry checks.
- It is clarified that:
  - The worker will contact the Resource Family Section in State Office if an individual who is required to be fingerprinted is unable to provide fingerprints due to a medical or physical condition that is documented by a licensed physician.
  - The federal criminal background check requirement for prospective adoptive parents is not met if a name-based criminal background check is completed on a prospective adoptive parent due to rejected fingerprint cards and the cards were rejected solely

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because the fingerprint impressions were of low quality due to lack of technological capacity or use of improper technique.

- If a variance is granted to a prospective adoptive parent who has been convicted of certain felonies, a Title IV-E subsidy cannot be approved for a child placed in that home.
- The OCS APSIN Unit handles requests from other states for child abuse and neglect registry.
- Procedures addressing rejected fingerprint cards have been added.
- The section has been updated to reflect ORCA procedures.

### **3.6.1 Placement Preparation.**

It is clarified that issues to be discussed with the care provider prior to placement include:

- The child's mental health needs and ongoing services and supports needed to meet the needs;
- The child's educational needs, including special education services and supports,
- That the child should be maintained in their current school, whenever possible; and
- If known, the child's tribal heritage and tribal resources that may be able to assist the care provider with continuing the child's connection to their culture.

### **3.7 Change or Termination of Placement/Trial Home Visit/Return Home.**

- The section has been reorganized, and updated to reflect ORCA procedures.
- The following requirement has been added:
  - For non-emergency transfers, the worker will provide advance notice to the child, the child's parents or Indian custodian or guardian, the child's foster parents or out-of-home caregiver, GAL, attorney, and tribe by sending a form specified in the policy and will make every effort to provide notification at least ten days prior to the intended transfer.
  - For emergency transfers, the worker will make every effort to notify the parties no later than five working days following the transfer by sending a form specified in the policy.
- It is clarified that when special planning is needed for a developmentally disabled child who is about to be released from custody, the planning will be initiated at least six months prior to the release or as soon as it is known that the child will be released from custody.

### **3.14.1 Life Skills Assessment.**

- The section has been revised to reflect changes in the Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA).
- It is clarified that OCS' policy requires that all children in custody age sixteen or older who are placed out-of-home complete an ACLSA at least annually, starting at the latest at age sixteen.
- It is also clarified that youth or caregivers who have questions about the ACLSA or need hard copy forms may contact either the Alaska Center for Resource Families or the Regional Independent Living Specialist.

### **3.14.2 Resources for Youth in Custody and Youth No Longer in Custody**

The section has been re-titled and divided into two subsections: **3.14.2.1 Transitioning out of Custody** and **3.14.2.2 Resources for Former Foster Youth**.

**3.14.2.1 Transitioning out of Custody:** This section addresses resources available to youth in custody who are preparing to transition out of custody.

- It is clarified that OCS's policy requires that an Exit Plan be developed for every 16-year-old in custody. The plan becomes part of the case plan and both the youth's worker and the Regional Independent Living Specialist are involved in developing the plan. An Exit

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Plan outline has been added to the CPS Forms subdirectory of the Statewide Forms Directory.

- For every youth in custody who is approaching the age of majority the worker will assess the youth's ability to live self-sufficiently. If, after the worker has discussed the issue with the youth's GAL or CASA and/or the Office of Public Advocacy, it is decided that a conservator should be appointed, the worker will ask the GAL to initiate a conservatorship proceeding.

**3.14.2.2 Resources for Former Foster Youth:** This section addresses resources available to youth who have left OCS custody. It is clarified that workers who are contacted by former foster youths about independent living services or funds will refer the youth to either the Independent Living Program Coordinator in State Office or to a Regional Independent Living Specialist.

### **5.2.3.B Receipt and Acceptance of Completed Home Study.**

This is a new section that addresses acceptance of an ICPC home study and the required time lines. It is clarified that if OCS determines that a home study received from another state is insufficient for making a placement decision for a child, OCS must notify the other state within fourteen days of receiving the home study.

