Child and Family Services Review
Statewide Assessment



State of Alaska, Office of Children's Services
July 31, 2026

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Background

One of the ways in which the Children's Bureau (CB) helps states achieve positive outcomes for children and families is monitoring state child welfare services through Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs). The CFSR process[1] is designed to meet the statutory requirement to provide federal oversight of states' compliance with title IV-B and IV-E plan requirements and to strengthen state child welfare programs and improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and families served. The CFSR process enables CB to:

1) Ensure conformity with federal child welfare requirements
2) Determine what is happening to children and families receiving child welfare services
3) Assist states in enhancing their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes related to safety, permanency, and well-being

For more information about the CFSRs, see the *Child and Family Services Reviews* at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb.

Purpose of the Statewide Assessment

The CFSR is a two-phase process. The first phase is a statewide assessment and is conducted by staff of the state child welfare agency in partnership with representatives with whom the agency was required to consult in the development of the state's Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) (45 CFR § 1355.33). These internal and external stakeholders are selected by the agency in collaboration with CB and may include other individuals, such as family and youth served by the state's child welfare system and members of the judicial and legal communities.

The second phase of the review process is an onsite review. The onsite review includes case record reviews, case-related interviews for the purpose of determining outcome performance, and, as necessary, stakeholder interviews to further inform the assessment of systemic factors. Information from both the statewide assessment and the onsite review is used to determine whether the state is in substantial conformity with the seven outcomes and seven systemic factors. States determined not to be in substantial conformity with one or more of the seven outcomes and seven systemic factors are required to develop a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address all areas of nonconformity.

States are required to complete and document an assessment of the extent to which their federally funded child welfare system functions effectively to promote the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families with whom they have contact. This process involves a state:

- Using both quantitative and qualitative evidence (e.g., state administrative data, information management system reports, case record reviews, interviews with case participants and key stakeholders) to assess its performance on the outcomes and systemic factors
- Analyzing and explaining its Risk-Standardized Performance (RSP) relative to the national performance for the CFSR statewide data indicators
- Providing supporting evidence of the state's assessment of its child welfare system, program, practice strengths, opportunities for improvement, and results of data-driven problem exploration

[1] Procedures for the review. 45 CFR § 1355.33.

- Providing relevant and quality evidence for CB to determine substantial conformity with CFSR systemic factors
- Communicating about the child welfare system's performance with the communities the systems served
- Demonstrating the engagement of child welfare system partners and stakeholders in the state's CFSR assessment and in its continuous quality improvement (CQI) change and implementation process
- Identifying priority areas of focus for further examination and to target improvement plans to strengthen systems and improve child and family outcomes
- Describing progress to address practice, program, and systemic change, and needed adjustments, as applicable
- Using assessment results to inform planning for the onsite review and to provide a foundation for the state PIP

Stakeholder Involvement

The statewide assessment is to be completed in collaboration with, and reflective of perspectives and feedback obtained from, state child welfare system partners and stakeholders pursuant to 45 CFR § 1355.33 (a–b). CB recommends that states assemble a statewide assessment team (as described below) while also consistently soliciting feedback and perspectives from key stakeholder groups, including parents, caregivers, and youth, throughout the CFSR process.

Individuals on the statewide assessment team need to include representatives from those with whom the child welfare agency was required to consult in developing its title IV-B state plan. The statewide assessment team members are selected by the child welfare agency in collaboration with CB. CB recommends that states ensure family and youth representation on the statewide assessment team, as well as other key partners (e.g., members of the legal and judicial communities, including state courts, the Court Improvement Project, and stakeholders). Examples of other partners and stakeholders who might serve on the statewide assessment team include frontline workers; foster, adoptive, and relative caregivers; the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) lead agency and other prevention partners, such as Children's Trust Funds; the Children's Justice Act grantee; service providers; faith-based and community organizations; and representatives of state and local agencies administering other federal or federally assisted programs serving children and families, such as Head Start, child care, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

The statewide assessment team of internal and external stakeholders engage in the CFSR statewide assessment process by:

- Empowering families and youth to participate in ongoing conversations about system-level improvement needs by recognizing and honoring their lived experiences and expertise, soliciting from them their perceptions and experiences, and acting on their recommendations about what families need to be strong and healthy[2]

[2] As outlined in the CB Information Memorandum to states (ACYF-CB-IM-19-03), parent, family, and youth voice is critical to understanding how well the child welfare system is achieving its goals. States are encouraged to integrate parents and youth throughout the CFSR process as they have lived expertise that provides critical context and information to identify and make child welfare system improvements.

- Collecting and analyzing data from selected partner and stakeholder groups through surveys, interviews, and/or focus groups
- Using partners' administrative data (may require data-sharing agreements with contracted service providers and other agencies providing services to the same populations) in the assessment process and to provide evidence of performance and systemic functioning
- Involving stakeholders in the review and analysis of data to help identify contributing factors, underlying causes of performance challenges, and possible solutions
- Discussing findings, recommended changes, and implications of proposed interventions, and obtaining stakeholder feedback regarding implemented solutions
- Systematically providing feedback to stakeholders regarding whether and how their input was used to change policy, processes, practice, or service provision

Capacity to Complete a Quality Statewide Assessment

States are encouraged to consider the following questions as they prepare to complete the statewide assessment:

- Does the statewide assessment team reflect the family and youth the system serves, as well as partners, stakeholders, and providers involved in the state child welfare system?
- Are team members committed to remaining involved, and is there a process to support them throughout the statewide assessment process, potential involvement in the onsite review, and development, implementation, and evaluation of the PIP?
- Do the state's infrastructure and information systems provide needed administrative and case record review data? What data are already collected and can be used, and what new data may be needed (e.g., resource family surveys, staff training participation and feedback)?
- To what extent do system partners collect data and make it available for the purposes of the statewide assessment? Are data-sharing agreements needed, and in place?
- Do some team members have expertise and experience in quantitative and qualitative measurement, data collection, data analytics, and technical writing? Are team members able to communicate the results of quantitative and qualitative analyses effectively to the range of stakeholders and partners who are part of the statewide assessment team?
- Do team members have knowledge and skills with the CQI change and implementation process (e.g., identifying root causes of performance challenges, developing and testing theories of change)?
- In what way do organizational cultures and climates support the activities necessary for system partners to conduct and complete a quality assessment?
- Are there recent or future organizational changes that may affect the state's child welfare system, programs, and/or service delivery (e.g., leadership change)?
- Are there organizational resources and infrastructure in place to support the assessment process?
- What changes in organizational capacity will be needed to complete a quality statewide assessment (i.e., resources, infrastructure, knowledge and skills, culture and climate, engagement and partnership)?

Availability and Use of Quality Data and Information

The statewide assessment represents a compilation of observations made about the state's child welfare system that is grounded in evidence. "Evidence is information that is used to support an observation, claim, hypothesis, or decision. Evidence may be qualitative or quantitative and can be found in or derived from a number of sources."[3] Gathering and exploring data evidence begins during problem exploration and continues over the course of implementing, assessing, and sustaining change. The statewide assessment process entails looking at past, updated, and new data to strengthen the team's understanding of state child welfare system performance and to identify the combination of data evidence used to determine:

- Strengths and opportunities for improvement
- Areas and factors influencing strong practice
- Nature of the problem and affected populations
- Variation in outcomes among populations served
- Contributing factors and underlying root cause(s) of the problem

This systematic development of evidence related to child welfare system performance may point to areas where change, innovation, and/or replication of certain practices, procedures, or policies may be warranted. This evidence then sets the stage for states to consider:

- Hypotheses that are rooted in theories of change (predictions about how and why needed change(s) will achieve the desired outcome)
- Selection of and lessons learned from implemented strategies/interventions
- Reasons to continue, modify, or discontinue the selected intervention, or revisit the original understanding of the problem and the hypothesis for change

Data sources states should consider using, as available, for the statewide assessment process include but are not limited to:

- CFSR state data profiles and supplemental context data; CFR 45 § 1355.33(b)(2)
- State child welfare agency information system data (e.g., SACWIS/CCWIS)
- Administrative data from partner agencies (public-, private-, and community-based)
- Information included in the CFSP and Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR), e.g., National Youth in Transition Database
- Annual Court Improvement Project reports, legal and judicial information systems, and other data collected by the courts (e.g., quality hearing observation data)
- Case record reviews

[3] Source: https://fcda.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/2014-07-Principles-Language-and-Shared-Meaning_Toward-a-Common-Understanding-of-CQI-in-Child-Welfare.pdf

- Child welfare studies (research, evaluation reports)
- Surveys, stakeholder interviews, focus groups
- Effective CQI change and implementation processes rely on high-quality and reliable evidence from data to provide accurate information. Consider the following when assessing the quality of evidence used for the statewide assessment and note this information where relevant:
- Data source (see examples in section above)
- Methods used to generate measures and analyze data (e.g., application of sound measurement principles, process/individuals involved in analysis of data)
- Relationship between the analysis produced and the questions asked (e.g., how results of analysis are responsive to questions raised about performance; how they raised more questions that are the focus of additional inquiry)
- Scope of the data (e.g., geographic, population)
- Representativeness of the population served or the subpopulation of interest (e.g., universe, random sample of records, selected sites or population, response rate)
- Time period represented in the data, included in citations for the data source (e.g., CY2020, FFY2020; point in time (9/30/2020); or multiple years: CY2018–2020)
- Completeness, accuracy, and reliability of the data (e.g., data quality tests performed and the accuracy of results confirmed; same measure used over time; results consistent with other data sources)
- Other known limitation(s) of the data (e.g., an array of stakeholders reported data integrity concerns; measure adjusted over time)
- Policy decisions/practices that affect the quality and consistency of the data (e.g., implementation of new information system; timeframes to respond to CPS reports changed; requirements for staff and/or provider training changed recently; new program recently implemented)

The Statewide Assessment Template

The statewide assessment is completed by states and submitted to CB at least 2 months before the case review (federal onsite or state-led review). The sections of the Statewide Assessment template are outlined below and used to provide the most current and relevant information for understanding state performance on child welfare outcomes assessed by the CFSR, and evidence required to demonstrate routine statewide functioning of systemic factors. Please see the *CFSR Procedures Manual* for additional information on completing the statewide assessment.

