

Joel Gilbertson, Commissioner
State of Alaska
Department of Health and Social Services
Office of the Commissioner
3601 C Street, Suite 578
PO Box 240249
Anchorage, AK 99524-0249

Dear Commissioner Gilbertson:

This is to notify you that the July 2003 submittal of Alaska's Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) Program Improvement Plan (PIP) as revised and resubmitted on August 18, 2003 is hereby approved, effective September 1, 2003 through August 31, 2005.

The initial PIP was submitted as required to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Region X Office in December 2002. Over the last several months our respective staff have worked in close partnership to further refine the PIP including developing additional information and clarification necessary to meet federal requirements. This letter reflects agreed upon conditions related to implementation, monitoring and goal achievement criteria.

The ACF Region X Office, in partnership with the State will evaluate the State's progress towards achieving the goals of the PIP as follows:

- The ACF Region X Office will monitor the State's progress in completing the provisions of the PIP through the State's written (or electronic) quarterly status reports. All reports will be submitted within 30 days from the end of each quarter. With PIP approval beginning September 1, 2003, the first quarter end date will be November 30, 2003 thus the first quarterly report will be due not later than December 30, 2003. The final reporting quarter ends August 31, 2005; therefore, the last PIP quarterly report is due by September 30, 2005. ACF Region X Office staff will conduct an on-site mid-term PIP review following receipt of the first year's third quarter report for purposes of evaluating PIP progress. Other on-site visits may occur as determined necessary by the ACF Region X Office.

- The quarterly reports using the required formats of the Program Improvement Plan Matrix and Program Improvement Plan Reporting Form, will include, at a minimum the following information:
 1. A narrative description of progress made towards completing action steps, benchmarks and goal achievement during the reporting period or reasons for any delays or barriers to completing required progress within the assigned timeframes, and
 2. Data and process reports regarding measurable benchmarks during each quarter.

- The ACF Region X Office and the State will jointly evaluate the State's progress in implementing the PIP and in determining when PIP goals have been achieved.

- Action steps and goals included in the PIP will be evaluated for completion according to the manner and expected completion dates specified in the PIP. The ACF Region X Office and the State may jointly determine that action steps have been completed and/or goals achieved before the projected completion dates, based on sufficient evidence/information. When this occurs, the ACF Region X Office and the State will not be required to further evaluate the goal during the remainder of the PIP implementation period. Typically, we expect to observe that a particular level of performance meets the specified level of improvement over two quarters period of time before determining the performance level has been achieved.

In regard to the five of six aggregate data profile elements that did not meet national standards, the PIP identifies a specific percentage of improvement for goal achievement during the course of the PIP. When the State believes their data is demonstrating the required improvement the related data files will be reviewed and must be approved by the ACF Region X Office prior to accepting the data as demonstrating goal achievement.

We strongly support Alaska's method of employing the Onsite Quality Assurance Review (OQAR) for purposes of measuring certain aspects of the PIP outcome measures. The PIP OQAR will include a quarterly total sample of 50 randomly selected cases with half foster care and half CPS types of cases and half of which will always be drawn from the Anchorage region and the other half equally divided between two other outlying offices. Each case review will include case-related stakeholder interviews as well as the case review process however the local systemic stakeholder interviews would not usually be an expectation except within identified areas of concern for the State. Given the very substantial role the OQAR process has throughout the PIP, Region X staff will within the first six months of the PIP participate in one of the OQAR. The purpose of Region X staff participation in the OQAR will be to ensure the process will produce results that would be consistent with a federal on-site CFSR case review. Further technical assistance to assist the State with the review process will be provided as needed.

We also note the significant inclusion of the Court Improvement Project's (CIP) corrective action plan within the State's PIP. This is an excellent demonstration of a collaborative effort between the State and CIP to improve outcomes for children and families.

Penalties are suspended while the State is implementing the PIP. If the Region X Office determines, however, that the State failed to submit quarterly reports or does not make satisfactory progress toward achieving the goals and action steps in a timely manner, then the suspension of penalties will cease and withholding of Federal funds will begin pursuant to 45 CFR 1355.36(e)(2)(i) and (ii).

We realize that the corrective actions outlined in this approved PIP are challenging but their successful implementation will yield positive results for the children and families in Alaska's child welfare system. We also appreciate the challenges Alaska has faced in developing this PIP during a time of significant change.

As the State proceeds to implement the PIP, we are eager to work closely with you to build on the collaborative partnership that has been established during the PIP's development. We appreciate the amount of time and effort you, your staff and other partners devoted to developing and revising the Alaska PIP. Plans have been made to continue our collaborative effort as you share the finalized PIP with agency staff and community partners. Technical assistance is available from the ACF National Resource Centers. For future questions or concerns please feel free to contact Lois Ward at (206) 615-2603.

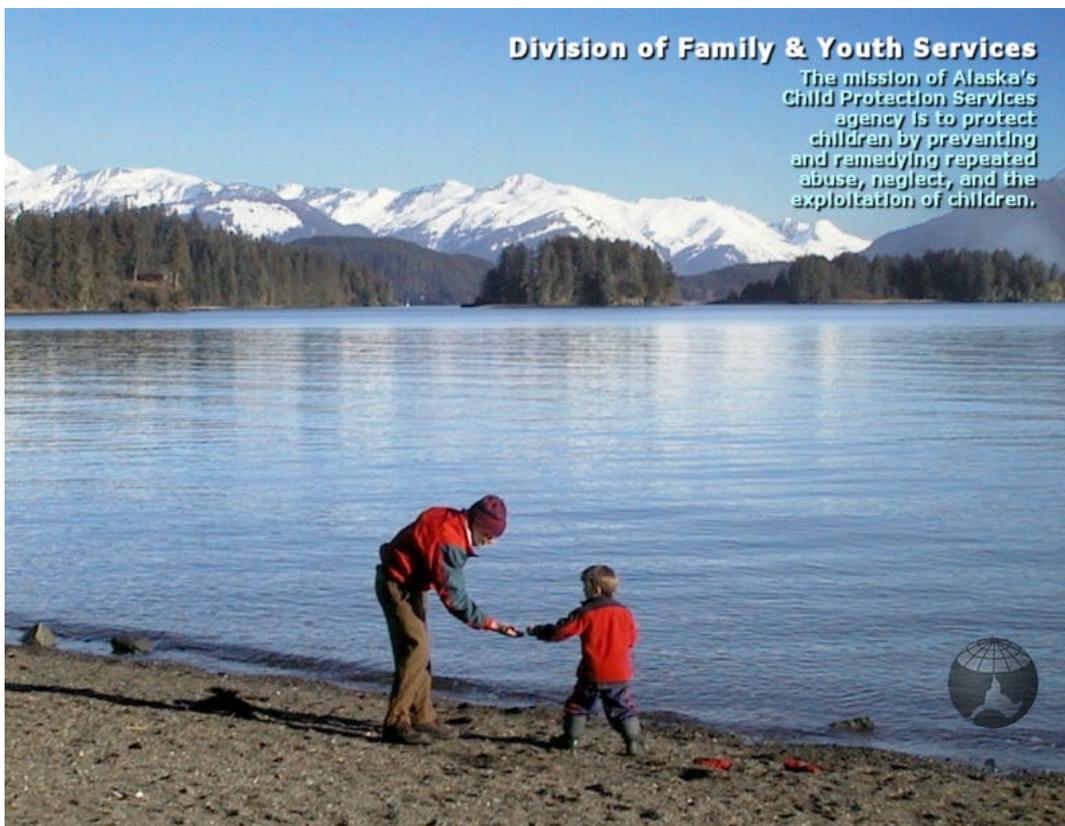
Enclosed are copies of the approved PIP and the signed PIP agreement form. In addition, we remind you that Federal regulations at 45 CFR 1355.37 require the State to make available for public review and inspection all statewide assessments, reports of findings, and the PIP that has been developed as a result of the June 2002 CFSR.

Sincerely,

Stephen Henigson
Regional Administrator

C: Elmer Lindstrom
Marcia Kennai

Alaska Program Improvement Plan



Office of Children's Services

**Submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Social Services
July 2003**

Table of Contents

Part I.	General Information.....	3
Part II.	Introduction	4
Part III.	Global Themes	5
Part IV.	Final Report Findings for Alaska.....	9
Part V.	Narrative: Items Needing Improvement, Goals, Action Steps, Methods and Benchmarks	12
	Safety	
	Permanency	
	Well-Being	
	Case Review System	
	Quality Assurance	
	Service Array	
	Foster and Adoptive Licensing	
Part VI	Matrix: Items Needing Improvement, Goals, Action Steps, Methods and..... Benchmarks	37

**Alaska
Child and Family Services Reviews
Program Improvement Plan**

Part I. PIP General Information

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I II III IV V VI VII VIII IX X

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Part II. Introduction

The June 2002 Federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) has provided Alaska with a great opportunity. Public awareness of child welfare issues has been heightened, our strengths and needs have been examined and recorded and our resolve has been strengthened. The recently formalized CFSR process has identified strengths and prioritized areas needing improvement. The reality of day-to-day child protection work in the most remote communities in the United States is evident in this plan. What is not clear in any of these documents but must be stressed is the dedication and professionalism of the 340 employees of the OCS who daily enter into difficult and dangerous circumstances to protect Alaska's most needy children.

Alaska formally began the development of the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) following the Federal Child and Family Services (CFSR) onsite review in June 2002. On August 1 and 2, 2002, key stakeholders were invited, with agency supervisors and managers, to participant in the PIP development process.

Approximately 100 individuals from across the state came to Anchorage to hear the preliminary CFSR findings and instructions for the PIP. Stakeholders who participated in Roundtable discussions during the Statewide Assessment were invited back to the PIP planning sessions. Six work groups were formed to address the areas needing improvement: Safety, Permanency, Well-being, Case Review and Quality Assurance, Service Array and Responsiveness to Community, and Training and Licensing.

Facilitators for these groups were pre-selected and journalists were assigned to each group. Groups continued to meet telephonically throughout the month of August.

Another planning session was held on October 23 and 24, 2002. By that time the final CFSR report had been issued and areas needing improvement were specified. Facilitators continued their group's work in the areas needing improvement with greater confidence that all areas were addressed in their plans. A general format for reports was provided to all facilitators. Results from these efforts produced one complete draft document.

Another draft was completed following a day-long meeting with all of the group facilitators in November 2002. During this meeting, items were reviewed to assure correct interpretation and understanding of each group's work. New considerations were also suggested and taken back to each group through the facilitators.

Input from the OCS Management Team was compiled during a one-day meeting in November. Throughout the process it was very important that top managers and supervisors understood and agreed to the action steps or changes needed.

Several meetings with the Court Improvement Project (CIP) coordinator occurred, including two CIP meetings in which the agenda included ways the CIP could take action in the common areas needing improvement.

The facilitators remained the key contacts for each group. They concluded their reports on November 22, 2002. A fourth and final draft was issued on November 29th to all participants. Their final comments were due on December 11th and were incorporated into the final document.

Following receipt of informal comments by Region X, another drafting process was completed for submission in April 2003.

Part III. Global Themes

During the development of the PIP, a number of areas arose fairly consistently in discussions in all groups, regardless of their specific areas of focus. These themes are consistent with broader goals that the OCS has identified need to be attained as part of a comprehensive plan to improve service delivery.

1. Management of Workloads

Current social worker duties prevent the OCS's front line workers from responding to all reports of harm, are a significant factor in explaining high employee turnover, and bar social workers from meeting with all clients even one time per month. As a result social workers' relationships with families and children do not foster collaboration and success between workers, communities and clients.

The duties of social workers must be re-aligned to maximize the amount of time available to perform those functions that only professional child protection workers can undertake. Face-to-face meetings with clients, timely investigation of reports of harm, and performance of court related functions should be emphasized. Administrative, clerical and other extraneous duties that need not be performed by front line workers should be assigned to others.

Once the duties of front line workers are clarified, a more meaningful analysis of child protection worker caseloads will be possible. This caseload analysis will include "in-home" cases that have not historically been adequately monitored by front line workers.

2. The Need for More Services

Services are not available and accessible to all children and families needing them, at the time that they need them the most. Whether the child has been removed or is at risk of being removed, services to reunite or prevent removal are inadequate. This affects many outcomes: repeat maltreatment, length of time to reunification or adoption, and achieving other permanency goals.

The most critical service identified was substance abuse treatment services. Alcohol and drug abuse were highlighted in a majority of cases. Parents waited long periods of time to enter treatment and most of the time had to travel long distances to access these services.

Collaboration between the substance abuse treatment system and the child protection system must be improved.

3. Streamline Business Processes

Providing child welfare services in Alaska presents challenges that do not exist in other areas. The size of the Alaskan Native population, difficulty in reaching and providing services in remote locations, reliance on local and tribal entities to assist in providing services, diverse urban and rural settings, and the travel required to serve children make the delivery of child welfare services unique in Alaska. Though Alaska is unique, there are a number of elements in the ongoing business processes that are very similar to other states, and many of the problems that are encountered are similar to those faced by other states.

Many of the business processes that OCS uses to provide services are a reflection of existing technology with all its limitations. A new information system, one tailored to meet the challenges faced by Alaska, would allow OCS to improve existing processes, including:

- Track worker assignments and caseloads.
- Integrate the standard decision-making process into ongoing case management techniques.
- Record case information in a standard format.
- Conduct proactive safety and permanency planning.
- Integrate case- and court-related information.
- Integrate child placement information with payment information.
- Aggregate payment information.
- Integrate payment and licensing data to facilitate the payment process.
- Support scheduling of staff for court dates and permanency planning reviews.
- Conduct and record standard-by-standard evaluations for licensing home studies.
- Track complaints against licensed facilities.
- Streamline the request for funds (RFF) process.

- Track the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) priority placements and active efforts.
- Enable the sharing or transfer of cases between offices.
- Reduce the cost and complexity of discovery.