### **5.3.1 Completing the Interstate Compact (ICPC) Home Study.**

This section addresses requirements in recent federal legislation (the Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Children Act), and merges former sections 5.3.1 Time Frames for Completing the Study and 5.3.2 Completing the Home Study. The following revisions have been made:

- The requirement has been added that when another state requests a home study, OCS must respond to the request within 60 days of when the request is received by submitting a report on the result of the home study to the requesting state.
- It is clarified that:
  - The assigned worker will submit a report on the result of the home study before or on the due date regardless of whether it includes a placement recommendation. If a placement recommendation cannot be made by the due date, the worker will list the reason why in the report.
  - If a request for an adoptive home study is referred to an adoptive home study contractor the OCS worker is responsible for ensuring that the report on the result of the home study is received by the Alaska Deputy Compact Administrator by the due date.
  - Supervisors will assign the home study to an OCS worker within three business days of receiving the request packet.
  - Definitions of "home study" and "report on the result of a home study" have been added.

### **5.3.2 Completing the Home Study.**

This section has been deleted.

### **6.2.1.3 Federal Support – IV-E and Medicaid**

The section has been updated to reflect current procedures and current federal rules, definitions and clarifications have been added, and the specific information about the eligibility requirements for Title IV-E adoption subsidies has been moved from section 6.2.2.6.A to this section.

- Changes in the eligibility requirements for Title IV-E Foster include the requirement that the child must now be AFDC eligible
  - in the home from which removed
  - in the month court proceedings are initiated to remove the child from home.

As a result, Parent's Self-Declaration of Income and Resources forms (06-9794) must be

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completed for all children who are removed from home. The form has been revised to reflect the change in eligibility requirements and the CPS Forms subdirectory of the Statewide Forms directory has been updated with the revised form.

- For eligibility for IV-E Adoption Assistance it is no longer required that the child is eligible for AFDC in the month that the adoption petition is filed.
- The following definitions have been added:
  - The AFDC definition of “specified relative”.
  - “Date the child is considered to have entered foster care” – this date determines, for Title IV-E eligibility, the due date of the first annual finding that reasonable efforts have been made to implement the permanency plan.
- The policy on minor parent and baby in placement has been updated to reflect the current federal rules.
- The procedures for IV-E eligibility reviews have been revised to reflect that while the requirement remains that Medicaid eligibility be reviewed every six months, redeterminations of Title IV-E Foster Care eligibility are now completed by the Eligibility Technician at least every twelve months and more frequently when something occurs that effects a child’s eligibility.
- The section has been updated to reflect ORCA procedures.

### **6.2.2.6.B Guardianship Subsidies**

- The definition for “hard to place/special needs child” has been added.
- The section has been expanded to include the policy and procedures for subsidy negotiations.
- Information has been added about the approval process for guardianship subsidies for children under age ten.
- The section has been updated to reflect ORCA procedures.

### **6.2.2.11 Request for Independent Living Individual Funds for Youth in Custody and Youth No Longer in Custody**

- The section has been updated to reflect current procedures:
  - A youth may initiate a request for independent living funds by either completing a request for funds application or by speaking with their caseworker and/or the Regional Independent Living Specialist to determine that a need for funds exists.
  - The application form and instructions for education and training vouchers can be obtained through the Regional Independent Living Specialist.
- It is clarified that for education and training voucher funds a youth can access a maximum of \$5,000 per academic years for a total of eight semesters, and youth may access funds up to age twenty-three if they started their post-secondary education by age twenty-one.

### **6.3.1 Medical, Dental, Vision, and Mental Health Care**

- The requirement has been added that when a child is released from custody due to reaching the age of majority or being emancipated, the assigned worker will ensure that the child’s medical and mental health record is supplied to the child at no cost.
- Examples are provided for what specific kinds of information must be given to the out-of-home care provider.
- It is clarified that:
  - The assigned worker is responsible for ensuring that the child’s medical and mental health records in the case file are kept up-to-date, including records provided by the care provider.
  - Minors have the right to consent to diagnosis, prevention, or treatment of pregnancy, and therefore consent by the child’s parents, OCS, or the out-of-home provider is not required in order for a child in custody to obtain birth control or having an abortion.

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### **6.5.9 Education**

- Information has been added about the procedures for appointment of surrogate parents, and their role.
- The requirement has been added that when a child leaves foster care due to reaching the age of majority or being emancipated, the worker will ensure that a copy of the child's education record is supplied to the child at no cost.
- It is clarified that the worker is responsible for ensuring that a child's educational record is reviewed and updated at the time of each out-of-home placement of the child, and that a copy of the record is provided to the foster parent.