Section I: Provide general information about the state child welfare agency; a list of the stakeholders involved in completing the statewide assessment; and a description of how state child welfare leadership and staff from all levels of the agency, families and youth, the legal and judicial communities, Tribes, and key partners and stakeholders were actively engaged in the assessment of the state child welfare system.

Section II: Briefly describe the state's vision and organizational structure for the state's child welfare system, cross-cutting issues, factors affecting overall performance, and other statewide drivers (e.g., consent decrees, transformation projects) that are not addressed in the outcomes and systemic factor sections of this assessment.

Section III: Provide an updated assessment of state performance on safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes and supporting practices. Include recent performance data, highlights of strengths and opportunities for improvement, a brief summary of observations, priority focus areas and results of problem exploration, and related CQI change and implementation activities, as applicable.

Section IV: Provide a combination of the sources of evidence needed to determine whether the state is in substantial conformity with the seven systemic factors. The systemic factors encompass items associated with select CFSP requirements and seven systems within the state that have the capacity, if routinely functioning statewide, to support child safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes.

Appendix: Attach a copy of the CB-generated CFSR state data profile transmitted to the state to use in completing the statewide assessment.

The Statewide Assessment template is available electronically on the CB website at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb.

Preparation

As states prepare for the statewide assessment, CB recommends that states:

- Review the CFSR Procedures Manual, "Statewide Assessment" section (available on the CB website at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb, which provides guiding principles and a framework for completing the statewide assessment.
- Review the Capacity Building Center for States' "Change and Implementation in Practice" series.[4] The series is a collection of research-informed and user-friendly resources (e.g., briefs, guides, videos) to help agencies achieve meaningful changes in child welfare practice to improve outcomes and systemic functioning.
- In collaboration with the CB Regional Office, identify and invite individuals to be members of the statewide assessment team. Review information on stakeholder involvement in the state's assessment of the child welfare system.
- Review the most recent versions of the following documents, which provide information and past assessments of state performance on child and family outcomes and supporting practices, and statewide routine functioning of the systemic factors:
  - PIP and PIP progress reports
  - CFSP and APSR
  - Court Improvement Project self-assessment and strategic plan
- Review the following additional recent and relevant data:
  - Most recent CFSR state data profile and supplemental context information, providing performance information on the CFSR statewide data indicators
  - State administrative data and aggregate performance information and measures
  - Case record review results
  - Other available statewide data, e.g., learning management system reports,

[4] Capacity Building Center for States' "Change and Implementation in Practice" series, available at https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/change-implementation/

administrative data from partner agencies and contracted service providers, CIP data, research and evaluation reports, surveys, stakeholder interviews, focus groups

- Review the *CFSR Procedures Manual*, "Capacity Building Collaborative Data Support Services" section, available on the CB website at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb, and determine the need for additional guidance and technical support with any step of the statewide assessment process, and request assistance as needed.

Instructions

State child welfare agencies, in collaboration with families and youth, the judicial and legal communities, Tribes, and other key partners and stakeholders, complete an updated statewide assessment of the state's child welfare system and the state's ability to achieve desired safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes.

- Develop the set of questions that when answered will provide the necessary information to assess the state's child welfare systems' processes, programs, and practices.
- Build on past work, including results of data exploration, progress made, lessons learned, and adjustments from development, implementation, and monitoring of the state's most recent CFSR/PIP, CFSP/APSR, and CQI activities in completing this section.
- Determine whether other relevant quality data are available and/or needed to provide a more recent and/or deeper understanding of state performance on the outcomes and systemic factor functioning. Use current (or the most recent available) data and/or information.
- Assess the agency's investment in the quality of programs and services to be delivered, the processes by which they are delivered, and the capacity of the agency to deliver them with fidelity.
- Determine which quality data and information are the most compelling and why they provide the best evidence to support the state's assessment of (a) strengths and areas needing improvement, and (b) statewide routine functioning of systemic factor items. Include data/measure descriptions, the sources of data and/or information used, time periods represented, and other information needed to understand the scope and quality of data used.
- Summarize the results of the assessment by responding to the questions that are designed to solicit the most notable information about state performance, evidence of key strengths and areas needing improvement, observations, results of data exploration, and related CQI change and implementation activities, as applicable. CB recommends that states concisely articulate the state's observations and supporting evidence in no more than 100 pages, beginning with Section I of this template.

Statewide Assessment Section I: General Information

Name of State Child Welfare Agency: State of Alaska Office of Children's Services

State Child Welfare Contact Person(s) for the Statewide Assessment

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List of Statewide Assessment Participants

Provide the names and affiliations of the individuals who participated in the statewide assessment process and identify their roles in the process. Identify individuals with lived experience by including an asterisk (*) after their name.

Name	Affiliation	Role in Statewide Assessment Process
Ana Hall	Office of Children's Services	Team Lead/Analysis/Writing
Kim Guay	Office of Children's Services	Review/Analysis
Kim Swisher	Office of Children's Services	Review/Analysis/Writing
Anya Sinclair	Office of Children's Services	Information/Writing
Marsha Tandeske	Office of Children's Services	Information/Writing
Nikki Maidl	Office of Children's Services	Information/Writing
Melanie Briggs	Office of Children's Services	Information/Data/Writing
Mindy Swisher	Office of Children's Services	Information/Writing
Kimberly Griffith	Alaska Court System	Information/Writing
Mara Rabinowitz	Office of Children's Services	Information/Writing
Tandra Donahue	Office of Children's Services	Information/Writing
Josheph Malatesta	Office of Children's Services	Information/Writing
Derek Skinner	Office of Children's Services	Information/Writing
Brooke Katasse	Office of Children's Services	Information/Writing
Alana Medel	Office of Children's Services	Information/Writing
Richard Bloomquist	Office of Children's Services	Information/Writing
Jack Eddy	Office of Children's Services	Information/Writing
Lisa Marx	Office of Children's Services	Information/Writing
Kimberly Rowan	Office of Children's Services	Review/Formatting

Description of Stakeholder Involvement in Statewide Assessment Process

Describe how child welfare leadership and staff from all levels of the agency, families and youth, the legal and judicial communities, Tribes, and other key partners and stakeholders were actively engaged in the assessment of the state child welfare system.

Insert description:

The Alaska Office of Children's Services (OCS) engaged a broad range of stakeholders throughout the development of the Statewide Assessment (SWA). This included child welfare leadership, staff at all levels, families and youth, Tribal partners, the legal and judicial community, and other key collaborators who contributed meaningful insight into statewide practice, system functioning, and performance.

Child Welfare Leadership and Staff

OCS leadership and staff participated through recurring SWA item teams, monthly planning meetings, data review discussions, and topic-specific workgroups such as SWA theme examinations. Staff across Intake, Safety, Permanency, Wellbeing, Policy, and Quality Assurance helped draft item responses, examine statewide trends, interpret quantitative and qualitative data, and identify underlying factors affecting system performance. Multiple staff surveys, including annual workforce surveys and targeted questionnaires, provided additional insight into practice strengths, service delivery challenges, and areas needing improvement.

Families, Foster Parents, Youth, and Lived Experience Partners

OCS engaged families and youth through expanded efforts specific to Round 4. Newly developed statewide surveys for parents and youth captured system experiences, communication quality, and service access concerns. Lived experience partners—including the Parent Advisory Council (PAC)—participated in leadership meetings where information was shared regarding the child welfare process in Alaska. Their input informed item narratives and systemic factor assessments.

Tribal Engagement

Tribal partners contributed through Tribal surveys, regular meetings, and targeted focus groups. These engagements supported deeper exploration of ICWA implementation, cross-jurisdictional coordination, permanency pathways, service availability across regions, and systemic functioning in Tribal communities. Their feedback was incorporated directly into Statewide Assessment findings across multiple systemic factors and outcomes.

Legal and Judicial Community

Judges, guardians ad litem, attorneys, and CIP steering committee members provided input through existing CIP structures, statewide discussions, and SWA-related focus groups. Judicial partners informed analysis of hearing timeliness, case review processes, notice requirements, coordination with OCS, and opportunities for strengthening cross-system collaboration.

Targeted Technical Assistance Support

OCS also received targeted technical assistance, including support from the National Child Welfare Center for Innovation and Advancement (NCWCIA). Their role focused on assisting OCS leads with data planning, providing analytic guidance, and participating in a number of SWA-related coordination meetings. NCWCIA shared tools and frameworks that OCS adapted for use in the assessment.

Integration of Stakeholder Feedback

Feedback from all stakeholder groups—including staff, families, youth, Tribal partners, courts, community organizations, and technical assistance partners—was synthesized through OCS's

continuous quality improvement approach. Survey data, focus group themes, meeting discussions, and qualitative insights were incorporated into each item and systemic factor, ensuring the SWA accurately reflected statewide experiences, performance drivers, and priorities for improvement.