An information system is not the answer to all the process-related problems facing OCS, but it is clear that a number of major obstacles are related to the manner in which information can or cannot be shared coupled with the restrictions and complexity of the existing information systems. A more robust, flexible, and integrated information system will provide OCS with a tool that can be used to restructure the way services are provided and drive significant cost and inefficiencies out of the existing processes.

The OCS is on schedule with development of a new information system. The new system will be completed in December 2004.

4. Expedite Permanency for Children

The OCS employs a comprehensive case planning process. Case planning activities are directed toward assuring that every child in State custody has a permanent family capable of providing them with nurturance and protection. When this is not the child's biological family, then an alternate, permanent family is found for the child.

A number of methods are incorporated to move the child(ren) to permanency in an expeditious manner:

- The Structured Decision Process will guide workers through the life of a case and direct workers toward appropriate goals.
- The Administrative Review Process, which reviews children in out of home placement, every three months during the first year of placement, is designed to insure appropriate and timely assessments and application of services to the child and family. This system mimics the federal onsite requirements and cues workers to follow through with ASFA related expectations.
- These systems compliment and oversee a worker's reasonable and active efforts to return children home and/or move quickly toward permanency.
- Adoption specialists in every region are able to focus efforts on the adoption process and facilitate the achievement of adoption goals.
- Supervisors are required to examine and instruct workers' efforts throughout the case planning process. Supervision of line workers is required and experienced supervisors mentor their workers through the permanency process. A further supervisory review tool is completed, although revisions to this tool will be made prior to full implementation. This tool assist supervisors identify necessary steps in the permanency process.
- INGENS a multi data base search engine is being utilized to a limited extent in all regions. This will help identify missing parents and relatives at an earlier stage in the case and improve timeliness of both reunification and relative placement options.

The Court Improvement Project (CIP) has indicated the court's willingness to examine numerous areas in which procedural changes may expedite permanency. Inroads have already been made in utilizing training and assistance from the National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues. These trainings were provided to the judiciary and CPS workers alike. The OCS was also able to attend the training provided to magistrates by this resource center and provide valuable input on Alaska specific issues.

5. Improve Assessments, Case Planning and Follow Up

It is obvious throughout the CFSR that the OCS has difficulty assessing the needs of families and that these assessments when completed do not always address the underlying needs of the family. There are a number of activities underway that are designed to improve these functions. Structured Decision Making is the most significant. This process is designed to give the worker tools to actively assess and prioritize parental needs early in the case as they relate to the safety of the child(ren). This leads to appropriate identification of case planning goals and early referral to services. This structured approach will occur in all cases throughout the life of the case. Implementation of Structured Decision Making is now being monitored and the initial data has recently been received. This data may help point the way to more effectively allocate resources as well as identify non-performing offices.

There are ongoing efforts to insure that both initial and ongoing training related to case planning and follow-up is practical, immediately applicable, and concrete. This training will focus on specific goal oriented case planning related to the child's special needs, foster parent needs as they relate to the child, and the parents needs as connected to the safety and risk to the child.

6. Stakeholder and Community Collaboration

In this era of budgetary shortfall, collaboration among departments, divisions and other governmental agencies is a necessity. Combining resources, eliminating duplication, streamlining administrative costs, and removing other barriers to service is a priority. All avenues of joint resource development will be explored. Community and faith based organizations as well as private sector relationships will need to be encouraged and supported. The above tasks will necessarily be built on the foundation of prioritizing services.

Regions and local offices must be organized in such a way that strategic relationships are developed at the local level with guidance from the state office. This will increase services based on local needs, result in a more effective use of resources, and provide for quality feedback to the state office.

Given the high number of Alaska Native children in the system, and the additional children being protected under the jurisdiction of the Tribes, state agencies must actively

partner with Tribal governments to address the needs of Alaska Native families in distress. This will require a stronger working relationship with our tribal partners. This relationship will be based on shared expectations and clearly defined outcomes for children under tribal jurisdiction.

Part IV: Final Report Findings for Alaska

Outcome	Number of Cases Substantially Achieved	Number of Cases Partially Achieved	Number of Cases Not Achieved	Percentage of Cases Substantially Achieved
Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect.	31	14	5	62%
Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate.	30	13	7	60%
Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.	5	14	4	21.7%
Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.	15	8	0	65.2%
Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.	14	22	14	28%
Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.	31	3	5	79.5%
Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.	30	5	11	65.2%

Systemic Factors	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1 None of the State Plan or program requirements are in place.	2 Some or all of the State Plan or program requirements are in place, but more than one of the requirements fails to function at the level described.	3 All of the State Plan or program requirements are in place, and no more than one of the requirements fails to function as described in each requirement.	4 All of the State Plan or program requirements are in place and functioning as described in each requirement.
Statewide Information System			<u>X</u>	
Case Review System		X		
Quality Assurance System		X		
Staff and Provider Training			X	
Service Array	X			
Agency Responsiveness to Community			X	
Foster and Adoptive Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention		X		

Data Indicators	National Standards	Calendar Year 1998		Calendar Year 1999		Calendar Year 2000	
		Unique Children	%	Unique Children	%	Unique Children	%
<u>Recurrence of Maltreatment</u>	6.1% or less	<u>962</u>	23.2	1,212	26.4	999	23.6
Incidence of Child Abuse and Neglect in Foster Care	.57% or less	46 of 2,456	1.87	36 of 2,784	1.29	56 of 2,939	1.91
<u>Of all children who were reunified with their parents or caretakers at the time of discharge from foster care, what percentage was reunified in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home?</u>	76.2% or more	316	66.5	337	60.9	361	58.3
Of all children who exited care to a finalized adoption, what percentage exited care in less than 24 months from the time of the latest removal from home?	32% or more	9	9.8	24	23.5	36	21.8
Of all children served who have been in foster care less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home, what percentage have had no more than two placement settings?	86.7% or more	855	71.6	960	71.9	886	70.6
Of all children who entered care during the year, what percentage re-entered foster care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode?	8.6% or less	32	2.9	52	4.4	51	4.6

Part V: Narrative

OUTCOME AREAS

Safety

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect.

<u>Item 1</u>

Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment.

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- Cases assigned a priority rating of two or three
- Response times are not as effective after normal business hours
- High workload and correspondingly high staff turnover create difficulty in responding to all reports of harm in a timely manner
- There is no policy on face to face contact with the child victim

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The OCS recognized the need to clarify existing policy and procedure regarding the requirements of face-to-face contacts with children within acceptable timeframes during the investigative process. This was particularly applicable to cases that were assigned as lower priority and occurred after normal business hours. A workgroup consisting of representatives from line staff and field management will convene to address these issues. A small working group is currently in place addressing definitional issues encountered during the review process. These include both practice and data related terminology.

Once the necessary changes in policy and procedure have been identified, all staff will be trained in the content and implementation of these changes. Full implementation will be accomplished by December 30, 2003.

As noted in 1.1.5, a working group has been formed and is meeting to address procedural issues identified in Dual Track (Alternative Response) programs statewide. Initial meetings have included regional and statewide OCS staff, with a plan to expand the group to include provider representation. The Dual track programs are voluntary and therefore initially had difficulty complying with state time frames for initiation of investigations of priority 3 reports. This work group has made recommendations for incorporating state standards for initiation of investigations of all screened in reports of harm, as well as implementing a structured decision making process that adheres to state guidelines.

In order to measure the effectiveness of these practice changes, the OCS will use its Quality Assurance On-Site Review Process.

Quality Assurance Activities – On site Field Office Reviews

The OCS Evaluation Unit conducts reviews of case practices in selected field offices. The reviews are intended to monitor and insure adherence to established standards of OCS as well as insure a continuing improvement in quality of services and delivery of services.

The field offices are selected for review to gain a broad spectrum of geographic Alaska as well as inclusion of both urban and rural offices. More frequent (quarterly) reviews are scheduled in Anchorage, as this field office has approximately half the state's cases. The reviews are scheduled to allow for every field office to be reviewed every two years. The reviews are conducted by a four-person team. The team is headed by the Evaluation Unit Program Officer with Unit Supervisors, Administrative Case Reviewers, and Regional Managers from regions other than the region in which the field office is located making up the remainder of the team. Field visits last 5 days on site.

The reviews are conducted using an abbreviated version of the Federal Children's Services Review process. A random sample of 12 cases is selected consisting of equal numbers of in home and out of home care cases. The federal review tool is utilized for each case. The family in each case reviewed is invited to meet with a review team member. Group interviews are held with invited foster parents, Guardian ad Litem, Assistant Attorney General's, and Tribal Representatives using the stakeholder's interview tool. Group meetings are also held with field office staff and supervisory staff to gain their input. In briefing meetings are held with all staff members prior to the initiation of the review and an exit briefing is conducted with all staff to give an overview of the findings. The formal written report is issued approximately 30 days later.

The information gathered is summarized into both a quantitative and qualitative report, which is provided to the OCS Deputy Commissioner, Program and Field Administrators, Children's Services Managers and Staff Managers. The region is required to develop a program improvement plan in response to the findings of the review which is then implemented by the field office and monitored by the region's Children's Services Manager and the State Office Field Administrator. A follow-up review can be conducted at the request of the Field Administrator. Quarterly reporting to Region X on the outcomes of these reviews is anticipated.

It should be noted that the On-site Field Office Reviews will be used as the major measurement tool for a majority of the items in the Program Improvement Plan, as indicated in the matrix.

Item 2

Repeat Maltreatment

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- The State's high incidence of repeat maltreatment is attributed, in part to the lack of treatment services and follow-up support services for alcohol abuse, particularly in remote areas.
- Lack of consistent follow up by workers through personal face to face contact and tracking of service provision in medium and high risk cases.
- Maltreatment most often involves neglect cases.
- In the majority of cases reviewed, there were multiple maltreatment reports over the life of the case
- The discrepancies in definition of abuse and neglect findings as well as inconsistencies with historical reports, duplicate reports and abuse category definitions have exacerbated data validity issues.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Repeat maltreatment

The state recognizes that substance abuse substantially contributes to child abuse and neglect in Alaska. This issue is a long-term problem with no quick fixes available. The OCS intends to tailor training regarding safety issues and substance abuse to more adequately address risk in the long run. This will also necessarily be a training topic for the judiciary and defense bar as we restructure efforts surrounding work with substance abusing families

Collaborative processes within communities and among departments must occur in order to ensure the most effective means of service delivery. Stakeholder meetings may serve to develop Family Group Conferencing models in target offices. Family group Conferencing will serve to support individual families in their communities, with their tribes and natural supports.

The OCS has begun and will continue to improve the quality of its grant allocation and monitoring programs. An emphasis will be placed on outcome measures and financial accountability.

The OCS will prioritize worker functions. This priority will highlight the importance of worker contact with children and parents according to their needs. These prioritizations will necessitate changes to policy and procedure that have already been drafted. These drafts will be forwarded to Region X for scrutiny.

The Judiciary Education Committee of the Court Improvement Project has recognized that a significant number of judges have less than five years of experience on the bench and would benefit from training in the effect of substance on many parents and children in the CINA system.

Another important function anticipated within the next two years is the SACWIS, ORCA. This scaleable system will both require and use automated reminders for workers to assess, refer and follow up on essential family needs and services.

Child abuse and neglect in foster care

Alaska recognizes that a lack of ability to identify and track reports of abuse in out-of-home care has led to an unacceptably high rate of child abuse and neglect in foster care. The OCS has implemented a tracking system that will more accurately measure these incidents. Regional Licensing staff will track reports of harm related to all licensed facilities and regional staff managers will track all reports of harm that concern children placed in unlicensed relative homes. These tracking documents will be cross-referenced with PROBER MIS data and results consolidated by OCS Central Office staff. The reports will be generated quarterly. This method will be considered an alternate data collection process, pending the completion of the ORCA development. Completion of ORCA will enable the OCS to fully comply with all AFCARS and NCANDS requirements for tracking and measurements.

In addition, all workers will receive clarification regarding existing policy that differentiates the difference between licensing complaints and associated standards and legitimate child protection allegations. PROBER entry clerks will be trained in proper coding of data entry in this area.

The OCS currently has a Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Public Safety, which allows for the sharing of information contained in the Alaska Public Safety Information Network (APSIN). Part of this agreement allows foster homes to be ‘flagged’ within the APSIN, so that the OCS is notified in the event a foster parent has dealings with law enforcement. We plan to work on expanding this agreement to include unlicensed relatives who are caring for children.

The development of a statewide Foster Care Recruitment and Retention Plan is currently underway. This plan will guide the OCS as it works to improve the recruitment, screening, training and retention of foster parents. Improvements in these processes will help in ensuring the safety of children by providing for a better “matching” process for children and families. The OCS is currently in the process of forming a workgroup consisting of OCS staff, foster parents, adoptive parents and the Alaska Foster Parent Training Center. This group will be working with technical assistance provided by Region X and the National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement to develop the plan.

Data Issues:

The OCS has recognizes that data validity is a significant issue. The State is very close to finalizing an award for the development of our comprehensive SACWIS system - ORCA (Online Resources for the Children of Alaska). The new system will substantially correct these data issues.

Data will be compiled at Central Office on a quarterly basis to keep an up to date accounting of the safety of children in their own homes and in out of home care. This data

will be shared with regional Children's Services Managers to facilitate discussions on current trends.

All activities requiring coordination and collaboration with providers, communities and other stakeholders will be reported on a quarterly basis, which will then be summarized in an annual report.

Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Item 3

Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal.

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- Services offered to families are not adequate to ensure children's safety and reduce risk of harm.
- Services offered to families often do not address underlying issues contributing to the maltreatment.
- There is insufficient monitoring on the part of the agency to assess whether services were actually provided, whether parents were fully participating in services, and/or whether children continued to be safe.
- Services recommended by professionals based on assessments were not provided (2 cases)
- Workloads prohibit workers from conducting a comprehensive needs assessment and monitoring services.
- There is a shortage of prevention-oriented programs, and there is a need for immediate crisis intervention services.
- Family support services not accessible to all families in all areas.
- Lack of post-reunification services.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The OCS will use the Structured Decision Making process for opening in-home cases and in-home case planning. Regional work groups will be established to continue to improve collaboration among tribes, community groups and the OCS. This will facilitate the extension of case management services, home visiting and other services. Adequate training will be necessary for these groups to fulfill the OCS's role in safety and risk assessment.