### **6.6.1 Intrastate Case Transfers.**

The following revisions have been made:

- It is clarified that transfer between regions will occur only when the judicial venue has changed.
- Procedures for changing judicial venue have been added.
- Time lines have been added for:
  - the receiving supervisor to assign the case; and
  - the assigned worker and the receiving worker to discuss the case.
- The requirement has been added that when a case is transferred to another region the transferring worker will notify the Regional Eligibility Technician of the case transfer to ensure that the Title IV-E and Medicaid case is transferred to the other region.
- The section has been updated to reflect ORCA procedures.

### **6.6.2 Out-of-Town Requests (OTR).**

The section has been reorganized, and the following revisions have been made:

- Timelines for responding to requests have been added.
- The unlicensed relative study outline has been revised to reflect the outline in section 3.5.2 Assessment of Unlicensed Relative Homes (Non-Emergency Placements), and the outline has been added to the statewide forms directory.
- The procedures for background checks for unlicensed relative homes have been updated to reflect current procedures.
- Procedures have been added for responding to requests from non-OCS offices.
- The policy and procedures for changing venue have been moved to section 6.6.1.
- The procedures for placement in a residential facility in another region have been deleted, since a secondary worker is not requested for such placements.

### **6.8.4 Inquiries to Alaska Public Safety Information Network (APSIN).**

This section previously addressed both APSIN checks and fingerprinting. It has been split into two sections, and the APSIN check policy and procedures remains in 6.8.4 and the fingerprinting policy and procedures has been moved to new section 3.5.5. The following revisions have been made to the APSIN check policy and procedures:

- The phone and fax numbers for the Alaska State Troopers has been updated.
- The section has been updated to reflect ORCA procedures.

## OCS Forms Changes Finalized in 2008

### Revised Forms

- **06-9013 Foster Home Visit Worksheet:** an applicant certification and signature section has been added to ensure compliance with the requirement that licenses are based on a license application.
- **06-9013 Foster Home Visit Worksheet:** The names of children in custody placed in the home have been replaced with the initials of the children.
- **06-9045 Plan for Care:** revised to address requirements in the amended licensing regulations. In addition, questions have been added to address how the foster parent will support the religious, ethnic, cultural heritage and language of foster child's family and how the foster parent will assist a foster child with different practices than the foster family's to attend their own religious or cultural events. The questions were previously located on form 06-9389 Background Information Foster Parent.
- **06-9049 Foster Group Home Report of Inspection:** The form has been revised to reflect the amended licensing regulations.
- **06-9050 Foster Homes with Employees or Volunteers - Report of Inspection:** revised to reflect amendments of the licensing regulations.
- **06-9162 Application for Foster Care License:** revised to address requirements in the amended licensing regulations. In addition, a question has been added that addresses the foster parent's role in supporting and helping to implement the foster child's case plan. The question was previously located on form 06-9389 Background Information Foster Parent.
- **06-9178 Compliance Review:** This form replaces form D084-LIC-07 Compliance Review: Foster Home, and it has been revised to address requirements in the amended licensing statutes and regulations, changes in policy, and ORCA requirements. An additional page has been added to be used for documenting quality assurance findings, actions needed, and follow-up.
- **06-9336 General Variance Application:** The form has been updated to reflect that OCS now only licenses foster homes, foster group homes, and child placement agencies; and the title of the form has been changed from "Variance Application" to "General Variance Application" to avoid confusion, since there now is a separate variance process for the criminal check requirements (based on 7 AAC 10.930-945) with a separate variance application form.
- **06-9350 Notice of Denial of Licensure (Provisional):** a "certification of service" section has been added.
- **06-9351 Notice of Denial of Licensure (Biennial):** a "certification of service" section has been added.
- **06-9352 Notice of Denial of Licensure (Biennial Renewal):** a "certification of service" section has been added.
- **06-9353 Notice of Violation:** a "certification of service" section has been added.
- **06-9354 Initial Notice of Immediate Revocation/Suspension:** a "certification of service" section has been added.
- **06-9355 Warning Notice:** a "certification of service" section has been added.
- **06-9356 Report of Investigation:** a "certification of service" section has been added.
- **06-9357 Request for Hearing:** revised to include the applicant or licensee's address, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address.
- **06-9371 Foster Care Report of Inspection:** This form was formerly titled "Foster Homes Standard by Standard Evaluation" and it has been revised to reflect the amended licensing statutes and regulations.
- **06-9372 Emergency Shelter Care Health Review:** The revisions consist of minor formatting changes, including the addition of "yes" and "no" checkboxes.