Section II: State Context Affecting Overall Performance

In this section, describe the vision and core components of the child welfare system, and how the state is organized to produce the desired child welfare outcomes. Briefly outline cross-cutting issues not specifically addressed in the outcomes and systemic factor sections of the statewide assessment, and finally illustrate how current improvement initiatives provide opportunities to achieve desired outcomes and system change.

We recommend dividing this brief summary into three parts:

Part 1: Vision and Tenets
Briefly describe the vision and core tenets of the state child welfare system (i.e., primary programs, including title IV-E prevention programs, as applicable; practice model; structure and approach to drive change) that are designed to produce desired child welfare outcomes and the routine statewide functioning of systemic factors.

Insert description:

Alaska's Vision for Child Welfare: Empower Communities to Strengthen Families and Prevent Child Abuse by Partnering with Tribes and Communities.

- Develop a Stable Child Protection Workforce
  - Enhance requirement and retention efforts through improved agency culture.
  - Improve new staff orientation, training, and transfer of learning.
  - Improve agency supervision.
- Prioritize Essential Child Protection Services
  - Establish Prioritization Principals.
  - Timely initiation and completion of investigations.
  - Monthly case worker visits, and family centered practices.
- Enhance Kinship Care and Involvement
  - Increase kin involvement.
  - Expand Team Decision Making statewide.
  - Plan for a family meeting continuum.
  - Support kin placements through licensure.
- Improve Permanency Outcomes for Children in Care
  - Focus on statewide permanency plan.
  - Centralize Statewide Permanency Leadership.

Part 2: Cross-System Challenges
Briefly describe cross-cutting issues not specifically addressed in other sections of the statewide assessment that affect the system's programs, practice, and performance (e.g., legislation, budget reductions, community conditions, consent decrees, staff turnover and workload).

Insert description:

A significant cross-system challenge continues to be the lack of interoperability between Alaska's court data systems and the Office of Children's Services (OCS) information system.

The absence of a shared or interface-enabled platform limits OCS's ability to ensure consistent, timely, and trackable communication with caregivers, providers, and staff regarding critical court activity. This challenge affects multiple points in the case trajectory:

Caregiver Notification of Hearings

At present, OCS relies on manual processes, individual worker follow-up, and variable communication practices to notify caregivers of upcoming hearings. Without an automated or standardized method for generating caregiver notifications directly from integrated court scheduling data, OCS cannot reliably track whether caregivers receive timely information about hearings or verify statewide consistency in notification practices.

Tracking of Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) Petitions

The lack of system connectivity complicates OCS's ability to track the status, timeliness, and outcomes of TPR petitions. Workers must monitor progress through manual updates, individual communication with assigned attorneys, and periodic review of court dockets rather than through system-generated alerts or dashboards. This creates risk of delay, missed deadlines, and inconsistent documentation across regions.

Access to Court Orders, Findings, and Critical Reports

Dispositions, adjudications, permanency hearing orders, and other essential court documents are not automatically available within the OCS information system. Staff frequently depend on uploaded documents from individual workers or attorneys, which leads to delays, uneven record completeness, and challenges in statewide quality assurance processes. Integrating court data would significantly improve OCS's ability to ensure timely review of findings, monitor compliance with judicial directives, and support case planning aligned with court expectations.

Medical and Behavioral Health System Integration

Beyond court connectivity, additional cross-system integration gaps exist with medical and behavioral health record systems. OCS often relies on provider-generated documentation, faxed records, or caseworker-initiated requests for health information. Without interoperability or a secure data-sharing framework, OCS cannot:

- Monitor vaccination status, appointments, or missed visits in real time.
- Access up-to-date behavioral health assessments or treatment plans.
- Ensure timely inclusion of critical medical information in case plans.
- Support caregivers and placement providers with comprehensive health histories needed for informed decision-making.

These gaps also impede OCS's ability to report accurate statewide health metrics and hinder monitoring of compliance with required health assessments.

Impact on Casework, Workforce, and Quality Assurance

The cumulative effect of these cross-system challenges is seen across multiple SWA systemic factors. Workers experience higher administrative burden, delays in receiving essential information, and inconsistent expectations for communication with courts, caregivers, Tribes, and medical providers. Quality assurance efforts are limited by the lack of centralized, accessible data, increasing reliance on manual audits and region-specific workarounds. Cross-system data limitations also restrict the effectiveness of improvement strategies discussed in statewide assessment planning meetings.

Part 3: Current Initiatives

Briefly describe the cross-cutting improvement initiatives (e.g., practice model, new safety model, workforce projects) to provide context for, and an understanding of, the priority areas of focus from the last CFSR that were addressed through the state's most recent PIP. This is an opportunity to highlight current initiatives and progress made toward achieving desired outcomes and systemic change.

Insert description:

OCS New and Ongoing Initiatives

Transformational TB14 & Innovation Challenge Participation
OCS recently enrolled in TB14 and the Innovation Challenge, initiatives aimed at strengthening data-informed decision-making and driving creative problem-solving across the agency. The commitment to these efforts reflects OCS's focus on modernizing practice and improving outcomes for children and families. Participation is already underway, with internal coordination occurring through meetings with various OCS leaders.

Kinship Certification Process Development
OCS is actively developing a Kinship Certification Process to streamline approval, support kinship caregivers, and reduce delays for children needing safe placements. Work on kinship-related improvements continues through forums to engage leadership and staff in refining requirements and practices. Additionally, OCS is exploring ways to utilize TANF resources to better support kinship families and strengthen opportunities for safe, consistent family visitation.

Modernization Through RHTP Funding
The agency is pursuing RHTP funding to support broader modernization efforts. The goal of this work is to reduce the administrative burden on frontline staff—freeing workers to spend more time directly engaging with families—while improving system efficiency, data quality, and workflow tools across OCS.

Foster Home Recruitment & Retention
Ongoing efforts continue to recruit and retain foster homes statewide. These efforts remain central to ensuring children have safe, supportive, and culturally responsive placements. OCS is expanding outreach, strengthening partnerships, and coordinating local recruitment strategies to increase foster home availability.

Workforce Wellness & Retention
To retain skilled staff and improve workplace well-being, OCS continues investing in its wellness program, providing resources that support staff resilience, reduce burnout, and promote long-term retention. These efforts underscore the agency's commitment to supporting its workforce as the foundation of effective child welfare practice.

Formally Ending the Orphan Tax
Since December 2025, OCS has implemented a practice requiring that any survivor's benefits received on behalf of a child in foster care be preserved in savings, with access limited to older youth who may request funds for appropriate needs that fall outside the state's purchasing authority.

Section III: Assessment of Child and Family Outcomes

A. Safety

Safety Outcomes 1 and 2

Safety outcomes include: (A) children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect; and (B) children are safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate.

1. Performance Data Highlights

Highlight the most notable state performance and provide a brief summary of the state's most recent, relevant, and quality data pertaining to the CFSR Safety Outcomes and supporting practices. Examples of relevant data: references to safety indicators in recent CB-generated state data profile, case record review results, and administrative data such as state-generated performance on the statewide safety data indicators and timeliness of face-to-face contact with children who are subjects of screened-in CPS reports. Include a description of state-produced measures (denominator and numerator), data periods represented, and methodology.

2. Brief Analysis

Briefly summarize the most salient observations, including strengths and areas needing improvement, and findings across data sources and practice areas, by answering the questions below. Consider how state RSP compares to national performance on the CFSR safety data indicators, how current statewide case review performance compares to CFSR Round 3 findings and PIP measurement, and the quality of the data.

- What is the trend in performance over time, and is the state trending in the desired direction? Are there changes in the denominator and numerator over time?
- What information do other related data sources provide to inform state observations?
- What does performance data from the legal and judicial communities show with respect to the impact of court processes on safety outcomes?
- What does performance data show with respect to the impact of prevention efforts on safety outcomes?
- What does the performance data identify as areas of strength?
- What does the performance data identify as areas in need of improvement?
- Are there data quality limitations (e.g., completeness, accuracy, and reliability)?

3. Results of Deeper Data Exploration for Priority Focus Areas

Identify areas prioritized for deeper data exploration and reasons for selecting those areas. Briefly summarize results of data analysis, including evidence supporting the identification of contributing factors and potential root causes driving strengths and challenges. Consider observations from additional evidence that may have been gathered to deepen the state's understanding of the focus area (e.g., additional analysis of a target sub-population, qualitative data such as caseworker surveys or focus groups with key stakeholders).

- What meaningful differences were identified for sub-populations, including specific groups of children (e.g., age, race/ethnicity) and geographic location in the state?
- What events, conditions, or factors contribute to or lead to the strength or challenge?

- What supporting evidence is provided by key stakeholders (e.g., caseworkers, supervisors, program managers, birth parents and youth, caregivers, and service providers) regarding the contributing factors and/or root cause(s)?
- Are there data or research findings pointing to the root cause(s) and/or contributing factors?

4. Information Regarding CQI Change and Implementation Activities, As Applicable

Briefly describe how the information and results of the analysis above relate to or build on results of prior data exploration and CQI change and implementation activities. Has progress been made and/or have lessons been learned from development, implementation, and monitoring of improvement activities included in the state's most recent CFSR/PIP, CFSP/APSR, and other systemic improvement processes? Are adjustments needed to existing strategies/interventions/plans, or are new CQI change and implementation plans needed to achieve desired outcomes?