The OCS will, with its partner divisions, examine a different structure for funding services. This may enable a funding approach that addresses family needs while children are still in the home.

The OCS believes that streamlining and restructuring the resources of the state will improve the OCS's ability to address in-home family cases on an ongoing basis. The OCS will also examine the feasibility of flexible shifts and weekend staffing to improve the OCS's capacity to respond after normal business hours. Continuous and out of state recruitment, double filling positions, and expediting the hiring process will assist in the recruitment of qualified child protection staff.

Personnel Reports that summarize regional efforts to review and restructure current employees work schedules and report on the hiring process will be generated quarterly. Administrative reports will be generated that will document collaborative efforts with tribes, community partners and other stakeholders. The provision of services will be measured through quarterly grantee reports.

Item 4

Risk of harm to child

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- There was insufficient monitoring of families to assess ongoing risk, including whether parents were engaging in services and behavioral change was taking place.
- The services provided to parents and children were not matched to meet the needs of the family or were insufficient to reduce risk of harm to children, usually due to inadequate assessments

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Structured Decision-Making (SDM) is the primary tool that will be used to assess the safety and risk of harm to children. SDM helps to identify whether the child(ren)'s safety is/was the primary concern in the case and examines how the State is managing the risk of harm that necessitates continued out-of-home placement or services to an intact family. The SDM Safety Assessment requires identification of immediate safety issues and interventions to ameliorate the safety concerns. The initial assessment and subsequent reassessments will allow the OCS to match services to the needs of the family and will reduce risk of subsequent harm to the child.

Further training and implementation of SDM has been recognized as a significant need. The SDM database has been placed on-line and data is now available and will be examined on a monthly basis in order to identify non-performing areas.

Permanency

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Item 6

Stability of foster care placement

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- Placement instability may be attributed to a lack of foster homes, which restricts the ability of workers to match the needs of children to the skills and training of the foster parents.
- Lack of foster parent support led to a high number of moves.
- Lack of an early relative search leads to foster care placement and resulting move to relatives at a later date.
- State Data Profile indicates that of all the children in foster care for 12 months or less, 70.6 percent experienced no more than 2 placement settings, which does not meet the national standard of 86.2 percent.
- Lack of training and follow up increases the inability of foster parents to deal with difficult children resulting in moves
- Children with multiple placements may have significant behavioral and emotional issues.
- Lack of services to disturbed children exacerbates out of home placement difficulties.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The lack of early identification of relatives in child protection cases invariably leads to a higher percentage of moves when relatives appear or are later identified. The OCS has implemented INGENS on a limited basis in every region. INGENS is a multi-layered database that is available to workers for relative searches.

The OCS has taken action to begin consistently tracking placement changes through the PROBER system. Managers receive a monthly report that highlights children's excessive moves. This process will be expanded to bring to regional management's attention these children and the barriers to their stable placement.

The Alaska Family Services Training Academy (FSTA) and the Alaska Foster Parent Training Center (AFPTC) will enhance current training for workers in developing and maintaining relationships with foster parents. The OCS notes that a lack of assessment of the foster parents needs in relation to the child's needs contributes to a higher percentage of moves. A larger and more culturally diverse pool of foster parents provided through the OCS's intensive recruitment plan will improve the options for placement. The OCS intends to consolidate and track training of foster parents. This will enable better matching of children to the special skills of foster parents thereby reducing moves. A continuing difficulty in provider payments will be eliminated through the implementation of ORCA. This system will provide a stable platform for provider payments.

The Training and Assistance Provided by the National Resource Center for Organizational improvement will be instrumental in the development of the statewide Foster Parent recruitment and retention campaign. This particular endeavor will be a major theme in the Alaskan Child Welfare system in the next two years.

Item 7

Permanency goal for child

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- The goal was noted as inappropriate and unrealistic, and that workers seemed to ignore concerns and signs that the goal was not likely to be achieved
- The plan for reunification remained in effect for too long, or that there had been multiple goal changes over the years, with no real focus on any particular goal or plan and attainment of permanency was unlikely to occur in the near future
- Although concurrent goals are being established for children, workers tend to treat them as a linear process rather than concurrent. .
- There are delays in filing for TPR because of the lack of services for parents, as well as long waiting lists to obtain these services
- Compelling reasons not to terminate parents' rights are not always documented or found in the file.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Historically the OCS has had limited ability to track the permanency goals of children. With the implementation of ORCA this difficulty will cease. A working group of administrative reviewers will identify policy and procedure changes needed to improve the setting of permanency goals. When completed this will enable the Administrative reviewers to track permanency goals consistently. Mandatory compliance with administrative review recommendations will be required. This will result in greater follow-through and an increase in the periodic scrutiny of permanency goals and the efforts to achieve them. At this time data is collected regarding permanency outcome measures. A process will be designed to prioritize the aggregation of this data and quarterly reports will be generated. Priority outcome measures will be permanency goal attainment and time to permanency. The Family Service Training Academy working group will coordinate with the Permanency working group to enhance training in the area of concurrent planning. This working group will also design a concise training for the supervisor quarterly meeting. This training is proposed to be a training of trainers with supporting material for line workers. Further training and retraining of workers to clarify the OCS's policy and procedures on concurrent goal setting will be necessary.

Item 8

Reunification, guardianship or permanent placement with relatives

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- Diligent efforts were not made to achieve goal of either reunification or guardianship within 12 months, or efforts were insufficient to achieve the goal given the circumstances of the case.
- Lack of clear goals in the case plans

- Lack of agency follow-up on service provision.
- Failure to provide services to families in a timely manner
- Long waiting lists for both in-patient and out-patient substance abuse treatment services due to scarcity of treatment options
- Lack of in-home follow-up services
- Children and parents have multiple problems that must be addressed before children can be safely reunified
- State Data Profile indicates the percentage of reunifications occurring within 12 months of entry into foster care (58.3%) does not meet the national standard of 76.2 percent.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The continued strengthening of the administrative review process will enforce expectations of timely efforts under this item. The use of SDM will continue to move cases in a structured and judicious manner toward the appropriate goals. The addition of home studies at the time of initial foster care licensing through the Simple New Adoption Process (SNAP) will improve concurrent planning for all permanency goals.

The structure of case planning and its documentation is in the process of changing. Child centered case plans with goal orientation are now required. Case planning, training, and retraining is in progress. This has taken the form of additional training on case planning at the regional level. Training will be mandated for all workers within the next six months and will again explicitly outline agency requirements.

Ongoing Administrative Reviews are being enhanced. These enhancements will enforce reviews for children who are in trial return home status. These reviews examine services delivery and will include administrative/line feed back, insuring follow up on review recommendations.

The formation of a state wide, interdepartmental working group (see item #35) will begin the process of gathering data on needs and service capacity. This group will then initiate and continue a collaborative process to marshal resources to the priority areas as well as work toward a seamless system of care.

Item 9

Adoption (within 24 months)

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- Lack of timely decisions and lack of follow up with the child and family
- Filing for TPR very late in the case.
- Delays in the decision process regarding changing the goals to adoption.
- Court delays.
- Delays in addressing children's medical needs.
- Delays in searching for relatives as placement resources.

- Delays in conducting home studies
- Difficulties finding families for children who have been diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) or Fetal Alcohol Exposure (FAE).
- Lack of a sufficient number of adoption specialists to assist workers.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Over a five-month period in early 2001 a team comprised of representatives of OCS field staff, Regional Adoption Specialists, attorneys from the Attorney General’s Office and the Office of Public Advocacy, the Balloon Project Manager, the Adoption Program manager, a trainer from the Training Academy and the OCS Director met with a contractor to:

- Map out the current adoption process
- Identify barriers to an expeditious process
- Create a new process that eliminates the current barriers.

As a result of this process a team was created to implement the new system. This is the SNAP team, which stands for the Simple New Adoption Process. An easy way of explaining the changes to the process is that steps that previously were done sequentially will now be done *concurrently*, thus shortening the time it takes for a child to be adopted.

The introduction of SNAP (Simple New Adoption Process) Committee recommendations will positively impact permanency timeframes. Implementation and training on SNAP procedures will reduce the time children spend in foster care prior to achieving their permanency goal of adoption.

The SNAP judicial track will further examine possible procedural obstacles that may interfere with timely adoptions.

The OCS will be submitting a Request For Proposals for the provision of adoption support services. These services will be designed to provide support to adoptive parents to provide them with support and assistance that is often necessary when adopting special needs children.

The integration of foster and adoptive home studies, or dual licensure, is anticipated to have a definitive positive impact on the time it takes to finalize the adoption process. The Department of Health and Social Services has, as of July 1, 2003, embarked on a major restructuring process. The current plan is to transfer all departmental licensing functions to the Division of Public Health in 2005. The development of dual licensure is anticipated to occur as part of that process.

<p><u>Item 10</u></p>

<p>Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement</p>
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A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- OCS had not provided the child with the services needed to support successful transition from foster care to independent living.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

As outlined in the PIP matrix, the OCS has begun the process of developing a work plan that will prioritize the activities necessary to implement a comprehensive independent living program. This work plan will support the development of several key components: a youth advisory board, support teams to work on transitioning youth who have special needs, and staff and foster parent training. The tribal-state collaboration group will address these issues as they relate to native children.

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Item 13

Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- Visits with siblings were not of sufficient frequency to meet the child’s needs
- The agency had not made sufficient efforts to locate the father and promote visitation
- The quality of the visitation with parents was not sufficient to promote the child’s goal of reunification
- Workers’ caseloads too high to provide more than one hour of supervised visitation per week.
- There is a lack of “family friendly” facilities.
- When siblings are separated, there is little visitation.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Appropriate visitation guidelines for OCS families have been lacking. The Policy Working Group will examine and update visitation policies and procedures. These changes will incorporate further extensions of visitation timeframes and be directive in support of sibling visitation. The use of supervised visitation will also be examined and appropriate protocols developed to clarify its use. These additions and clarifications will be disseminated to workers through supervisory staff and regional trainings.

This working group will also clarify foster parent expectations, which will then be added to the foster parent handbook and to initial foster parent training.

As indicated previously INGENS searches will be initiated at the beginning of a case. This will improve the ability of the OCS to locate absent fathers and arrange for visitation with their children.

Tribal assistance is a necessity for progress in this area. Approximately 60% of all children in custody are of native Alaskan heritage. Statewide Memoranda of Agreement with Tribal organizations will be developed through the Tribal State Collaboration group. Further collaboration with local tribal entities on a regional and local office level will be initiated.

Item 14

Preserving Connections

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- Insufficient efforts to maintain connections to family, community, culture, faith, and friends for children in foster care.
- Tribe not notified of the placement in a timely manner.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

In an attempt to provide workers with additional tools to assist in preserving connections, the OCS's Forms Committee will develop a reporting tool to be given to parents to complete. This tool will allow parents to inform the OCS of critical family and community connections that are important to the child. A desk reference regarding permanency-planning issues will also be developed for workers.

Policy will be developed and implemented requiring workers to complete genograms for all their cases. Genograms are diagrams of family trees and community support networks. Incorporating these into case assessment and planning will assist workers in addressing the need to preserve connections for the child.

Due to the high number of Alaska Native children in custody, additional actions will be taken for this population. An ICWA Help Desk serves the community of Anchorage through the Cook Inlet Tribal Council. The Coordinator for this program works collaboratively with OCS workers to: 1) conduct tribal searches for notifications, 2) assist with tribal enrollment, and 3) provide assistance in relative searches. This has been extremely helpful in preserving connections for children. The OCS would like to expand this concept to other parts of the state.

Current efforts with the State/Tribal Collaboration Group will continue to address cultural issues. The State Tribal Collaboration subcommittee will investigate and report to TSCG on barriers to preserving connections for children in out of home care and further will develop strategy for improving the stability of children's primary connections in tribal cases. These strategies will be converted into training and required practice. Follow up Quality Assurance feedback will be necessary for administration and TSCG to continue to improve this

mandate. Training and assistance from the **National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement** will be initiated and included in TSCG efforts.

In addition, the development of ORCA will enable the OCS to do a better job of tracking relative search activities. The implementation of a new statewide Foster Care Recruitment and Retention Plan will result in an increased number of foster homes, offering more opportunities for children to be placed closer to their home communities.

Administrative reports regarding progress in each of these areas will be generated on a quarterly basis.

Item 15

Relative Placement

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- Lack of sufficient search for paternal relatives.
- A limited exploration of potential relative placements, not going beyond immediate relatives.
- Inconsistent interpretation of role and responsibilities among tribes regarding relative search

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Under state and federal law the first option to be considered for any out-of-home placement of a child is with a relative. Current law (AS 47.10.080 (r)(5)) requires the court to order parents of children in custody to submit the names and locations of relatives at the disposition hearing. This hearing usually does not occur until the child has been placed out of his/her parents' home for a number of months. Meanwhile the child remains in a foster home and may face additional moves when relatives are located. This is especially a problem when the parents are not cooperating with the OCS.

Workers will be expected to follow existing policy and procedure regarding the immediate need for relative searches. The OCS will ask the Department of Law to inform AGs that they can request the judge to order uncooperative parents to disclose relative information earlier in the process, at the probable cause hearing and other opportunities as they arise. The CIP will consider amending judges' Temporary Custody checklist to include a reminder to order parents to disclose relative information.

A difficulty encountered by the OCS, at times is a lack of understanding and cooperation from family members and tribal groups when undertaking a relative search. The OCS in cooperation with TSCG will facilitate training to tribal groups regarding relative search and tribal state cooperation in the process.