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- **06-9389 Background Information Foster Parent:** "Yes" and "no" checkboxes have been added to some of the questions, and some of the questions have been moved to forms 06-9045 and 06-9162.
- **06-9437 Clearance Form:** revised to delete page 2 which contained outdated information about the background check requirements and to add a space for recording Sex Offender Registry History check.
- **06-9437 Clearance Form:** Information about the background check requirements has been added as pages 2 and 3 of the form.
- **06-9712 APSIN Request Form:** The statute citations on the form have been updated.
- **06-9730 Financial Summary Sheet:** This form was originally used only for adoptive applicants, and it has been revised to be used also for foster care licensing.
- **06-9731 Health History:** This form was previously used only for adoptive and guardianship applicants, and it has been revised to be used also for foster care licensing.
- **06-9748 Out-of-Town Request:** revisions include updates to address implementation of ORCA.
- **06-9772 Medical Health Information:** This form was previously used only for adoptive and guardianship applicants, and it has been revised to be used also for foster care licensing. The form is used when the completed Health History or information obtained during the home study process indicates that an applicant has health problems that may affect his/her ability to parent a child.
- **06-9773 Mental Health Information:** This form was previously used only for adoptive and guardianship applicants, and it has been revised to be used also for foster care licensing. The form is used when the completed Health History or information obtained during the home study process indicates that an applicant has mental health problems that may affect his/her ability to parent a child.
- **D084-LIC-17 Employment Application - Foster Home/Foster Group Home:** The title of the form has been changed to reflect that it now applies only to foster homes and foster group homes (it previously applied also to residential child care facilities and maternity homes). In addition, the number of required references has been changed to reflect the requirements in the current licensing regulations.

### Added Forms

- **06-9163 Family Characteristics:** completed by foster care applicants and adoptive applicants.
- **06-9179 Referral for Training:** used by OCS staff to refer care providers to the Alaska Center for Resource Families for training.
- **06-9180 Medical, Dental, and Medication Record, and Medication Log:** used by the care provider.
- **06-9181 Fire Drill Log:** This new form replaces form D084-LIC-06 Fire Drill Report and is intended to be used to document fire drills required for foster homes and foster group homes.
- **06-9337 Window Variance Worksheet:** used by licensing workers when a window variance is requested.
- **06-9358 Report of Inspection:** used to document the results of an inspection of a facility.
- **06-9359 Allegation of Compliance:** used by a foster care licensee to notify OCS of completion of a plan of correction.
- **06-9385 Request to Review Licensing Record Log:** used to record requests to review licensing files.
- **06-9386 Provider Emergency Response Information Form:** addresses the requirement in the amended licensing regulations that foster homes must have disaster preparedness and emergency evacuation plans.

## Appendix A

- **06-9761 Notice of Emergency Transfer:** used to notify the child, the child's parents or Indian custodian or guardian, attorney, and tribe of an emergency transfer of a child to another placement.
- **06-9762 Notice of Non-Emergency Transfer:** used to notify the child, the child's parents or Indian custodian or guardian, attorney, and tribe of a non-emergency transfer of a child to another placement.
- **06-9763 Notice of Denial of Placement:** used to notify an adult family member or family friend that their request for placement of a child in their home has been denied.
- **06-9798 Child Abuse and Neglect Information Request:** used for requesting information from another state's child abuse and neglect registry about prospective foster or adoptive parents and other adults living in the home, when any of those individuals have lived in another state in the preceding five years.
- **06-9799 Authorization for Release of Information from Child Abuse and Neglect Registry:** used to authorize release of information from another state's child abuse and neglect registry. The form is completed by prospective foster or adoptive parents and other adults living in the home, when any of those individuals have lived in another state in the preceding five years.
- **Unlicensed Relative Study Outline:** (from CPS Manual section 6.6.2) lists issues that must be addressed in an unlicensed relative study.
- **Request for a Superior Court Review Hearing of Placement Denial:** used by adult family member or family friend to request a review hearing when a request for placement of a child in their home has been denied.
- **D084 Orientation Brochures:** These brochures provide information about orientation for licensing and include addresses for the seven OCS field offices that have licensing workers. There are seven different versions of the brochure and the only difference between the seven versions is the contact information regarding orientation.
- **D084-LIC-10 Well Child Exam/Immunization Recommended Schedule:** This document is intended to provide information to care providers.

### Deleted Forms

- **06-9444 Second-Hand Smoke Reduction in Foster Home:** The form has been deleted because the content of the form has been incorporated into form 06-9045 Plan for Care.