State Response:

Item 1: Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment

Based on available CFSR and statewide data, Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 1 (Item 1).

CQI CFSR Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 1: Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment

Region	Percent Strength	Percent ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	71% (10/14)	29% (4/14)	20	34
NRO	77% (10/13)	23% (3/13)	14	27
SCRO	67% (6/9)	33% (3/9)	14	23
SERO	0% (0/2)	100% (2/2)	4	6
WRO	67% (2/3)	33% (1/3)	5	8
Total	68% (28/41)	32% (13/41)	57	98

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

CQI CFSR Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 1: Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment

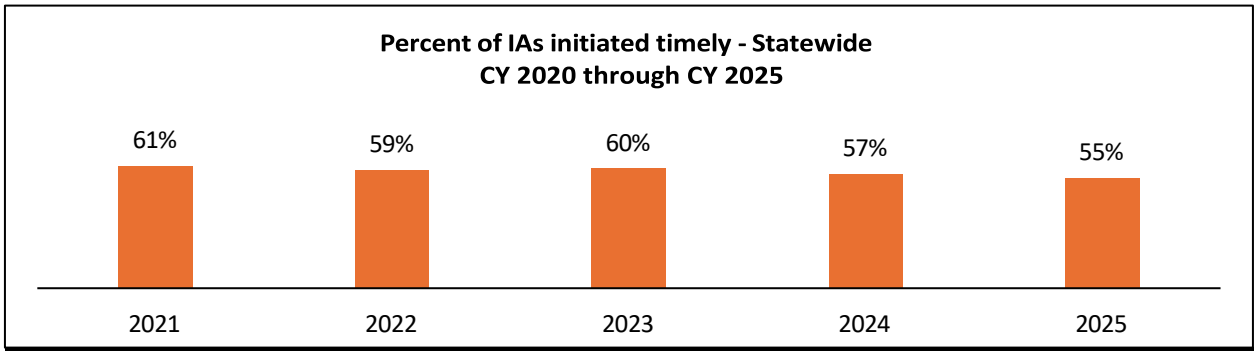
Region	Percent Strength	Percent ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	55% (6/11)	45% (5/11)	15	26
NRO	86% (6/7)	14% (1/7)	7	14
SCRO	86% (6/7)	14% (1/7)	11	18
SERO	0% (0/2)	100% (2/2)	5	7
WRO	67% (2/3)	33% (1/3)	3	6
Total	67% (20/30)	33% (10/30)	41	71

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

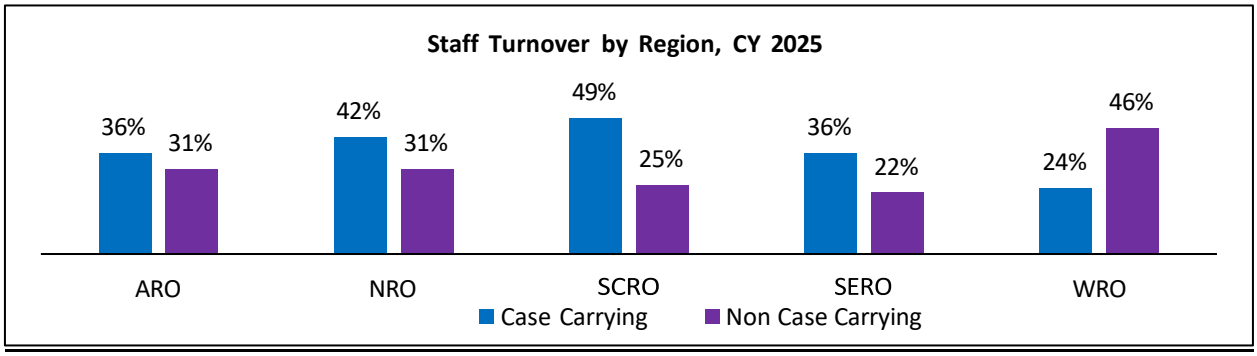
ESS Data: Timely Initiations

Region	ESS Region CY 2024	ESS Region CY 2025
ARO	58%	55%
NRO	54%	57%
SCRO	65%	62%
SERO	59%	58%
WRO	25%	25%

Source: ORCA (OCS online management system)



Source: ORCA (OCS online management system)



Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1 (72%, Alaska CFSR Final Report).
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate majority of applicable cases achieved timely initiation in both 2024 (67%) and 2025 (68%), however this is a slight decline from CFSR Round 3.
- CQI case reviews and Essential Services (ESS) Data highlight regional variability.
  - ARO made improvements from 2024 to 2025 while NRO and SCRO declined; SERO and WRO remained unchanged.
  - SERO and WRO had a small sample size.
- Statewide data indicates a gradual decline of timely initiation over the past 5 years with 2025 at 55%.

Contributing Factors

- All five regions include remote areas, in particular NRO, SERO and WRO which impact the ability to access families in a timely manner.

  - Many Alaskan communities are only accessible by small aircraft or all terrain vehicles/snowmachines; weather affects travel frequently.

- Staffing transitions and vacancies affect timeliness:
  - ARO and WRO had managerial staffing changes in 2025.
- OCS launched the Strengthening Investigations and Assessment in 2025 to improve investigations.
- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
  - Timely face to face contact.
  - Delays occurred due to circumstances outside of the agency's control such as child advocacy center/law enforcement coordination, interstate jurisdiction and parent refusal/fleeing resulting in court action.
- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
  - Staff/workload/assignment delays resulted in untimely face to face contact.
  - Delays occurred due to circumstances within the agency's control such as insufficient search efforts within time frames and documentation gaps.
- Alaska's Supplemental Context Data indicates AN/AI children enter care at significantly higher rates:
  - Many rural and remote communities are predominately AN/AI, contributing to higher entry rates in NRO, SERO and WRO.

Summary

Initiation timeliness remains uneven statewide. CQI case reviews show 67% of applicable cases rated a strength in 2024 and 68% in 2025, while statewide data shows a decline from 61% (2021) to 55% (2025). Regional variability persists, with lower performance in remote regions—driven by access barriers, weather, staffing transitions, and variability in search efforts and documentation.

Based on available CFSR and statewide data, Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 1 (Item 1). Continued focus should be placed on operational support such as staffing and access for hard to reach communities.

Item 2: Services to Families to Protect Children in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-entry

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 2 (Items 2 and 3). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 2 is approaching the threshold for substantial achievement.

QA Unit CQI CFSR Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry Into Foster Care

Region	Percent Strength	Percent ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	94% (17/18)	6% (1/18)	16	34
NRO	100% (18/18)	0% (0/18)	9	27
SCRO	93% (14/15)	7% (1/15)	8	23
SERO	50% (1/2)	50% (1/2)	4	6
WRO	20% (1/5)	80% (4/5)	3	8

Region	Percent Strength	Percent ANI	N/A	Total
Total	88% (51/58)	12% (7/58)	40	98

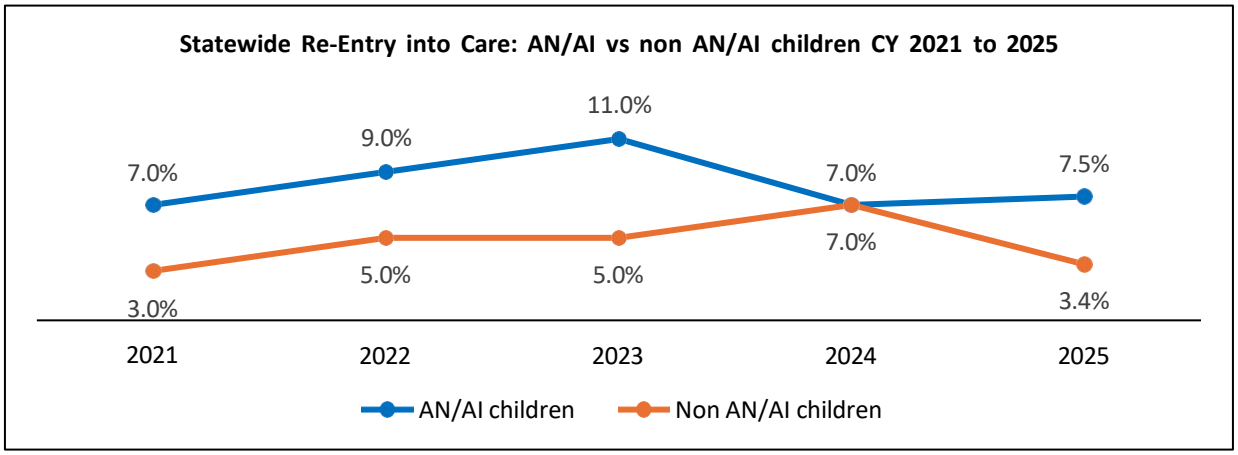
Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI CFSR Reviews by Region, 2024

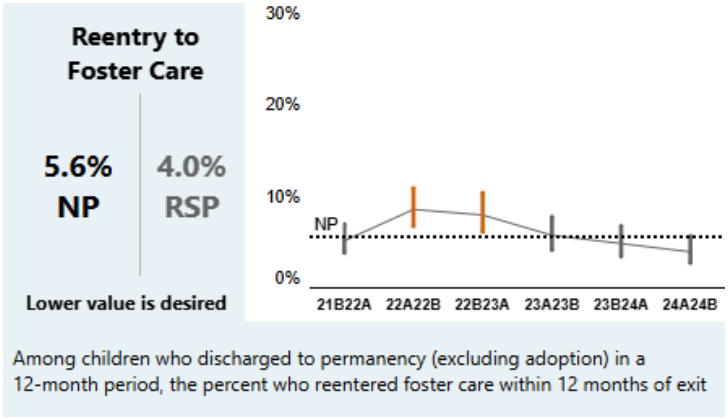
Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry Into Foster Care

Region	Percent Strength	Percent ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	63% (10/16)	38% (6/16)	10	26
NRO	55% (6/11)	45% (5/11)	3	14
SCRO	67% (6/9)	33% (3/9)	9	18
SERO	100% (3/3)	0% (0/3)	4	7
WRO	50% (2/4)	50% (2/4)	2	6
Total	63% (27/43)	37% (16/43)	28	71

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI



Source: ORCA (OCS online management system)



Source: CFSR Data Profile

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2 (38%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 38% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 2.
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate majority of applicable cases received strength ratings in both 2024 (63%) and 2025 (88%), highlighting significant improvements from CFSR Round 3.