Item 16

Relationship of child in care with parents

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- Inconsistent efforts to locate absent fathers early in a case and to promote relationships between children and fathers.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

In addition to the goals and action steps identified in items 13 and 14, additional emphasis will be placed on conducting paternity testing as soon as possible when appropriate. In Anchorage, the OCS is currently working collaboratively with the Court System and the Child Support Enforcement Division to conduct paternity tests at the courthouse when paternity is an issue. If the Anchorage model is successful, efforts will be made to expand this program to other areas of the state.

Well-Being

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Item 17

Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- Inadequate assessments resulted in a failure to capture and address underlying problems for both children and parents
- Assessments were not completed periodically and on an ongoing basis
- Foster parents are not receiving services they need to support placement, and not always being heard.
- Workers are not always aware of services that are available to families.
- There is a need to focus more on the child through timely assessments and application of appropriate services, in particular medical, mental health and special needs

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The goal is to ensure that the child's, parents' and foster parents' needs will be adequately assessed and addressed at critical junctures in the case, that social workers will be able to use strengths/needs based practice to engage and motivate family members to participate in services, and there will be an evaluation of improvement in parenting capacity. This item focuses on the needs and services of the child, parents, and foster parents and whether or not the services provided are/were appropriately matched to the identified needs of the child and family. The needs of foster parents refer to what they need to provide appropriate care and supervision to the child in their home.

Case planning protocols should indicate what services are required, who will provide the services, and appropriate time frames for completion. The plan should identify what the foster parents will do to provide for the child's needs. The Structured Decision-Making (SDM) process allows for the identification of both family and child needs. Once these needs are identified, they should directly affect the case planning protocols. Quarterly measurement of SDM data will allow for the assessment of how workers are meeting these goals.

The OCS will work with the Training Academy to strengthen worker training in conducting assessments. Supervisors will be expected to follow-up with their workers regarding their assessment of child and family needs, and the incorporation of these needs into a strengths-based case planning and service provision process. In addition, an assessment of foster parents' needs will be addressed as part of the case plan.

The OCS currently has contracts with two agencies to conduct adoptive home studies. These home studies are conducted upon the request of a child's worker. Workers have not always requested home studies early enough in the process when a concurrent planning goal is created. By requiring that workers request home studies earlier in the process, needs of prospective adoptive parents can be identified and supported. Monitoring of the home studies for quality will be increased during the next funding cycle using quarterly reports from Regional Adoption Specialists and quarterly grant reports.

Item 18

Child and family involvement in case planning

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- Parents and children are not adequately involved in case planning.
- The initial case plan is more commonly developed without parental involvement.
- Lack of involvement in case planning was attributed to workload issues and difficulties engaging some parents.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The PIP Matrix identifies action steps that relate to child and family involvement in case planning. The OCS has recently purchased access to INGENS for some offices to assist in finding any missing biological parents of children in custody. INGENS is a national database that assists in finding individuals through numerous types of public records.

Policy will be developed and training provided to staff regarding the use of culturally appropriate techniques to engage parents in the case planning process.

The Quality Assurance On-Site Reviews will be used to measure progress in this area. Since these reviews mimic the CFSR process, child and family involvement in case planning will be assessed in each field office. In addition, the OCS will develop a child

and family survey instrument, which will be distributed on a regular basis to consistently obtain client feedback on the process.

Item 19

Worker visits with child

Item 20

Worker visits with parents

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- Visits with children and parents were not of sufficient frequency and quality to ensure the safety and well being of the child or enhance the attainment of permanency
- High caseloads, worker turnover, and weather and transportation problems contribute to insufficient frequency of worker visits with children and parents

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

In assessing the ability of social workers to increase the frequency of face-to-face visits with children and parents, one of the major factors raised was the high caseload that workers carry that inhibits their ability to make visits with the frequency desired. In addition, workers in rural Alaska who must travel by small plane to visit children in remote villages face unique challenges due to Alaska's geography and climate.

The OCS will also examine its own policy to determine whether visits should be prioritized based on the current status of the case and the case history. Tools for better documentation of visits will also be developed.

Caseload reports will be generated on a regular basis to determine workloads. A tracking mechanism for visitation will be developed to assist workers and supervisors assess the frequency of visitation. The OCS will also document how issues such as weather, distance and lack of transportation impact visits.

Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.

Item 21

Educational needs of the child.

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- Key concern pertained to in-home cases in which reviewers determined that OCS was not responding to children's education-related issues.
- Workers and foster parents do not understand the education system sufficiently in order to advocate for the children

- Training is needed in this area.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The OCS will be working closely with the Department of Education and Early Development as well as the Department of Law to reduce the barriers that exist in the sharing of educational information on children in custody. Through the use of the Quality Assurance Onsite Review process as well as the development and implementation of Stakeholder Satisfaction surveys, the OCS will be able to measure progress in this area. The OCS will encourage parent advocacy groups, such as Parents, Inc. to more broadly advertise the training they provide on an ongoing basis to assist parents and foster parents in advocating for their children’s educational needs.

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

<u>Item 22</u>

Physical Health of the child

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- Lack of health screenings at entry into foster care.
- Lack of preventive health and dental care.
- Some foster parents do not view themselves as the ones responsible for providing the children’s health screening at the time of placement.
- Foster parents do not always receive health information on a child at the time of placement.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The OCS will re-establish its partnership with the Division of Public Health to facilitate EPSDT screenings for all children in custody within 30 days of placement. Through collaborative process, as noted in the PIP Matrix (Item #35) the OCS will further develop strategies to enhance interdepartmental cooperation in the service delivery arena as well as capacity building in those areas deemed needing attention. The OCS, through Public Health, will continue with the passport project. This project follows the medical needs of children in custody in the Anchorage Region. The OCS will continue efforts to duplicate this project statewide. Through the use of the Quality Assurance Onsite Review process as well as the development and implementation of Stakeholder Satisfaction surveys, the OCS will be able to measure whether workers are communicating adequately with foster parents regarding the physical health needs of children in their care.

<u>Item 23</u>

Mental Health of the child

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- Lack of mental health services, particularly culturally relevant mental health services.
- Rural and remote areas receive mental health services on an itinerant basis and services are not always available during a time of crisis.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The OCS is in the process of reviewing a draft mental health policy to provide mental health evaluations for all children entering out of home care. Collaboration with the Division of Behavioral Health will be critical to adequately address this area. Please refer to the Systemic Section on Service Array.

SYSTEMIC FACTORS

Case Review System

Item 25

Provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child's parent(s) that includes the required provisions.

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- A lack of clarity in the expectations and format for developing case plans for in-home services cases.
- A lack of specificity in case plans involving children placed in foster care
- Tribes need to be involved earlier in the case planning process.
- Parents' attorneys sometimes encourage resistance to involvement in case planning.
- Parental involvement is difficult when parents are in denial.
- Case plans in dual track program are not goal oriented and do not include time limits and the responsibilities of providers.
- Initial case plans frequently do not have parent involvement but are developed by the social workers and presented to the family.
- High caseloads.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The OCS will form a policy work group to practically define and suggest changes needed to address federal and state mandates.

The OCS has identified case planning quality and inclusiveness as a priority. The OCS will complete a thorough review of policy, procedure, and training regarding parental and child inclusion in case planning in out-of-home and in-home cases. Procedural barriers will also be assessed. The OCS notes that goal specific and goal oriented case plan content is an area that needs particular attention. Procedural changes will be implemented

to address these deficiencies. Case planning practice will be enhanced through additional training to all workers, supervisors, Dual Track grantees, and the judiciary.

Item 27

Provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the state has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter.

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- Permanency hearings are not consistently held in a timely manner.
- Delays in permanency hearings may be caused by continuances requested by one or more parties to permit additional time to prepare for the hearings.
- Other identified barriers to timeliness of hearings were the scheduling of court dockets, the availability of parties, incorrect tracking from delayed dispositional hearings, and the court practice of granting continuances.
- Stakeholders noted that courts need to establish more of a balance between parents' rights and children's need for permanency. At present, parents' rights seem to receive greater consideration than children's needs.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The OCS and the Court Improvement Project (CIP) will work jointly on this item. The CIP has identified one procedural change and one data management issue that has the potential to improve tracking of permanency hearings and to help understand the reasons for delays and continuances of hearings. The PIP Matrix specifically identifies the action items that the CIP has agreed to take at this time.

The OCS will increase its tracking and attention to the steps to permanency including insuring that the date the child enters foster care is consistently recorded as the date of the probable cause finding, setting appropriate goals in a timely manner, filing TPRs in a timely manner, tracking the reasons for continuances, and scheduling of hearings in the appropriate timeframes.

Item 29

Provides a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- Foster parents do not consistently receive notification of permanency hearings and are not consistently provided an opportunity to be heard in accordance with ASFA.

- Notice is not provided very far in advance of the hearing.
- Administrative reviews are not always in accordance with foster parents' schedules.
- All parties are not always notified of court hearing changes.
- Tribes are not regularly notified of reviews.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The OCS has begun hiring support staff to schedule and provide notice to foster parents and grandparents of all hearings and administrative reviews.

The OCS will work with the AG's office regarding the recognition of foster parents in hearings. The CIP will encourage judges to ask foster parents if they want to be heard at the court hearing. The CIP will study court practices regarding notice of hearings. The Matrix contains the timelines for that study.

Quality Assurance

Item 31

The State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented.

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- State does not have formal process for clients or stakeholders to evaluate agency performance.
- No formal procedures for sharing the results of evaluation reviews with program staff, training academy or the public.
- State does not have comprehensive quality assurance system and local level efforts vary widely

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

A request for training and technical assistance from the Resource Center for Organizational Improvement will be made to Region X in order to assist the OCS to develop a comprehensive Quality Assurance Program.

The OCS will develop a process whereby regular feedback regarding agency performance will be obtained from a variety of stakeholders, including tribal groups, foster parents and families involved with OCS.

A working group will be formed that is similar in composition to the CFSP stakeholders group. This group will meet periodically to review current OCS functioning through Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) reports and make recommendations to the Deputy

Commissioner regarding changes in practice and services. This working group, in conjunction with the administration, will design methods to periodically disseminate information that describes CQI underway in the state.

As part of the development of a complete Quality Assurance Program, the OCS will continue to work on improvements in the Quality Assurance activities that it currently operates which are 1) the Supervisory Case Review System, 2) Administrative Reviews, and 3) Quality Assurance On-Site Reviews.

Service Array

Item 35

The State has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency.

Item 36

The services in item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State's CFSP.

Item 37

The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency.

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- Services are not available in sufficient quantity in either rural or urban communities.
- Shortages of services have a negative impact on prevention, reunification, permanency planning and the agency's efforts to provide for the well being of both children and families.
- Services are not readily available in all areas of the state.
- Service provision is influenced by availability rather than underlying needs of children and families.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The issue of service array for Alaska is widespread and wide-ranging. These three items in the Federal review are inextricably linked; therefore they are being addressed as a whole in one section of this narrative.

The OCS will be assessing strengths and gaps in the service system on a regional basis. It will utilize the information gathered to develop collaborative efforts and agreements both within the department and with communities. Regional groups (including representatives

from tribal organizations, community agencies and others) will focus on ways to improve service delivery and capacity.

The Program Improvement Plan identifies the need for increased collaboration within the Department regarding the provision of services. The OCS will be actively collaborating with all other relevant divisions within the department to determine how to use available resources in the most efficient and effective manner. Flexible funding opportunities will need to be developed for the provision of services. The OCS will be collaborating with the divisions of Behavioral Health, Public Health, and Health Care Services to achieve this goal.

Another area of concern is case planning. Case planning in the area of outcome measurement and goal specific case planning will be enhanced. In many areas services are either unavailable or the capacity does not meet the need. In these areas innovative case work and service provision will be necessary. Utilization of tribal, Para-professional and village based resources will be necessary to meet the need. Specific planning and collaboration in this area as noted in the Matrix, is anticipated. The Family Service Training academy and the Permanency Working group will collaborate to develop this training in the coming months.

Quarterly reports on the Service Array will be generated and be part of an administrative report that tracks overall progress. Current OCS grantees submit quarterly service reports, which will be consolidated into the administrative report for Service Array. A baseline of current service delivery will be developed in order to be able to measure changes in the number of children and families receiving services throughout the state. Special emphasis will be given to tracking service provision in rural areas.

Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing

Item 42

The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or childcare institutions receiving title IVE or IVB funds.

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- The application of variances results in full licensing standards not being applied to all foster homes.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The OCS and Region X have had many discussions regarding the statutory authority for the application of licensing variances. Variances do not serve the function of “waiving” licensing requirements, but provide for an alternative method of meeting the licensing standard.

The OCS is currently in the process of collecting information by region on the reasons that variances have been granted in the past. This data will be collected to determine

patterns of use and will be evaluated to consider whether any changes to existing licensing regulations are necessary. Central Office program staff will complete this process and a report will be ready for Region X to review by the end of September 2003.

Item 44

The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed

A. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NON-CONFORMITY

- The State has inadequate recruitment strategies for an effective recruitment plan.
- There are many Alaska Native children in out-of-preference ICWA placements due to lack of Alaska Native foster homes.
- Foster parents incur expenses and then must wait to receive payment through the mail.
- State is losing foster homes either through adoption or by not supporting them with respite and day care.
- Some potential families do not follow through because of frustration with the paperwork requirements.
- Respite care is needed.

B. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

As stated previously, the OCS has already initiated the steps necessary to begin the development of a Statewide Foster Care and Recruitment Plan. Through training and assistance provided by The National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning., the plan will include both statewide and regional goals and action steps. Due to the diverse nature of the state, regional plans that take into account the unique issues present in different geographic areas must be part of overall plan development. Included in the plan will be steps to increase the availability of support groups for foster parents, the development of respite care services, and increased training for foster parents. The development of this plan will take into account the unique challenges entailed in the recruitment and retention of Alaska Native foster homes. Culturally appropriate training and recruitment techniques will be critical to its success. The goal is to have the Plan implemented by January 1, 2004.

The State of Alaska contracts with Alaska Foster Parent Training Association (AFPTC). This contract is a five-year contract that started FY 2000 and is negotiated yearly based on available funding. AFPTC and OCS Central Office staffs jointly facilitate a recruitment Advisory Board. The Board, activated in July, held it's first telephonic meeting in September and meets monthly. The recruitment of native foster families is a priority of the advisory board.

It has been well documented that children in child protective custody do better when they can remain within their home communities near family and friends. It is also a mandate of the Indian Child Welfare Act that American Indian children be placed with their relatives, other tribal members, members of other tribes, or with other tribally approved placements. The Tribes and the State of Alaska recognize that significant differences exist in the services and resources available to foster homes from tribe to tribe, between regions, and between urban and rural locales.

There has been much discussion over the past 5 years as to how to improve our OCS recruitment of Native Foster homes. Because the lack of Native foster homes available for children in State custody, the Tribal/State Collaboration Group agreed to develop a mechanism for the State to recognize and subsidize tribally licensed foster homes for Alaska Native children in the State's custody. This plan is cited in our Program Improvement Plan and was also cited in our Statewide Assessment for the Federal Review.

Few tribes in Alaska currently have tribally licensed foster homes or a tribally licensed foster home program. This has been, in part, because tribes lack the funds to subsidize children placed in tribally licensed foster homes by their tribal courts. The problem for T/SCG has been twofold. First, since few tribes have tribal foster care standards, there was a need to develop tribal foster care licensing standards that met basic federal and state safety requirements for the purposes of receiving the state foster care maintenance subsidy. Second, the Tribes must be able to adopt their own standards, as is their right as a function of the Millennium Agreement entered into between the Tribes and the State of Alaska.

The State of Alaska and the Tribes in Alaska, through joint collaboration, have worked to develop the "Model Tribal Foster Home Standards Agreement" which, when adopted by a Tribal organization, ensures that a foster home licensed under the model standards will be recognized by the State in the same manner and to the same extent the State recognizes foster homes certified by the State. The Tribes and the State of Alaska have further agreed that where a Tribe adopts the model standards, the State of Alaska will provide foster care subsidies in the same manner and to the same extent that the State provides foster care subsidies to foster homes licensed by the State.

Currently, we have three tribal organizations and one tribe having amended their Tribal Title IV-E Agreement to increase the number of tribally licensed foster homes for our use. This is a new program and we have just begun developing an implementation plan through the Tribal/State Collaboration Group.

We are currently working to find a way to expand this option to tribes and tribal organizations that have not signed a Title IV-E Agreement with the State of Alaska.

The benefit of this Agreement is that it increases Native children being placed in Native foster homes, allowing Native children to remain in their community, remain near or with their extended family members, and promotes family reunification and cultural continuity for children placed in state custody. This will also improve the State's compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act for preference placement.

Training for Tribal workers to successfully license and monitor tribally licensed foster homes is an important part of the process. Developing this process together will enhance tribal participation in Native child welfare issues.

OCS and the Alaska Native Health Board applied for and received a CAPTA grant this past September, part of which will be used by the Tribal/State Collaboration Group (T/SCG) to provide training for tribal and state workers and produce brochures for implementing the Tribally Licensed Foster Home Program.

The OCS will work with T/SCG to develop the necessary brochures, training and technical assistance to those tribes and tribal workers wishing to enter into an Agreement with the State of Alaska so they can license and monitor their own tribal foster homes. Additionally, OCS will work with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Social Services, and the Alaska Native Indian Child Welfare Association (ANICWA) to provide presentations and training to all conference participants attending the annual BIA Rural Provider's Conference and the Statewide ICWA Conference.

All of these activities will be reported on via an Administrative Report on a quarterly basis. Progress towards the completion of each benchmark and action step will be documented. The most telling measure will, of course, be the number of foster homes available to children in custody. We hope to see an increase in the number of homes and an increase in the number of culturally appropriate placements approximately six months after the implementation of the new recruitment plan.

The OCS also plans to streamline the adoptive and foster home application process by combining both procedures. This activity will take up to one year to complete and will be part of a work group activity.

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

Outcome or Systemic Factors, Item (s) Contributing to Non-Conformity, and Areas Needing Improvement	Goal	Action Steps	Goal % of Improvement	Method of Measuring Improvement	Measurable Benchmarks and Dates	Responsible Party For Item and/or Action Step
Safety Outcome 1: <i>Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.</i>						
Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment.			Baseline: 70% of reports received a response in accordance with agency policy for the risk level assigned and face-to-face contact was established with the subject of the report in a timely manner. By December 2003 80% and July 2004 90% of reports will have a timely response.	Quality Assurance On-Site Review		
	1.1 Respond to all investigations within the required time frames.	1.1.1 Develop policy and procedures for face to face contact with the child during an investigation. Assure definition of "initiate" is clear.			1.1.1a. Workgroup to begin meeting by February 21, 2003. Draft Policy and Procedures completed by July 15, 2003 and finalized by October 1, 2003	Field Administrator
					1.1.1b. Supervisory Directive for staff training sent to all Supervisors (and FSTA for ongoing training) by November 15, 2003	
					1.1.1c Staff trained by Supervisors and policy implemented by December 30, 2003.	
		1.1.2 Develop criteria and procedures for establishing safety when face to face is not possible within time frames (i.e., due to weather, transportation, etc.).			1.1.2a Workgroup to meet by February 21, 2003. Draft Policy and Procedures completed by July 15, 2003 and finalized by October 1, 2003.	Field Administrator

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

Outcome or Systemic Factors, Item (s) Contributing to Non-Conformity, and Areas Needing Improvement	Goal	Action Steps	Goal % of Improvement	Method of Measuring Improvement	Measurable Benchmarks and Dates	Responsible Party For Item and/or Action Step
	1.1 Respond to all investigations within the required time frames.				1.1.2b Develop protocol to establish child safety in all assigned investigation cases within the State's policy guidelines for face to face contact. Utilize SDM assessment for this process by November 2003	
		1.1.3 OCS & FSTA will develop training curricula and schedule			1.1.3a FSTA and select work group members meet to develop needed training curricula enhancements and schedule by August 30, 2003	Field Administrator
		1.1.4 Training for Supervisory staff			1.1.4a Initial training of all current supervisory staff completed by August 30, 2003	Field Administrator
					1.1.4b Supervisory staff to train all units by September 15, 2003	
					1.1.4c Supervisory staff to provide out reach and training to alternative response providers by December 1, 2003	
					1.1.4d Beginning September 1, 2003, all new staff will be trained in this element during Training and Orientation of New Employees (TONE)	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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		1.1.5 Develop a workgroup to review and develop consistent procedures for utilizing Dual Track Services that comply with OCS policy and procedures on case initiation and case contact standards.			1.1.5a Workgroup to meet by February 21, 2003. Changes to grant condition and MOAs completed by July 1, 2003. Provider practice changes implemented by October 1, 2003.	Field Administrator
		1.1.6 Assure consistent definition and recording of the dates reports are received, assigned and responded to.			1.1.6a Workgroup to meet by February 21, 2003. Policy and Procedures completed by August 1, 2003. Data entry staff trained by September 15, 2003. Social work and supervisory staff trained by September 15, 2003.	Field Administrator
Statewide Data Indicator: Repeat Maltreatment.			Data Indicator Baseline: 23.4% of reports received in Calendar year 2001 had a recurrence. By December 2004 22% or less will have a recurrence.	PROBER reports completed every 6 months		
Item 2 Repeat Maltreatment.			Baseline: 74% of cases reviewed had no repeat maltreatment. By December 2004 80% or more will have no repeat maltreatment.	Quality Assurance On-Site Review		
		2.1.1 SDM will be utilized as a decision making tool in opening in home cases			2.1.1a The SDM work group will examine and make recommendations regarding raising priority level for those reports that have had a substantiated report in the preceding six months, by September of 2003	Field Administrator
	2.1 Reduce the rate of repeat				2.1.1b SDM Work group will examine and make recommendations regarding case open/close matrix for historical risk factors including past substantiated reports by September 2003.	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	maltreatment.				2.1.1c The division will establish a protocol for supervisors to review repeat maltreatment cases at the intake stage of all investigations by October 31, 2003	
					2.1.1d Supervisors to be trained and protocol implemented by January 1, 2004.	
	2.1 Reduce the rate of repeat maltreatment.	2.1.2 OCS will enhance training on identification and documentation of substance abuse/addiction studies related to child protection. (see also 35.3.7)			2.1.2a Meet with the Training Academy to discuss training curriculum by July 30, 2003.	Field Administrator
					2.1.2b Coordinated training through the Family Service Academy and the Foster Parent Training Center, will be available to all foster parents	
					2.1.2c FSTA will conduct an applied research project dealing with substance abuse that result in policy and practice changes through the next 17 months	
					2.1.2d FSTA will develop a strategic plan for the most needed evaluation efforts and a variety of funding strategies to help make the Research Center self-sustaining by August 2004	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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					2.1.2e See item # 35	
					2.1.2f See #3.2.3	
		2.1.3 The Court Improvement CINA Committee will ask the Judicial Education Committee to consider substance abuse as a possible future training topic (e.g., what is reasonable length of sobriety in parenting context?).			2.1.3 a JEC will consider suggestion and make recommendation within 3 months.(The supreme court agreed to permit the training in the fall of 2003 if outside funding could be obtained.)	CIP Coordinator
					2.1.3b CIP staff submitted a funding request to the State Justice Institute. Decision is due in May of 2003.	
		2.1.4 Collaborate with community to identify, develop, and provide highest priority services			2.1.4a Meet with community stakeholders to discuss service needs during year one of the PIP See Item #35	Program Administrator
					2.1.4b OCS will incorporate stake holder survey information in the development of the new 5-Year CFSP by June 30, 2004	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	2.1 Reduce the rate of repeat maltreatment.	2.1.5 Develop protocol for prioritizing waiting lists.			2.1.5a Ongoing meetings with departmental partners to discuss service accessibility during Year One of the PIP (See Item #35)	Program Administrator
					2.1.5b Interdepartmental meetings will develop State MOA for prioritized services by July 2004	
		2.1.6 Evaluate effectiveness of purchased services.			2.1.6a Partner with UAA through FSTA research grant during next 2 years. Research design to begin August of 2003.	Program Administrator
					2.1.6b Research completed by December 2004 will be incorporated into a strategic plan and added to the PIP by March 2005.	
		2.1.7 Implement a statewide computerized safety and risk assessment system to provide structure to decision making at critical stages in a child protection case.			2.1.7a Continue worker training in SDM. 85% compliance with computerized system by December 30, 2003.	Field Administrator
					2.1.7b See #2.1.8	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	2.1 Reduce the rate of repeat maltreatment.	2.1.8 Reassess, clarify, and operationally define all definitions for Screening and Intake (SDM/Prober) to provide consistency in what reports are screened in and out of the system.			2.1.8a Workgroup to meet by February 15, 2003.	Field Administrator
					2.1.8b Policy and Procedures completed by October 1, 2003.	
					2.1.8c SDM implementation plan completed by November 30, 2003.	
					2.1.8d Staff trained and policy implemented by January 31, 2003.	
	2.2 Improve data entry to accurately reflect incidents of repeat maltreatment.	2.2.1 Refine dispositional outcomes.			2.2.1a Same as 2.1.8	Research Analyst IV
		2.2.2 Clarification of categorization of referrals			2.2.2a Same as 2.1.8	Research Analyst IV

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	2.2 Improve data entry to accurately reflect incidents of repeat maltreatment.	2.2.3 Allow duplicate reports to be linked. Determine correct recording of linked reports.			2.2.3a Same as 2.1.8	Research Analyst IV
		2.2.4 Incorporate data entry improvements into ORCA development			2.2.4a ORCA Policy Committee to coordinate changes with workgroup on same timeframes.	ORCA Project Manager
Statewide Data Indicator: Incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care.			Baseline: 1.91% in CY 2000, or 56 children out of 2,939. By December 2003 this will reach 1.77%	Staff Manager Log		
	2.3 Reduce the incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care	2.3.1 Develop standards for unlicensed relative caregivers and include them in the FLAG Project through public safety.			2.3.1c Consult with Department of Public Safety by October, 2003 .	Program Administrator
					2.3.1b Form workgroup by November, 2003.	
					2.3.1b Complete standards by January 31, 2004.	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	2.3 Reduce the incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care				2.3.1d Staff trained and changes implemented by March 15, 2004.	
		2.3.2 Improve data integrity for differentiating between licensing complaints and child protection allegations in alternate caregiver homes			2.3.2a Implement tracking system by August 15, 2003.	Program Administrator
					2.3.2b Provide quarterly feedback to regional managers for purposes of data correction.	
					2.3.2c Identify and train key staff for data entry by October 2003.	
		2.3.3 Improve foster parent recruitment, screening, training, and retention			2.3.3a Request TA from National Resource centers by January 15, 2003 2. See item 34	Program Administrator
					2.3.3b Develop workgroup for plan development by February 1, 2003.	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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					2.3.3c Develop statewide implementation plan by November 2003	
					2.3.3d See 6.1.1	
<p>Safety</p> <p>Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.</p>						
<p>Item 3: Services to families to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal.</p>			<p>Baseline: 69% of families had services to protect the child in his or her home to prevent removal.</p> <p>By December 2004 74% of families will receive services.</p>	Onsite Quality Assurance Review		
		<p>3.1.1 Research alternative staffing methods and work schedules, such as flexible shifts, weekend workers, etc. to ensure adequate coverage on all cases.</p>			<p>3.1.1a Children's Services Managers will conduct review of current employee work schedules and staffing patterns in relation to caseload by September 1, 2003.</p>	Field Administrator
	<p>3.1 Establish sufficient staffing levels to meet CWLA caseload standards and to protect children and prevent removal.</p>	<p>3.1.2 Strengthen and streamline hiring process. Use continuous and out of state recruitment, double fill positions when one is coming vacant, establish training positions.</p>			<p>3.1.2a Workgroup meet by January 15, 2003</p>	Field Administrator & Administrative Manager