  - Regions performing above substantial achievement (>90%) include ARO (94%), NRO (100%) and SCRO (93%).
  - SERO and WRO had significant declines from 2024 to 2025, however had a small sample size.

- Statewide data indicates re-entry rates for non-AN/AI children have declined to their lowest level in the past three years while re-entry rates for AN/AI children have remained steady since 2024 and continue to be higher than non-AN/AI children.
  - Re-entry into foster care in 2025 for AN/AI children is above the national performance, while non-AN/AI children is below (CFSR Data Profile).

Contributing Factors

- All five regions include remote areas, in particular NRO, SERO and WRO which impact the service availability for families.
  - Many Alaskan communities are only accessible by small aircraft or all terrain vehicles/snowmachines; many communities do not have access for face to face services.
- Renewed focus on the Initial Referral of Services (IRS) at the investigations and assessment stage aims to increase early provision of services to prevent removal.
- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
  - Immediate danger was controlled by removal.
  - Safety plans and alternate caregivers were utilized.
    - Families had concrete supports in place and received transition planning which stabilized reunification.
  - Services to prevent removal or re-entry:
    - Assessments.
    - Treatment/aftercare.
  - Counseling.
- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
  - Prevention services were not identified or provided to prevent removal or re-entry.
  - Service barriers existed due to access/remote locations.
  - Follow up/documentation of service participation was not sufficient.
    - Safety plans were utilized, but did not include prevention services to reduce danger.
  - Supports to stabilize reunification were not put in place.
- Alaska's Supplemental Context Data indicates higher re-entry rates for AN/AI children:
  - Service availability in rural and remote locations is limited, where many of the communities are predominantly AN/AI.

Summary

Provision of services to protect children in the home and prevent removal/re-entry improved substantially: CQI strengths increased from 63% (2024) to 88% (2025). Performance is strong in ARO, NRO, and SCRO (>90%), while SERO and WRO declined. Re-entry rates declined for non-AN/AI children but remained higher for AN/AI children and above national performance. Gains since Round 3 are notable, but statewide results are uneven.

Given the statewide and regional patterns, Alaska's Item 2 performance is approaching but does not yet meet substantial conformity. Continued focus is needed on early referral (IRS), culturally responsive services and building supports for families (safety plans, services).

Item 3: Risk and Safety Management

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 2 (Item 2 and 3). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 3 has not been substantially achieved.

QA Unit CQI CFSR Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management

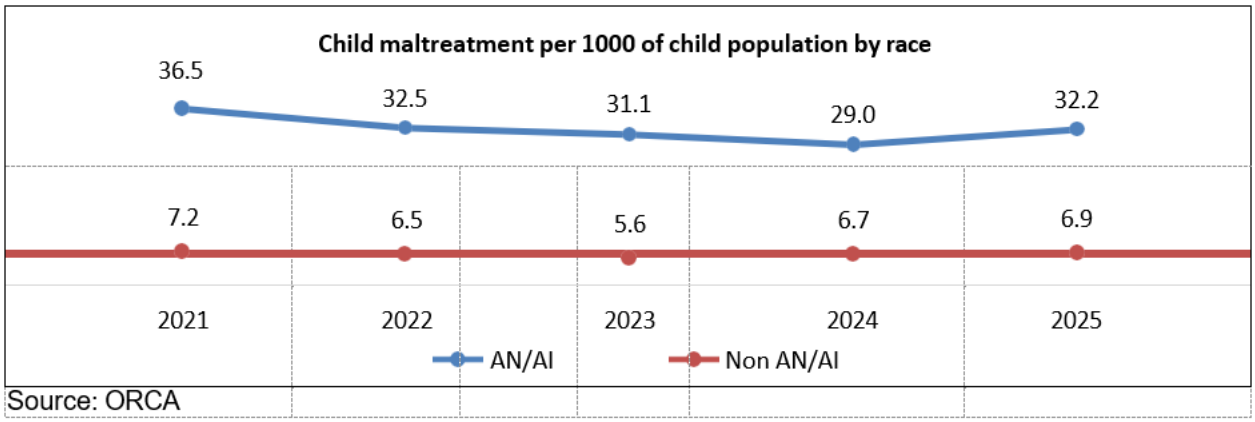
Region	Percent Strength	Percent ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	74% (25/34)	26% (9/34)	0	34
NRO	81% (22/27)	19% (5/27)	0	27
SCRO	78% (18/23)	22% (5/23)	0	23
SERO	50% (3/6)	50% (3/6)	0	6
WRO	0% (0/8)	100% (8/8)	0	8
Total	69% (68/98)	31% (30/98)	0	98

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

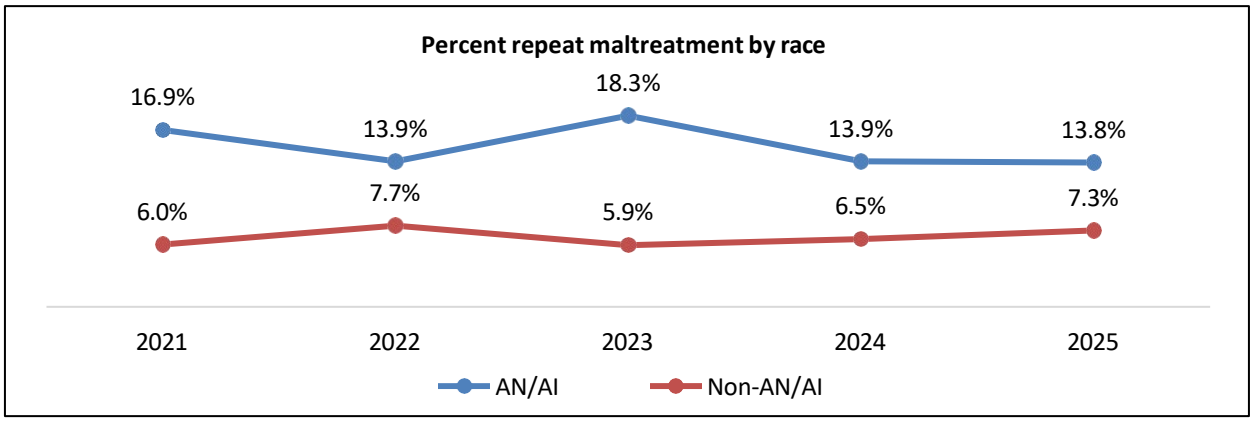
QA Unit CQI CFSR Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management

Region	Percent Strength	Percent ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	54% (14/26)	46% (12/26)	0	26
NRO	36% (5/14)	64% (9/14)	0	14
SCRO	67% (12/18)	33% (6/18)	0	18
SERO	71% (5/7)	29% (2/7)	0	7
WRO	17% (1/6)	83% (5/6)	0	6
Total	52% (37/71)	48% (34/71)	0	71

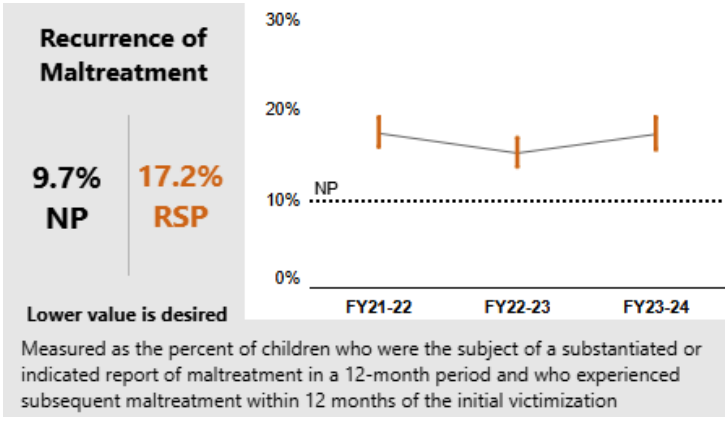
Source: CFSR OMS OSRI



Source: ORCA



Source: ORCA



Source: CFSR Data Profile

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2 (38%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 40% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 3
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate majority cases received strength ratings in both 2024 (52%) and 2025 (69%), highlighting significant improvements from CFSR Round 3
    - ARO, NRO and SCRO had significant gains from 2024 to 2025
    - SERO and WRO had significant declines from 2024 to 2025, however had a small sample size
- Statewide data indicates maltreatment rates per 1000 children had minimal variations since 2021 while this rate is slightly higher than that past two years for AN/AI children
- Statewide data indicates repeat maltreatment rates for non-AN/AI children have remained steady with minor fluctuations since 2021 while repeat maltreatment rates for AN/AI children are at their lowest since 2021; however, continue to be higher than non-AN/AI children
    - Repeat maltreatment rates in 2025 for AN/AI children is above the national performance, while non-AN/AI children is below (CFSR Data Profile)

Contributing Factors

- All five regions include remote areas, in particular NRO, SERO and WRO which impact the ability to monitor families face to face

  - Many Alaskan communities are only accessible by small aircraft or all terrain vehicles/snowmachines

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
  - Initial assessments conducted properly resulted in timely protective action
  - Ongoing assessments included routine contact with families and collateral contact to aid in assessments
  - Safety plans controlled for risk and safety concerns, and were monitored/updated as needed
- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
  - Initial assessments did not correctly identify safety threats
  - Collateral contact was not conducted
  - Safety plans were not utilized when needed, or were not routinely monitored/updated
  - Ongoing assessments lacked routine contact with families
  - Safety was not reassessed despite evolving circumstances

Summary

Risk and safety assessment and management improved from 52% strengths in 2024 to 69% in 2025. Stronger practice was observed in ARO, NRO, and SCRO; mixed results in SERO; and significant challenges in WRO. Repeat maltreatment increased slightly in 2025 for both AN/AI and non-AN/AI children, with persistent disproportionality for AN/AI children and rates noted above national performance.

Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 2 (Item 3). Continued focus should include routine contact with families and collaterals, consistent identification of safety threats and utilizing safety plans with proactive monitoring—supported by workforce stabilization and rural access strategies.

B. Permanency

Permanency Outcomes 1 and 2

Permanency outcomes include: (A) children have permanency and stability in their living situations; and (B) the continuity of family relationships is preserved for children.

1. Performance Data Highlights

Highlight the most notable state performance and provide a brief summary of the state's most recent, relevant, and quality data pertaining to the CFSR Permanency Outcomes and supporting practices. Examples of relevant data: references to permanency indicators in recent CB-generated state data profiles, case record review results, and administrative data such as time to permanency by permanency goal, percentage of children placed with relatives/kin, percentage of children in foster care placed with some or all siblings; court performance measures; and quality hearing review project results. Include a description of the state-produced measures (denominator and numerator), data periods represented, and methodology.

2. Brief Analysis

Briefly summarize the most salient observations, including strengths and areas needing improvement, and findings across data sources and practice areas, by answering the questions below. Consider how state RSP compares to national performance on the CFSR permanency data indicators, how current statewide case review performance compares to CFSR Round 3 findings and PIP measurement, and the quality of the data.

- What is the trend in performance over time, and is the state trending in the desired direction? Are there changes in the denominator and numerator over time?
- What information do other related data sources provide to inform state observations?
- What does performance data from the legal and judicial communities show with respect to the impact of court processes on permanency outcomes?
- What does the performance data identify as areas of strength?
- What does the performance data identify as areas in need of improvement?
- Are there data quality limitations (e.g., completeness, accuracy, and reliability)?

3. Results of Deeper Data Exploration for Priority Focus Areas

Identify areas prioritized for deeper data exploration and reasons for selecting those areas. Briefly summarize results of data analysis, including evidence supporting the identification of contributing factors and potential root causes driving strengths and challenges. Consider observations from additional evidence that may have been gathered to deepen the state's understanding of the focus area (e.g., additional analysis of a target sub-population, qualitative data such as caseworker surveys or focus groups with key stakeholders).

- What meaningful differences were identified for sub-populations, including specific groups of children (e.g., children entering foster care, children in foster care for longer periods of time, child age and race/ethnicity) and geographic location in the state?
- What events, conditions, or factors contribute to or lead to the strength or problem?

- What supporting evidence is provided by key stakeholders (e.g. caseworkers, supervisors, program managers, birth parents and youth, caregivers, and service providers) regarding the contributing factors and/or root cause(s)?
- Are there data or research findings pointing to the root cause(s) and/or contributing factors?

4. Information Regarding CQI Change and Implementation Activities, As Applicable

Briefly describe how the information and results of the analysis above relate to or build on results of prior data exploration and CQI change and implementation activities. Has progress been made and/or have lessons been learned from development, implementation, and monitoring of improvement activities included in the state's most recent CFSR/PIP, CFSP/APSR, and other systemic improvement processes? Are adjustments needed to existing strategies/interventions/plans, or are new CQI change and implementation plans needed to achieve desired outcomes?

State Response:

Item 4: Stability of Foster Care Placement

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Permanency Outcome 1 (Items 4, 5 and 6). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 4 has not been substantially achieved.

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 4: Stability of Foster Care Placement

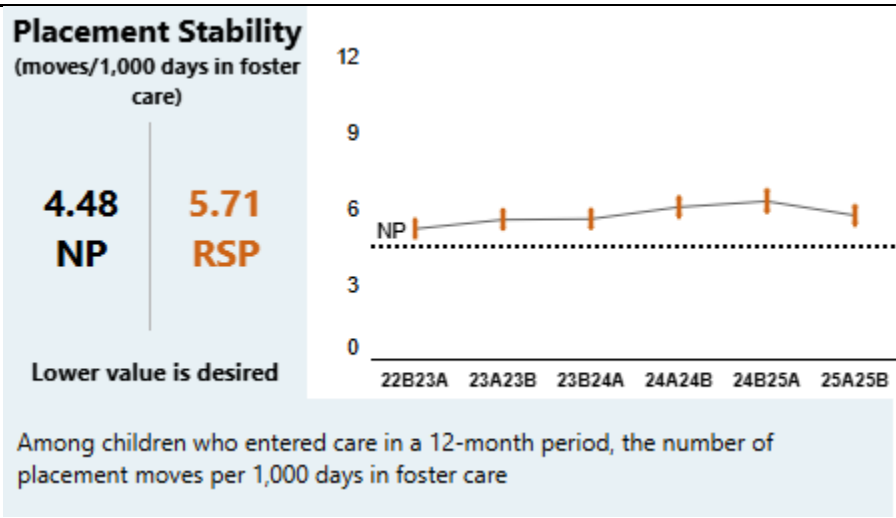
Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	96% (27/28)	4% (1/28)	0	28
NRO	76%(16/21)	24% (5/21)	0	21
SCRO	84% (16/19)	16% (3/19)	0	19
SERO	83% (5/6)	17% (1/6)	0	6
WRO	33% (2/6)	67% (4/6)	0	6
Total	83% (66/80)	17% (14/80)	0	80

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 4: Stability of Foster Care Placement

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	88% (14/16)	12% (2/16)	0	16
NRO	67% (6/9)	33% (3/9)	0	9
SCRO	82% (9/11)	18% (2/11)	0	11
SERO	50% (2/4)	50% (2/4)	0	4
WRO	75% (3/4)	25% (1/4)	0	4
Total	77% (34/44)	23% (10/44)	0	44

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI



Source: CFSR Data Profile

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1 (15%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 80% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 4.
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate majority cases received strength ratings in both 2024 (77%) and 2025 (83%):
  - Four regions (ARO, NRO, SCRO and SERO) improved from 2024 to 2025.
  - WRO had a significant decline from 2024 to 2025, however had a small sample size.
- CFSR Data Profile indicates Alaska's placement stability remains slightly higher than the national performance.

Contributing Factors

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
  - Both non relative and relative placements remained stable.
  - Placements were utilized (including relatives) that were aligned with permanency goals and children's needs.
  - Placement changes were planned, and in the best interest of children.
- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
  - Placements were utilized that were temporary and/or not stable.
  - Placements requested unplanned moves due to children's behaviors or their own health limitations.
  - Placements changes occurred due to maltreatment concerns.

Summary

Statewide performance in Item 4 shows similar and improved results from CFSR Round 3, with 77% of cases receiving a strength rating in 2024 and 83% in 2025. Four of the five regions demonstrated year to year improvement, while WRO declined. CFSR Data Profile indicators show Alaska is performing slightly higher than desired.

Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Permanency Outcome 1 (Item 4). Continued focus should include thoughtful placement decisions, with opportunities centered around reducing unplanned moves and strengthening caregiver support.

Item 5: Permanency Goal for Child

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Permanency Outcome 1 (Items 4, 5 and 6). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 5 has not been substantially achieved.

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 5: Permanency Goal for Child

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	46% (13/28)	54% (15/28)	0	28
NRO	52% (11/21)	48% (10/21)	0	21
SCRO	79% (15/19)	21% (4/19)	0	19
SERO	67% (4/6)	33% (2/6)	0	6
WRO	0% (0/6)	100% (6/6)	0	6
Total	54% (43/80)	46% (37/80)		80

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 5: Permanency Goal for Child

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	62% (10/16)	38% (6/16)	0	16
NRO	44% (4/9)	56% (5/9)	0	9
SCRO	45% (5/11)	55% (6/11)	0	11
SERO	50% (2/4)	50% (2/4)	0	4
WRO	25% (1/4)	75% (3/4)	0	4
Total	50% (22/44)	50% (22/44)		44

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1 (15%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 50% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 5.
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate majority cases received strength ratings in both 2024 (50%) and 2025 (54%):
    - Three regions (NRO, SCRO and SERO) improved from 2024 to 2025.
    - ARO and WRO had significant declines from 2024 to 2025.