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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					3.1.2b Hiring process for training positions approved by September 15, 2003.	
	3.2 Increase services to families to protect children in their home and prevent their removal.	3.2.1 Clarify policies, procedures, and definitions for in-home cases			3.2.1a Workgroup to meet by January 15, 2003.	Field Administrator
					3.2.1b Research and develop procedures for in home case work by August 2003	
					3.2.1c Develop procedures for care and safety plans and in home case planning for in home cases based on SDM by August 2003	
					3.2.1d Examine work load to determine pilot offices by September 15, 2003	
	3.2 Increase services to families to protect children in their home and prevent their removal.				3.2.1e Assign target offices by September 30, 2003	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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					3.2.1f Evaluate and coordinate needed changes for in home case work policy and procedure based on findings from pilot by February 2004.	
					3.2.1g Finalize policy and procedure by March 2004, Train staff by June 2004, Implementation by July 2004	
		3.2.2 Establish collaborative effort between Tribal/State collaboration group, community groups and OCS to help monitor and provide services to in-home cases.			3.2.2a See Item #35	Field Administrator
		3.2.3 Open for services those cases SDM helps identify as high risk when priority needs are not met by protective capacities			3.2.3a SDM workgroup will meet monthly beginning January 2003 to address these issues. See 2.1.8	Field Administrator
	3.2 Increase services to families to protect children in their home and prevent their removal.				3.2.3b See 2.1.7	
		3.2.4 Refer to Goal, Action Steps, Measures and Benchmarks in 2.1.3-2.1.8			3.2.4a Refer to Goal, Action Steps, Measures and Benchmarks in 2.1.3-2.1.6	Refer to Goal, Action Steps, Measures and Benchmarks in 2.1.3-2.1.6

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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Item 4: Risk of harm to child.			Baseline: 68% of families had assessment of risk and services to reduce the risk. By December 2003 75% and December 2004 80%.	On-Site Quality Assurance Review and Number of SDM assessments completed		
	4.1 Reduce risk to children by improving assessments.	4.1.1 Utilize SDM on all Cases			4.1.1a SDM workgroup will meet monthly. Continue worker training in SDM. 85% compliance with computerized system by August, 2003.	Field Administrator
					4.1.1b See 2.1.7	
		4.2.1 Refer to Goal, Action Steps, Measures and Benchmarks in 2.1.3-2.1.6		Refer to Goal, Action Steps, Measures and Benchmarks in 2.1.3-2.1.6	4.2.1a Refer to Goal, Action Steps, Measures and Benchmarks in 2.1.3-2.1.6	Refer to Goal, Action Steps, Measures and Benchmarks in 2.1.3-2.1.6
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.						
Item 6: Stability of foster care placement			Baseline: 61% of children had stability in foster care placements. By July 2004 70% and December 2004 71%.	Prober monthly print out		

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	6.1 Decrease number of foster care placements from time of entry into foster care.	6.1.1 Develop pre-service training for all foster parents prior to licensure (not emergency licensure) see item #34			6.1.1a Examine Anchorage pre-service training (including kinship) by September 30, 2003	Program Administrator
					6.1.1b Develop revised curriculum for Foster and Adoptive Core Training via distance delivery by November 30, 2003	
					6.1.1b Develop schedule for Foster and Adoptive Core Training via distance delivery by January 1, 2004	
					6.1.1c Statewide implementation of regularly scheduled, centralized pre-service or distance delivered training by February 2004	
		6.1.2 The permanency working group will review information surrounding placement change and develop criteria for review of placement changes and appropriate interventions			6.1.2a The Permanency working group in conjunction with the Research analyst will conduct monthly review of Prober data regarding child placement changes.	Field Administrator
					6.1.2e The permanency working group will draft policy for case review criteria for excessive placement and forward to the regions by January 30, 2004	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	6.1 Decrease number of foster care placements from time of entry into foster care.				6.1.2f The regions will conduct case review and follow up (interventions) on all appropriately identified cases by April 30, 2004.	
		6.1.4 Strengthen matching process by increasing placement options available through foster home recruitment and retention.			6.1.4a See item #44	Program Administrator
					6.1.4b Permanency/AFPTC subgroup will prioritize (April 30, 2004) and then developed the following:	
					6.1.4c Joint training, in special needs care, for foster parents, through DBH (June 30,2004).	
					6.1.4d A specialized cross training calendar for foster and kinship care among agencies dealing with mutual clientele (July 2004).	
			6.1.5 Increase training opportunities for foster parents in both rural and urban areas of the state. See item #34			6.1.5a Permanency/AFPTC subgroup will prioritize and then develop the following:

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	6.1 Decrease number of foster care placements to no more than two placements from time of entry into foster care.				6.1.5b A specialized cross training calendar for foster and kinship care among agencies dealing with mutual clientele, village based (October 30, 2003).	
					6.1.5c AFPTC will contract local trainers (village based) to train FPs by September 30, 2003	
					6.1.5d AFPTC will collaborate with tribal and village based partners in the development and implementation of training. MOA's will be developed outlining expectations. December 30, 2003	
					6.1.5e Permanency/AFPTC subgroup will develop P&P for mandatory training for relative placement/kinship care. November 2003	
					6.1.5f Permanency/AFPTC subgroup will develop training for relative placement/kinship care. April 1, 2004	
					6.1.5g AFPTC will implement training for relative placement/kinship care by April 1, 2004	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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Statewide Data Indicator: Of all children served who have been in foster care less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home, what percentage have had no more than two placement settings? National Standard is 86.7 or more.			Baseline: in FFY 2000, 70.6% of children had only two placement settings. By July 2004 72.6% and December 2004 74.6%.	AFCARS		
Item 7: Permanency goal for child.			Baseline: 61% of children had appropriate permanency goals within the established timeframes. By July 2004 65% and December 2004 70%.	On-Site Quality Assurance Review		
	7.1 Improve assessment of permanency goals to appropriately match a child's individual needs.	7.1.1 Standardize practice for setting and changing goals when concurrent planning occurs.			7.1.1a Permanency work group will develop policy/practice changes by November, 2003. Training work group will develop curricula revisions by December 30, 2003. TONE, Core and ongoing training of concurrent planning will incorporate new policy and practice by March 31, 2004.	Field Administrator
		7.1.2 Ensure documentation of compelling reasons.			7.1.2a Clarify existing Policy and Procedure regarding documentation of compelling reasons by October 2003.	Field Administrator
					7.1.2b Insure that documentation of compelling reasons is included in ORCA design by October 2004	ORCA Project Manager
					7.1.2c See 8.1.2	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	7.1 Improve assessment of permanency goals to appropriately match a child's individual needs.				7.1.2d Clarify existing Policy and Procedure through Supervisory Quarterly Meeting September, 2003	
		7.1.3 Continue permanency finalization specialists (Balloon Program)			7.1.3a Reassign administrative management of Balloon Program to Permanency Unit in Central Office by July 1, 2003.	Program Administrator
	7.2 Implement ORCA to streamline business processes.	7.2.1 Increase the division's ability to measure permanency goals			7.2.1a ORCA will be online in December 2004. Standardize goal data entry in Prober November 2004	ORCA Project Manager
Statewide Date Indicator: Of all children who were reunified with their parents or caretakers at the time of discharge from foster care, what percentage was reunified in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home? National standard is 76.2% or more.			Baseline: FFY 2000 58.3% of reunifications occurred within 12 months of when child entered care. By December 2003 60.8% and by December 2004 63.3%.	AFCARS		
Item 8: Reunification, Guardianship, or Permanent Placement with Relatives	8.1 Expedite permanency for children with reunification, guardianship, or placed with relatives.		Base line: In 31 % of applicable cases, OCS had made, or was making, diligent efforts to attain the goals of reunification or guardianship	On site Quality Assurance Reviews		

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	8.1 Expedite permanency for children with reunification, guardianship, or placed with relatives.	8.1.2 Strengthen Administrative Reviews to examine permanency goals and concurrent plans.			8.1.2a Review and approve current P&P draft regarding Administrative Reviews and quality feedback loop. October 30, 2003	Field Administrator
					8.1.2b Complete training of new policy for all Supervisors at the Quarterly Supervisors meeting. Follow with administrative memo to all Staff and Children's Service Mangers. By December 30, 2003	
		8.1.3 Increase use of reunification assessments through SDM, and continue training workers on these assessments.			8.1.3a Track SDM implementation through database and target non performing offices (less than 85%) for specific supervision	Field Administrator
					8.1.3b Supervisory Quarterly meeting to review SDM reunification components September,2003	
Statewide Data Indicator: Of all children who exited care to a finalized adoption, what percentage exited care in less than 24 months form the time of the latest removal from home? National standard is 32% or more.			Of all children who exited care to a finalized adoption, in FFY 2000 21.8% exited care in less than 24 months from the time of the latest removal from home By December 2004 24.7%.	AFCARS		
Item 9: Adoption			Base line 30% percent of the cases, OCS made diligent efforts to achieve adoptions in a timely manner. By December 2003 45%. By December 2004 70%	On site Quality Assurance Reviews		

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	9.1 Decrease Court Delays	9.1.1 Refer to SNAP Judicial Track (also known as CIP Case Management/Adoption subcommittee) for further study (what aspects of court operations contribute to delays?) and recommendations.			9.1.1a Adoption subcommittee will complete research and forward recommendations to CIP by July 2004.	CIP Coordinator
					9.1.1b CIP will consider recommendations and develop an action plan by November 2004. Implement action plan by January 2005.	
	9.2 Complete All Adoptions Within 24 Months from Date of Entry into Foster Care	9.2.1 Implement the SNAP Project recommendations			9.2.1a .Develop new Policies and Procedures (Completed) 2. Provide training to Quarterly supervisors (Completed) workers through TONE, meetings and Advanced Adoption training	Program Administrator
		9.2.2 Increase post-adoption services			9.2.2a . Submit RFP for pre and post-adoption services April, 2003	Program Administrator
					9.2.2b Implement statewide contract for post-adoption services by September 2003.	
		9.2.3 Implement Permanent Families contract			9.2.3a Develop contracts with two service providers by October 1, 2003.	Program Administrator

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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					9.2.3b Provide funding to regions to remove barriers to timely home studies for adoptions and guardianships.	
	9.2 Complete All Adoptions Within 24 Months from Date of Entry into Foster Care	9.2.4 Complete home study as part of foster care licensing process.			9.2.4a Recruitment and retention subgroup to design process, policy and procedure for combining adoption home studies with foster home licensing by September 30, 2004	Program Administrator
					9.2.4b Train all licensing workers on the new process of integrating the foster home and adoption home study processes May, 2005.	
					9.2.4c Implement process of integrating the foster home and adoption home study processes by June, 2005	
Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement.			Baseline: 50% of applicable cases had independent living services made available to the child after they turned age 17. By December 2004 75% of children 14 and older will have IL services made available.	Onsite Quality Assurance Review		
		10.1.1 Increase to 50% (from<5%) use of ACLSA by eligible youth.			10.1.1a Develop and begin providing financial incentive for youth to complete ACLSA assessment by July 1, 2003.	Program Administrator

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	10.1 Improve the access and delivery of transitional and independent living services to youth in care				10.1.1b Modify residential care contracts to require providers to assist youth in completing ACLSA assessments by July 1, 2003.	
		10.1.2 Develop youth advisory board (YAB) to help identify service gaps and improve service delivery.			10.1.2a Establishment of YAB including framework for membership and consistent meeting schedule by October 2003	Program Administrator
	10.1 Improve the access and delivery of transitional and independent living services to youth in care	10.1.3 Through the TSCG IL committee, develop and implement a prioritized work-plan for meeting the transition needs of native youth in state custody			10.1.3a Development of a work plan that includes priorities, assignments and timeframes by November 30, 2003	Program Administrator
		10.1.4 Continue training for workers, foster parents and service providers on Understanding Adolescence and Transition Case Planning.			10.1.4a ILP and FSTA will develop ILP segment for Tone to be implemented by October 31, 2003	Program Administrator
		10.1.5 Create a statewide network of local experts on assessing life skills, creating transition plans and accessing IL funds			10.1.5a Identify OCS staff, tribal staff and local service providers to be the experts. Provide training and establish routine communications. By July 1, 2003	Program Administrator
<p>Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.</p>						

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care.			Baseline: 73% of visits between parents and children occurred with sufficient frequency. By December 2004 80%.	Onsite Quality Assurance Review		
	13.1 Increase visits between parents, siblings, and children in foster care.	13.1.1 Clarify responsibilities of foster parents for helping facilitate visits.			13.1.1a See 34.1	Program Administrator
					13.1.1b Update current Foster Parent Handbook to clarify responsibilities by October, 2003	
					13.1.1c Update all current foster parents regarding expectations of visitation through direct mailing in monthly payment by May 30, 2003	
					13.1.1d Include visitation expectations for foster parents in pre-service and ongoing training of foster parents see 6.1.1	
					13.1.1e Review and/or revise foster care agreement form. By January 1, 2004 see 13.1.2	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	13.1 Increase visits between parents, siblings, and children in foster care.	13.1.2 increase the capacity for visitation through clarification and stream lining of visitation policy and procedure			13.1.2a Working group will develop clear policy, procedure and guidelines for visitations, supervised and unsupervised by October 31, 2003	Field Administrator
					13.1.2b see 1.1.3	
		13.1.3 Review, revise and/or improve training for workers regarding case plan development as it relates to visitation.			13.1.3a see 1.1.3	Field Administrator
		13.1.4 Increase tribal visitation assistance.			13.1.4a Discuss tribal assistance in visitation with the Tribal State Collaboration Group September 2003	Field Administrator
					13.1.4b TSCG will developed MOA outlining tribal responsibility for visitation in tribal cases by see 14.1.3 March 2004	
Item 14: Preserving connections.			Baseline: 74% rated as strength in the agency making diligent efforts to preserve child's connections to family, neighborhood, community, traditions, faith. By December 2004 85%.	Onsite Quality Assurance Review		