Contributing Factors

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
    - Permanency goals were established in a timely manner.
    - Permanency goals were appropriate to case circumstances.
    - Concurrent permanency goals were utilized when appropriate.
- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
    - Permanency goals were not established in a timely manner.
    - Permanency goals were not updated to align with case circumstances.

- Concurrent permanency goals were not utilized despite prolonged amounts of time in care and/or a lack of parental engagement.

Summary

Statewide performance on Item 5 shows mixed progress. While CQI case reviews indicate slight improvement from 2024 (50% strength) to 2025 (54% strength), performance continues to vary markedly by region. Three regions (NRO, SCRO, SERO) showed improvement, while ARO and WRO experienced significant declines.

Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Permanency Outcome 1 (Item 5). Continued focus should include timely establishment of initial permanency goals, updating goals as family circumstances evolve and increase use of concurrent planning.

Item 6: Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Permanency Outcome 1 (Items 4, 5 and 6). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 6 has not been substantially achieved.

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 6: Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

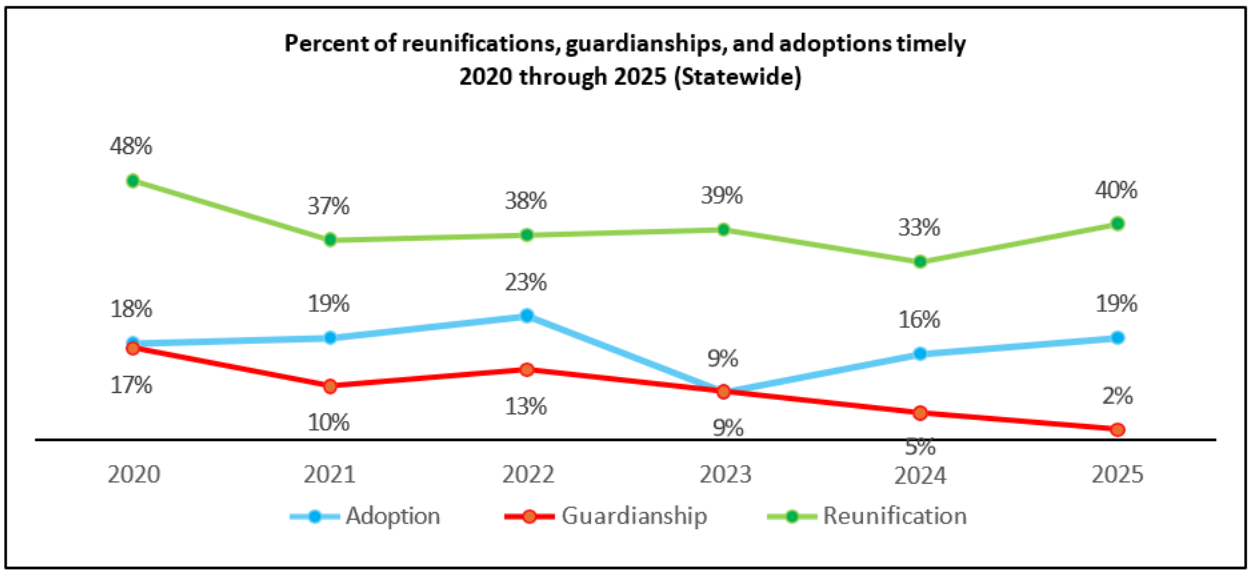
Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	29% (8/28)	71% (20/28)	0	28
NRO	43% (9/21)	57% (12/21)	0	21
SCRO	68% (13/19)	32% (6/19)	0	19
SERO	33% (2/6)	67% (4/6)	0	6
WRO	17% (1/6)	83% (5/6)	0	6
Total	41% (33/80)	59% (47/80)	0	80

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

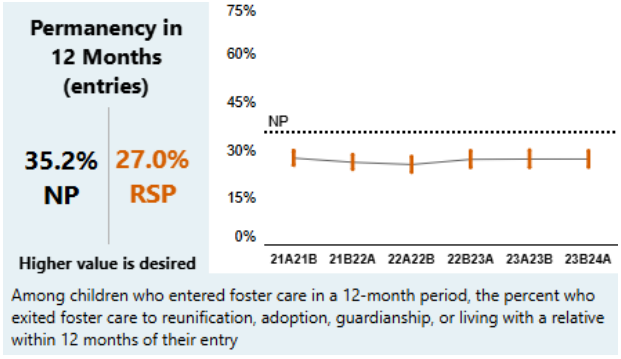
QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 6: Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

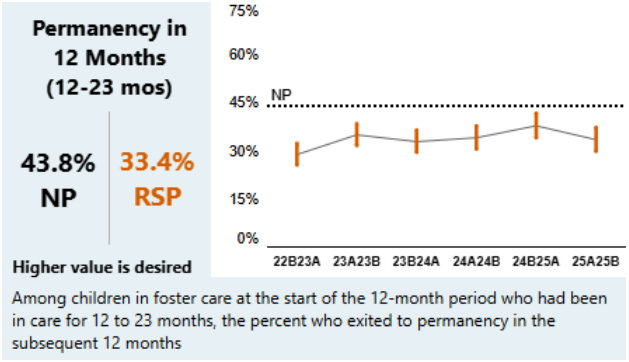
Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	38% (6/16)	62% (10/16)	0	16
NRO	44% (4/9)	56% (5/9)	0	9
SCRO	45% (5/11)	55% (6/11)	0	11
SERO	25% (1/4)	75% (3/4)	0	4
WRO	25% (1/4)	75% (3/4)	0	4
Total	(35%) (17/44)	65% (27/44)	0	44

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

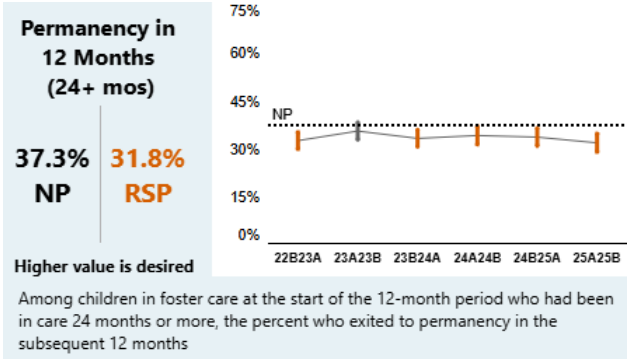


Source: ORCA





Source: CSFR Data Profile



Source: CFSR Data Profile

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1 (15%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 25% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 6
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate a positive trend, with Item 6 strength ratings increasing from 35% in 2024 to 41% in 2025
    - SCRO and SERO improved from 2024 to 2025, while NRO remained stable

  - ARO and WRO had declines from 2024 to 2025
- CFSR Data Profile indicates Alaska is performing below the national average in achieving permanency in 12, 12 to 23 and 24+ months
- Alaska's Supplemental Data show notable disparities in permanency outcomes
  - AN/AI children achieve permanency at lower rates and over longer timelines than non AN/AI children
  - Older youth face significantly slower pathways to permanency

Contributing Factors

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
  - Permanency was achieved in a timely manner
  - Trial home visits started within reunification timeframes
  - Timely adoptions were supported through placements preparedness
  - Court hearings were held on schedule, and orders were not delayed
- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
  - Permanency was not achieved in a timely manner
  - Trial home visits did not start within reunification timeframes
  - Services for parents were not provided consistently
  - Parental consents were not obtained within guardianship timeframes
  - Termination petitions were not filed within adoption timeframes
  - Court hearings were delayed and/or had numerous continuances

Summary

Performance on Item 6 shows gradual improvement, but continues to reflect challenges in achieving timely permanency. CQI case reviews indicate progress from 35% in 2024 to 41% in 2025. SCRO and SERO made improvements from year to year, while NRO remained stable. ARO and WRO experienced notable declines. Supplemental data also highlights disparities for AN/AI children and older youth both experiencing slower permanency timelines.

Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Permanency Outcome 1 (Item 6). Continued focus should include early permanency planning (especially for AN/AI children and older youth), ensuring parents are receiving consistent services for timely case progression and working with the courts to minimize continuances and delays.

Item 7: Placement With Siblings

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Permanency Outcome 2 (Items 7 to 11). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 7 has been substantially achieved.

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 7: Placement With Siblings

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	100% (17/17)	0% (0/17)	11	28
NRO	100% (16/16)	0% (0/16)	5	21
SCRO	100% (15/15)	0% (0/15)	4	19

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
SERO	100% (4/4)	0% (0/4)	2	6
WRO	100% (4/4)	0% (0/4)	2	6
Total	100% (56/56)	0% (0/56)	24	80

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 7: Placement With Siblings

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	86% (12/14)	14% (2/14)	2	16
NRO	86% (6/7)	14% (1/7)	2	9
SCRO	91% (10/11)	9% (1/11)	0	11
SERO	100% (3/3)	0% (0/3)	1	4
WRO	100% (4/4)	0% (0/4)	0	4
Total	90% (35/39)	10% (4/39)	5	44

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2 (65%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 89% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 7
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate a positive trend, with Item 7 strength ratings increasing from 90% in 2024 to 100% in 2025
    - ARO, NRO and SCRO improved from 2024 to 2025
    - SERO and WRO maintained 100% in both years

Contributing Factors

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
    - Sibling groups were maintained and placed together
    - When siblings were separated, it was for valid reasons such as educational or medical/behavioral needs
- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
    - Sibling groups were not maintained and not placed together
    - Separation was not for valid reasons
    - There was a lack of effort to place sibling groups together

Summary

CQI case reviews demonstrate strong and improving practice in keeping sibling groups together. Strength ratings increased from 89% in CFSR Round 3 to 90% in 2024 and reached 100% in 2025, reflecting consistent efforts to place siblings together and ensure any separation is supported by valid reasons. Current CQI case review data indicates that Alaska has met substantial conformity for Permanency Outcome 2; Item 7 has been substantially achieved based on current CQI findings.