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	14.1 Continue and preserve family relationships and connections for children in out of home care.	14.1.1 Develop form for parents to complete to include information about the child, relatives, and community connections.			14.1.1a Division Forms Committee will develop form by October 2003. Distribution of form to the field by November 2003.	Program Administrator
		14.1.2 Ensure ICWA compliance through relative search, using ICWA Help desk in Anchorage (expand to other regions), worker filling out genogram, continue 30 day review of children placed out of compliance.			14.1.2a Implement INGENS statewide by July 1, 2003.	Field Administrator
					14.1.2b Assess the feasibility of expanding the ICWA Help Desk concept to other regions of the state by January 2004. Report regarding feasibility submitted to administration by February 2004.	
		14.1.3 Continue Tribal State Collaboration Group.			14.1.3a Working group to investigate and report to TSCG on barriers to preserving connections for children in out of home care by September 2003	Field Administrator
					14.1.3b TSCG subcommittee will develop strategy for improving the stability of children's primary connections in tribal cases by March 2004	
					14.1.3c State and tribal partners will begin implementation of new strategy/guidelines for preserving connections in all cases. June 2004	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	14.1 Continue and preserve family relationships and connections for children in out of home care.	14.1.4 Develop ORCA to easily document diligent efforts to find missing parents.			14.1.4a ORCA will be online in December 2004.	ORCA Project Manager
		14.1.5 Continue funding for regional clerk to provide notices to case conferences and court hearings.			14.1.5a Completed in all regions except SCRO See #29.1.2	Field Administrator
		14.1.6 Increase the number of foster homes to help keep children in home school and home community.			14.1.6a See item #44	Program Administrator
		14.1.7 Develop desk reference permanency planning checklists for workers to use .			14.1.7a Checklists developed by Training Academy by May 2004	Field Administrator
		14.1.8 Enhance connections for children who are in out of home placement			14.1.8a Permanency work group will develop Policy and Procedures guiding practice in preserving connections November 2004	Field Administrator
					14.1.8b Training Academy will develop training and implement by March of 2004	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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Item 15: Relative placement			Baseline: 70% of cases reviewed children were already placed with relatives or diligent efforts were made. By December 2004 80%.	Onsite Quality assurance Review		
	15.1 Conduct thorough relative search at Probable Cause Hearing and continue to be updated throughout the case.	15.1.1 Provide for immediate paternity testing with quick results.			15.1.1a Examine the Anchorage model for immediate paternity testing by August 29, 2003	Program Administrator
					15.1.1b Work with Child Support Enforcement Division and the court system to implement paternity testing statewide by July 2004.	
					15.1.1c Coordinate effort with CIP to ensure relative search completed by all parties. See 15.1.4	
					15.1.1d See Item 14	
		15.1.3 Ask Department of Law to train AGs that they can ask the judge to order uncooperative parents to disclose relative information at PC and other opportunities as ordered..			15.1.3a Review at next Court Improvement Project Meeting in September 2003	Program Administrator

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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		15.1.4 Consider amending judges' Temporary Custody checklist to include reminder to order parents to disclose relative information. See AS 47.10.080 (r)(5).			15.1.4a. CIP staff will amend CINA checklists to include reminder that judges can order parents to disclose relative information. See AS 47.10.080 (r)(5). Draft to be submitted to committee in September 2003 This task will be completed December 2003.	CIP Coordinator
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents.			Baseline: 81% of cases reviewed showed a strong bond between child parent. By December 2004 90% of cases where children are returning home or will be placed with a relative will show a strong bond supported by the agency..	Administrative Review Onsite Quality assurance Review		
	16.1 Provide ongoing support to enhance and maintain the child-parent bond	16.1.1 Provide for immediate paternity testing with quick results. (refer to 15.1.1)			16.1.1a Work with CSED and the court system to implement paternity testing statewide. Examine the Anchorage model.	Program Administrator
		16.1.2 Strengthen and encourage parents' continued participation in medical care, school conferences, and other activities.			16.1.2a Management team to design plan for effective ways to assist staff in implementation of current policy and procedure by September 2003	Field Administrator
					16.1.2b See items 13 & 14	
well-being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.						

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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Item 17: Needs and services of child, parent and foster parents.			Baseline: 52% of cases presented with adequate assessment and service needs for the children, parents and foster parents. This will increase to 60% by December 2003.	Quality Assurance On-site Review			
	17.1 The children and parents' needs will be adequately assessed and addressed at critical junctures in the case	17.1.1 Fully implement SDM			17.1.1a Provide SDM refresher course during on-site local training.	Field Administrator	
					17.1.1b Complete SDM screening process in 85% investigations according to established time frames by December 2003		
						17.1.1c Complete SDM screening process training in offices where the PIP improvement goals are not met. Target training based on quarterly SDM data analysis starting December, 2003.	
		17.1.2 Evaluate/strengthen current TONE curriculum on child and family assessments.			17.1.2a Meet with supervisors to review and recommend revisions to assessment training. Select supervisors to meet with the Training Academy by September of 2003.	Field Administrator	
					17.1.2b Meet with training academy to review and recommend revisions to assessment training by October of 2003		

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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					17.1.2c FSTA and select work group members meet to develop training curricula, as determined by 17.1.2b and schedule by January 2004.	
					17.1.2d Debrief all current supervisory staff on training assessment outcomes and train by February 2004	
	17.1 The children and parents' needs will be adequately assessed and addressed at critical junctures in the case				17.1.2d Supervisory staff to train all units by April 2004.	
					17.1.2e Post July 1, 2004 all new staff will be trained in this element as part of Training and Orientation of New Employees (TONE).	
		17.1.3 Synchronize adoption/guardianship home studies with establishment of concurrent planning goal.			17.1.3a Change Policy to reflect that home studies will be requested when a concurrent planning goal is created by September 30, 2003	Program Administrator
					17.1.3b Complete home study as part of foster care licensing process. See 9.2.4	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	17.2 There will be ongoing evaluation of service provision for parents and children	17.2.1 Enhance Policy and Procedure for Administrative review feedback to administration.			17.2.1a Complete strengthening of Administrative Review feedback loop protocol by April 2003. See Item #25	Field Administrator
	17.3 Foster parent needs will be assessed and addressed in regard to the child's specific needs	17.3.1 include foster parents needs (in relation to child specific needs) in workers' assessments and case planning.			17.3.1a Meet with training academy to review and/or revise foster parent needs assessment training by January, 2004.	Field Administrator
					17.3.1b Enhance foster parent Plan and agreement tool through connecting foster parent needs to child's specific needs as indicated on case plan January 2004.	
Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning.			Baseline: 48% of cases reviewed had all relevant parties actively involved in case planning process By December 2004 80%.	Onsite Quality Assurance Review /Consumer SatisfactionSurvey		
		18.1.1 Train workers to make diligent, early inquires to locate any "missing" biological or legal parents.			18.1.1a see 14.1.2 (ICWA and INGENS) &15.1 (courts)	Field Administrator
	18.1 Assure that each child in custody and his/her parents all				18.1.1b 95% of cases will be run through Ingens within 60 days of Assumption of Custody by December 2003	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	actively contribute to case planning efforts affecting their family.	18.1.2 Enhance worker and family personal contact in case planning			18.1.3a Permanency work group will develop P&P requiring face to face meeting for initial case planning purposes September 2003	Field Administrator
					18.1.3b Staff to be trained in new policy by January 2004.	
Item 19: Worker visits with child.			Baseline: 28% of cases had sufficient frequency and quality of visits between worker and child were to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's safety and well-being By December 2004 80%.	Onsite Quality Assurance Reviews		
	19.1 The frequency and quality of visits between workers and children is sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's safety and well-being.	19.1.1 Implement ongoing task analysis to identify essential worker functions			19.1.1.a Prioritized list of essential worker functions completed by June 2003.	Field Administrator
		19.1.2 Develop policy & procedure regarding the prioritization process for worker-child visitation			19.1.2a Workgroup to meet by January 15, 2003. Policy and Procedures completed by December 2003. Staff trained and policy implemented by January 30, 2004.	Field Administrator
Item 20: Worker visits with parents.			Baseline: 28% of cases had visits occurring with sufficient frequency By December 2004, 80%.	Onsite Quality Assurance Review		

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	20.1 Worker visits with parents will occur with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of the children and parents, focusing on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment.	20.1.1 Same as Item 19			20.1.1a see Item 19	Field Administrator
well-being Outcome 2: Children will receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.						
Item 21: Educational needs of the child.			Baseline: 79% of the cases reviewed, workers actively participated in efforts to assess children's educational needs. This will increase to 95% by December 2004.	Onsite Quality Assurance Reviews		
		21.1.1 Review Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) law and develop language in our custody orders to allow workers access to all educational records.			21.1.1a Request Attorney Generals (AG) office change court orders to reflect division authority to collect educational information for children in custody by November 28, 2003	Field Administrator
					21.1.1b AGs office to train all AGs statewide in the use of new orders by December 31, 2003	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	21.1 All children will attend school regularly and progress toward graduation or transitional goals within the state's mandated time frames	21.1.2. Clarify expectations between school districts and the division regarding case and school record collection, documentation and worker participation in IEP meetings.			21.1.2a Develop interdepartmental working group to address the educational needs of children under child welfare jurisdiction by September 2004 See item #35	Field Administrator
					21.1.2b Develop MOA with DOE regarding collection procedures for educational records of children in Custody by December 2004	
		21.1.3 Provide training to workers and out of home care providers regarding the educational system to improve the ability to advocate for the needs of children in state custody. (Other partners may be invited to these trainings)			21.1.3a OCS and DOE will coordinate trainings to workers and providers regarding advocacy for children under the departments jurisdiction. By September 2004	Program Administrator
		21.1.4 Workers will assess, address and document the presence of educational needs for children in their own homes			21.1.4a Policy group to review policy regarding inclusion of educational assessment in in-home case planning September 30, 2003 . Revise policy if necessary and train staff by January 2004.	Field Administrator
Well-being Outcome 3: Children will receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.						
Item 22: Physical health of the child.			Baseline: 77% of cases reviewed found children's physical health needs had been appropriately assessed and services provided By December 2004 80%	On site Quality Assurance Review		

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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		22.1.1 Complete EPSDT within our guidelines and use the healthcare provider's recommendations as a guide for all health treatment decisions.			22.1.1.a Develop MOA with Public Health to facilitate EPSDT notification process and follow up by January 30, 2004	Program Administrator
	22.1 Ensure all children with open cases are safe, thriving (adequate food, clothing, and housing), and physically healthy through consistent and timely access to appropriate and necessary dental, optical, and medical services.				22.1.1b Clarify caregiver and social worker roles in providing health screenings and follow-up for children at entry into foster care include clarification in staff Memo and Tone training by January 30, 2004 .	
		22.1.2 Maintain consistent communication with the child and caregivers on health needs and issues.			22.1.12a 90% of out-of-home care providers will have copies of current medical records for children in their care by December 2004.	Program Administrator
					22.1.2b Administrative reviewers will evaluate children's health needs in all reviews	
Item 23: Mental health of the child.			Baseline: 66% of children had mental health needs assessed and appropriate services provided By December 2004 70%	Onsite Quality Assurance Review		
		23.1.1 Review draft mental health policy and formalize triage access to provide mental health evaluations for all children entering out of home care.			23.1.1a Finalize mental health P&P by November 2003. 2. Staff training and full implementation by January 2004.	Program Administrator

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

Outcome or Systemic Factors, Item (s) Contributing to Non-Conformity, and Areas Needing Improvement	Goal	Action Steps	Goal % of Improvement	Method of Measuring Improvement	Measurable Benchmarks and Dates	Responsible Party For Item and/or Action Step
	23.1 Every child with an open case will have access to mental health assessment and necessary services.				23.1.1b See item 22	Program Administrator
					23.1.1c Refer to Item 35.1.4	Program Administrator
Systemic Factor: <i>Case Review System</i>						
Item 25: Provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child's parents that includes the required provisions.			Refer to Item #18	18.1.3 a and b		
	25.1 Case plans will be developed with the child (if appropriate) and the child's parents.	25.1.1 Review and strengthen policy and procedures, practice and training that pertain to child and parent involvement in case planning.			25.1.1a see item 18	Field Administrator
					25.1.1b All administrative reviews will assess and report on parent and child inclusion in case planning see Item 18	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

Outcome or Systemic Factors, Item (s) Contributing to Non-Conformity, and Areas Needing Improvement	Goal	Action Steps	Goal % of Improvement	Method of Measuring Improvement	Measurable Benchmarks and Dates	Responsible Party For Item and/or Action Step
	25.1 Case plans will be developed with the child (if appropriate) and the child's parents.				25.1.1c Administrative Review will assess and report on outcome oriented case planning and goal specific case plans See item 18	
					25.1.1d Administrative review data gathering will be reported to and tracked by local management on a quarterly basis in order to monitor adherence to policy.	
		25.1.2 Case planning policy for in-home cases will be enhanced to include parent and child participation in case planning			25.1.4a Policy group to meet and review policy concerning in-home case by October 1, 2003 . Policy changes by January 2004 and staff training by February 2004.	Field Administrator
					25.1.4b In-home cases, documentation of parent and child inclusion in case planning will be in the case file as observed and reported by the On-Site Quarterly Reviews by February 2004.	
Item 27: Provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the state has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter.			Development of a baseline measurement from Current Onsite Quality Assurance Reviews will be completed By September 2003. Following this an incremental improvement will be added	Onsite Quality Assurance Reviews		
		27.1.1 Coordinate efforts to improve timeliness of permanency hearings			27.1.1a Coordinate effort between the CIP and OCS to schedule all permanency hearing according to following guidelines by September 2003	Field Administrator

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	27.1 All children in foster care will have a permanency court hearing no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter.				27.1.1b Assess Courts ability to measure % of Permanency hearings being held in a timely manner, and if not, why not. Begin assessment in December of 2003.	CIP Coordinator	
					27.1.1c OCS/CIP will evaluate and develop plan of action addressing areas of concern July 1, 2004		
		27.1.2 CIP will ask supreme court to consider amendments to CINA Rule 17.2 that would prohibit granting of continuances in permanency hearings except upon a showing of good cause, and requiring judges to make written findings when granting a continuance.				27.1.2a Review at next Court Improvement Project Meeting in September 2003. Proposal to be made by October 2003. CINA Rules Committee and Supreme Court will consider proposal by July 2005.	CIP Coordinator
		27.1.3 CIP will encourage judges to Prioritize scheduling and timeliness of permanency hearings				27.1.3a Review at next Court Improvement Project Meeting in September 2003	CIP Coordinator
						27.1.3b CIP will send a letter to judges during 2003 to: Encourage judges to set the permanency hearing earlier than 14 months after the petition filing date (e.g. set Perm. Hrng. 10-12 months from date petition was filed); Remind judges that CINA Rule 17(f) requires the disposition order to set the date for the Permanency Hearing; Encourage judges to set the due date for the permanency report in the disposition order; Encourage judges to grant continuances only when necessary and only for the shortest possible time (e.g., a two-hour continuance for parties to review a late-filed permanency report.)	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

Outcome or Systemic Factors, Item (s) Contributing to Non-Conformity, and Areas Needing Improvement	Goal	Action Steps	Goal % of Improvement	Method of Measuring Improvement	Measurable Benchmarks and Dates	Responsible Party For Item and/or Action Step
	27.1 All children in foster care will have a permanency court hearing no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter.				27.1.3c Set ongoing meeting between CIP coordinator and PIP coordinator July, 2003. Coordinators will meet, at a minimum on a quarterly basis.	
		27.1.4 CIP will design enhancements to the court system's computerized case information system that would permit timely scheduling and tracking of timeliness in permanency hearings.			27.1.4a CIP will consider (funds permitting) designing and funding enhancements to the court system's new Courtview computerized case information system that would permit tracking of permanency hearings. This system is scheduled to be operational statewide by the end of 2004.	CIP Coordinator
		27.1.5 The timeliness of TPRs will be improved			27.1.5a CIP will examine case files for reason of delays in TPR by July 2004.	CIP Coordinator
					27.1.5b Examination of possible systemic issues will be completed state wide by December 31, 2003	
Item 29: Provides a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child.				By December 2004 80%	A survey of foster parents and pre-adoptive parents regarding their notice and ability to be heard in any review or hearing during January and June of 2004.	
		29.1.1 Hire and maintain administrative clerks in each region to provide notices of case conferences to all parties, and notices of court hearings to foster parents or other caregivers and grandparents, if known.			29.1.1a Five administrative clerks will be hired by July 1, 2003.	Field Administrator

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

Outcome or Systemic Factors, Item (s) Contributing to Non-Conformity, and Areas Needing Improvement	Goal	Action Steps	Goal % of Improvement	Method of Measuring Improvement	Measurable Benchmarks and Dates	Responsible Party For Item and/or Action Step
	29.1 All foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers will be notified of case conferences and court hearings for the child in their care.				29.1.1b Reviewers and support staff will schedule and provide notice by June 30, 2003	
					29.1.1c The CIP will study the court practices with regard to notification of hearing changes by December 2003. Any recommendations will have timelines attached.	CIP Coordinator
					29.1.1d CIP will evaluate results and make findings and recommendations by March 2004.	
					29.1.1e within 6 months of request, CIP will consider findings and recommendations and draft an action plan within 6 months	
			29.1.2 Foster Parents will be recognized and be given an opportunity to be heard in hearings			29.1.2a AGs will ask for recognition in all hearings where it is appropriate for foster parents to be heard by August 2003
Systemic Factor: <i>Quality Assurance System</i>						

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

Outcome or Systemic Factors, Item (s) Contributing to Non-Conformity, and Areas Needing Improvement	Goal	Action Steps	Goal % of Improvement	Method of Measuring Improvement	Measurable Benchmarks and Dates	Responsible Party For Item and/or Action Step
Item 31: The State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented.			The State will operate an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented.	Development of a Comprehensive Quality Assurance System		
	31.1 Strengthen and build upon existing measures to fully identify and integrate quality assurance activities occurring within the division.	31.1.1 Develop a formal and periodic evaluation of agency performance by stakeholders and tribal groups.			31.1.1a Request for TA from National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement to assist in consolidating QA activities into an overall/comprehensive program, will be made by the state and the Region X office by October 30, 2003.	Program Administrator
					31.1.b Develop survey instrument November 2003	
					31.1.c Implement stakeholder surveying on an annual basis in each region beginning January 2004.	
					31.1.d Develop and produce annual reports detailing findings and making recommendations beginning April 1, 2004.	
		31.1.2 Develop and implement an ongoing system to gain foster parent information regarding agency performance.			31.1.2a Develop survey instrument November 2003	Program Administrator

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	31.1 Strengthen and build upon existing measures to fully identify and integrate quality assurance activities occurring within the division.				31.1.2b Implement foster parent surveying on annual basis in each region beginning January 2004.	
					31.1.2c Develop and produce annual reports detailing findings and making recommendations beginning April 1, 2004.	
		31.1.3 Develop and implement an ongoing system to gain consumer/family information regarding agency performance.			31.1.3a Develop survey instrument November 2003.	Program Administrator
					31.1.3b Implement consumer/family surveying on annual basis in each region beginning January 2004.	
					31.1.3c Develop and produce annual reports detailing findings and making recommendations beginning April 1, 2004.	
			31.1.4 Develop regional QA committees			31.1.4a Develop QA committee protocol – purpose, objectives, committee composition by July 1, 2004.

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	31.1 Strengthen and build upon existing measures to fully identify and integrate quality assurance activities occurring within the division.	31.1.5 Improve and revise the Supervisory Case Review instrument.			31.1.5a Finalize investigative and ongoing case review instrument January 2004.	Field Administrator
					31.1.5b Supervisory case review process incorporated into ORCA design August 2004.	
		31.1.6 Implement Quality Assurance review system for in-home cases			31.1.6a Develop Policy and Procedure for in-home case Administrative Review, utilizing the safety and well-being sections of the CFRS October 31, 2004	Program Administrator
					31.1.6b Begin administrative review of in home cases November 30, 2004	
					31.1.6c Supervisor review of all in home cases before closure beginning January 2005.	
		31.2.1 Establish a Quality Assurance system for evaluating grantees' performance.			31.2.1a Require contractors to develop and implement a client satisfaction survey by July 1, 2004.	Program Administrator

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	31.2 Improve quality and accountability of grant system to ensure that quality services are delivered and that locally relevant service needs are being met.				31.2.1b Develop regional reporting structure on needs and grantees specific services/functions October 2004		
					31.2.1c Develop grant specific outcome measures for quality of service August 2004		
					31.2.1d Develop feed back loop with local and regional offices to evaluate grantee performance October 2004		
		31.2.3 Improve grant programs through measurement of client outcomes				31.2.3a Enhance Quality Assurance measures in grantee programming through: measurement of outcomes related to client benefit, program requirements and fiscal measures i.e.. cost benefit analysis by June 30, 2004.	Program Administrator
						31.2.3b Research and develop quality assurance measurement tools for above areas by June 30, 2004.	
						31.2.3c Request TA in this area from the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement December 2003	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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		31.2.4 Develop universal application for services.			31.2.4a. Coordinate meeting of Grantees requesting format for universal service application (SWs will use this when applying for services) by July 2004	Program Administrator
					31.2.4b State to develop and finalize format by October, 2004	
	31.2 Improve quality and accountability of grant system to ensure that quality services are delivered and that locally relevant service needs are being met.				31.2.4c Finalize with Grantees November, 2004	
					31.2.4d All RFPs will require universal application as part of funding requirement July 1, 2005	
Systemic Factor: <i>Service Array</i>						

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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<p>Item 35: The State has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency.</p>			<p>Baseline will be established through mapping of services. Baseline: reflecting availability of services at the time of the on-site review to be established 11/03</p>	<p>Process Measure, a description of progress will be reported in Quarterly Report</p>		
	<p>35.1 A system of effective services will be available to keep children safe in their own home when reasonable or to achieve permanency in alternative placements.</p>	<p>35.1 .1 Establish an interdivisional, interdepartmental working group that meets to identify and ameliorate financial, training and service provision barriers in the Alaska Child Welfare arena</p>			<p>35.1.1a Form work group to design Strengths/Needs Assessment (members and key informants identified by January 2004.</p>	<p>Program Administrator</p>
		<p>35.1.2 Assess strengths and gaps in services on a Regional basis</p>			<p>35.1.2a Complete Assessment including compiling information by March 2004</p>	<p>Program Administrator</p>
					<p>35.1.2b Utilize the compiled information to develop collaborative efforts/agreements and interdepartmental MOAs to provide services by April 2004</p>	
		<p>35.1.3 Establish flexible funding opportunities to provide for identified service needs</p>			<p>35.1.3a Convene a work group with OCS, DBH, DJJ, DPH and DPA to identify funding sources for children and families, both in-home cases and out-of-home cases by January 2004</p>	<p>Program Administrator</p>

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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		35.1.4 Develop regional collaborative efforts with DHSS Divisions, Tribes, Tribal Organizations and Community agencies to improve services to children and families.			35.1.4a Regional work groups will be formed to develop collaborative agreements with DHSS Divisions, Tribes, Tribal Organizations and Community agencies and individuals to improve service delivery and capacity to children and families by January 1, 2004.	Program Administrator
Item 36: The services in item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State's CFSP.						
	36.1 Children and families will have access to the services they need in proximity to their community.	36.1.1 Prioritize development of new services in all areas of the state			36.1.1a Refer to Item 35	Program Administrator
Item 37: The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency.			Case plans will be based on client needs	Administrative Reviews Client Satisfaction Surveys		Program Administrator
		37.1.1 Provide training to staff on the proper development of individualized case plans			37.1.1a The FSTA Advisory Committee will review the case planning section curriculum and modify as needed to ensure that staff are being taught to individualize case plans by August 1, 2003.	Program Administrator
	37.1 Case plans will be individualized based on the needs of the child/ren and family				37.1.1b A refresher individualized case planning training module will be developed in partnership with the FSTA by September 1, 2003. 50% of staff will receive the training by March 1, 2004. 75 % will have received the training by September 1, 2004. 100% of staff will have received the training by January 1, 2005.	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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					37.1.1c See item #18	
<i>Systemic Factor: Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention.</i>			The standards will be applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds.	Administrative Report		
Item 42: The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds.	42.1 Licensing Standards will be applied fully and equally to all foster homes.	42.1.1 Collect and interpret information by region on the reasons that variances have been granted in the past			42.1.1a Develop method for collecting variances and entering into state wide data base by July 2003	Program Administrator
					42.1.1b .Conduct analysis by September 2003.	
					42.1.1c Examine regulations and policy to insure that safety standards are applied consistently state wide by January 2004	
	42.1 Licensing Standards will be applied fully and equally to all foster homes.				42.1.1d Identify and clarify allowable variances for non safety standards. Incorporating input and review from ACF By January 2004	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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					42.1.1e .Draft statutory and regulatory changes if needed, by January 2004	
Item 44: The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.			The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.	The number of ethnically diverse culturally appropriate foster homes will increase		
	44.1 Develop and implement a process to increase the pool of skilled, qualified and culturally appropriate foster/adoptive parents.	44.1.1 Establish a statewide plan that incorporates regional plans.			44.1.1b Request TA from National Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning by February 1, 2003	Program Administrator
					44.1.1c Form Recruitment and Retention workgroup by March 15, 2003	
					44.1.1d Workgroup Proposed Statewide recruitment and retention plan developed by May 15, 2003	
					44.1.1e Statewide Foster Care Recruitment and Retention Plan approved by August 30, 2003	

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	44.1 Develop and implement a process to increase the pool of skilled, qualified and culturally appropriate foster/adoptive parents.				44.1.1f Regional Recruitment and Retention plans developed and approved by January 1, 2004	
					44.1.1g Statewide Foster Care Recruitment and Retention Plan implemented by January 1, 2004.	
		44.1.2 Conduct thorough review of existing AFPTC contract by January 1, 2003			44.1.2a Identify and negotiate contract modifications to strategically address training, recruitment and retention issues . October, 2003	Program Administrator
		44.1.3 Continue work on tribal-state agreements to increase tribal foster homes.			44.1.3a Increase number of signed agreements thorough continued work with IVE grantees and Tribal State Collaboration Group	Program Administrator
					44.1.4b Track ICWA compliant placements to determine effect of Tribal Agreements 12/31/03.	
		44.1.4 Review and revise foster parent handbook to update for accuracy and include information related to adoption			44.1.4a Completed January, 2004	Program Administrator

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	44.1 Develop and implement a process to increase the pool of skilled, qualified and culturally appropriate foster/adoptive parents.				44.1.4b Distribute to regions for full distribution January 2004	
		44.1.5 Implement ORCA to streamline reimbursement process			44.1.5a ORCA will be online in December 2004.	ORCA Project Manager
		44.1.6 Streamline foster and adoptive home application process.			44.1.6c Develop work group to begin process of integrating foster home and adoption home study processes by January 2004.	Program Administrator
					44.1.6e Revise foster and adoptive parent applications to incorporate requirements into single document/packet by January 30, 2004.	
					44.1.6f Provide joint training for adoption workers and licensing staff regarding changes in practice, forms, policy and procedure needed to implement changes in application process for adoptive and foster homes. January 2005	
			44.1.8 Develop partnerships to support foster and adoptive families such as: Youth for Christ, Adopt a Worker program.			44.1.8a Evaluate existing Pilot Project to determine possible expansion January 2004

Alaska Program Improvement Plan Matrix

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	44.1 Develop and implement a process to increase the pool of skilled, qualified and culturally appropriate foster/adoptive parents.				44.1.8b Research successful partnership models in other states by January 2004	
					44.1.8c Target three communities and identify potential partnership organizations, including Tribal entities and Faith based organizations to discuss collaborative support program implementation by November 30, 2004.	