Continued focus should include strengthening documentation of placement searches for sibling groups and clearly outlining the reasons when siblings must be placed separately.

Item 8: Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Permanency Outcome 2 (Items 7 to 11). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 8 has been substantially achieved.

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 8: Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	90% (19/21)	10% (2/21)	7	28
NRO	95% (18/19)	5% (1/19)	2	21
SCRO	94% (17/18)	6% (1/18)	1	19
SERO	100% (3/3)	0% (0/3)	3	6
WRO	60% (3/5)	40% (2/5)	1	6
Total	91% (60/66)	9% (6/66)	14	80

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 8: Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	50% (7/14)	50% (7/14)	2	16
NRO	75% (6/8)	25% (2/8)	1	9
SCRO	80% (8/10)	20% (2/10)	1	11
SERO	100% (2/2)	0% (0/2)	2	4
WRO	25% (1/4)	75% (3/4)	0	4
Total	63% (24/38)	37% (14/38)	6	44

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2 (65%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 55% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 8
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate a positive trend, with Item 8 strength ratings increasing from 63% in 2024 to 91% in 2025
    - ARO, NRO, SCRO and WRO improved from 2024 to 2025
    - SERO maintained 100% in both years

Contributing Factors

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
    - Parents received frequent and meaningful contact with their child(ren)
        - Visits frequency ranged from daily to weekly
        - Virtual contact was utilized to supplement frequent visitation
        - Visits occurred in family-like settings
        - Transportation was provided to support visitation
    - Separated sibling groups received consistent visitation
- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
    - Parents did not have frequent and/or meaningful contact with their child(ren)
        - Some families did not have in person visitation at all
        - Transportation was not provided to support visitation
    - Separated sibling groups did not receive consistent visitation

Summary

Performance on Item 8 has improved significantly based on current CQI case review data. Strength ratings increased from 55% in Round 3 to 63% in 2024 and reached 91% in 2025.

Four regions (ARO, NRO, SCRO, WRO) improved over the past year, and SERO maintained 100% performance.

Current CQI case review data indicates that Alaska has met substantial conformity for Permanency Outcome 2; Item 8 has been substantially achieved based on current results. Continued focus should include reducing visitation barriers such as providing transportation to support visitation, and ensuring parents and separated sibling groups receive consistent, meaningful visitation.

Item 9: Preserving Connections

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Permanency Outcome 2 (Items 7 to 11). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 9 has been substantially achieved.

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 9: Preserving Connections

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	100% (28/28)	0% (0/28)	0	28
NRO	100% (21/21)	0% (0/21)	0	21
SCRO	100% (19/19)	0% (0/19)	0	19
SERO	100% (6/6)	0% (0/6)	0	6
WRO	67% (4/6)	33% (2/6)	0	6
Total	98% (78/80)	2% (2/80)	0	80

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 9: Preserving Connections

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	94% (15/16)	6% (1/16)	0	16
NRO	78% (7/9)	22% (2/9)	0	9
SCRO	100% (11/11)	0% (0/11)	0	11
SERO	100% (4/4)	0% (0/4)	0	4
WRO	75% (3/4)	25% (1/4)	0	4
Total	91% (40/44)	9% (4/44)	0	44

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2 (65%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 75% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 9
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate improvement, with Item 9 strength ratings increasing from 91% in 2024 to 98% in 2025
    - ARO and NRO improved from 2024 to 2025
    - SCRO and SERO maintained 100% in both years
    - WRO had a slight decline from 2024 to 2025

Contributing Factors

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
    - Children remained in their home communities following removal
        - This allowed children to maintain the same friends/peers, school and medical providers
    - Tribes supported connections through consistent contact and resources

  - Activities to maintain connections included berry picking, fishing, extended family visitation, sports, church

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
  - Children did not remain in their home community following removal
    - This disrupted the ability to maintain the same friends/peers, school and medical providers
    - Extended family/friend visitation did not occur
    - Tribal connections were severed due to removal from home community

Summary

Performance on Item 9 has improved based on current CQI case review data. Strength ratings increased from 75% in Round 3 to 91% in 2024 and reached 98% in 2025. Two regions improved over the past year (ARO and NRO), and both SCRO and SERO maintained 100% performance. WRO had a slight decline.

Current CQI case review data indicates that Alaska has met substantial conformity for Permanency Outcome 2; Item 9 has been substantially achieved based on current results. Continued focus should include exhausting search efforts to maintain a child's home community (especially kin), asking the family about a child's important connections and sharing this information to the placement.

Item 10: Relative Placement

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Permanency Outcome 2 (Items 7 to 11). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 10 has been substantially achieved.

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 10: Relative Placement

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	96% (27/28)	4% (1/28)	0	28
NRO	100% (21/21)	0% (0/21)	0	21
SCRO	95% (18/19)	5% (1/19)	0	19
SERO	100% (6/6)	0% (0/6)	0	6
WRO	100% (6/6)	0% (0/6)	0	6
Total	98% (78/80)	2% (2/80)	0	80

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 10: Relative Placement

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	100% (16/16)	0% (0/16)	0	16
NRO	100% (9/9)	0% (0/9)	0	9
SCRO	100% (11/11)	0% (0/11)	0	11
SERO	100% (4/4)	0% (0/4)	0	4
WRO	100% (4/4)	0% (0/4)	0	4
Total	100% (44/44)	0% (0/44)	0	44

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

ESS Child in Relative Placement by Region, CY 2025

Region	AN/AI	Non-AN/AI
ARO	42%	50%
NRO	40%	50%
SCRO	58%	49%
SERO	51%	44%

Region	AN/AI	Non-AN/AI
WRO	56%	N/A
Total	49%	48%

Source: ORCA (OCS online management system)

ESS Child in Relative Placement by Region, CY 2024

Region	AN/AI	Non-AN/AI
ARO	48%	48%
NRO	43%	54%
SCRO	57%	49%
SERO	52%	41%
WRO	59%	N/A
Total	52%	48%

Source: ORCA (OCS online management system)

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2 (65%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 76% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 10
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate minimal fluctuation, with 100% of cases receiving a strength rating in 2024 and 98% in 2025
    - NRO, SERO and WRO maintained 100% in both years
    - ARO and SCRO had a slight decline from 2024 to 2025
- ESS data indicates slightly higher rates of relative placement amongst AN/AI children than non AN/AI children
    - Relative placements rates reduced slightly from 2024 to 2025

Contributing Factors

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
    - Children were placed with relatives who were aligned with child safety and well-being
    - When children were not placed with relatives, maternal and paternal relatives were explored
        - Through relative searches, some relative placements were able to take place following assessment while others were not viable placements
        - Tribes assisted with relative searches
- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
    - Children were not placed with relatives, and maternal and paternal relatives were not explored

Summary

Performance on Item 10 has remained steady based on current CQI case review data. There was minimal change from 2024 (100%) to 2025 (98%). Three regions maintained 100% in both years, while two had slight declines (ARO and SCRO).

Current CQI case review data indicates that Alaska has met substantial conformity for Permanency Outcome 2; Item 10 has been substantially achieved based on current results. Continued focus should include assessing all identified relatives for potential placement, utilizing Tribes in relative searches and asking parents and children about any relatives.

Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care With Parents

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Permanency Outcome 2 (Items 7 to 11). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 11 has been substantially achieved.

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care With Parents

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	84% (16/19)	16% (3/19)	9	28
NRO	100% (18/18)	0% (0/18)	3	21
SCRO	100% (17/17)	0% (0/17)	2	19
SERO	100% (3/3)	0% (0/3)	3	6
WRO	67% (2/3)	33% (1/3)	3	6
Total	93% (56/60)	7% (4/60)	20	80

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care With Parents

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	75% (9/12)	25% (3/12)	4	16
NRO	71% (5/7)	29% (2/7)	2	9
SCRO	89% (8/9)	11% (1/9)	2	11
SERO	100% (2/2)	0% (0/2)	2	4
WRO	50% (2/4)	50% (2/4)	0	4
Total	76% (26/34)	24% (8/34)	10	44

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2 (65%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 64% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 11
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate substantial improvement from 2024 to 2025, with 76% of cases receiving a strength rating in 2024 and 93% in 2025
    - SERO maintained 100% in both years
    - ARO, NRO, SCRO and WRO made improvements from 2024 to 2025

Contributing Factors

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
    - Parents were invited to attend children's school and medical appointments
        - Transportation services assisted in parental involvement
        - Parents were provided virtual/telephonic contact for appointments when time/distance impacted their ability to participate in person
    - Parents were provided with mentoring opportunities by placements and through therapy
- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
    - Parents were not invited to participate in their children's school and medical appointments
        - Incarceration impacted parental ability to participate
    - Parents were not provided virtual/telephonic contact to supplement

Summary

Performance on Item 11 has increased based on current CQI case review data, from 64% in CFSR Round 4 to 76% in 2024 to 93% in 2025. SERO maintained 100% in 2024 and 2025 while all other regions made gains.

Current CQI case review data indicates that Alaska has met substantial conformity for Permanency Outcome 2; Item 11 has been substantially achieved based on current results. Continued focus should include providing parents the opportunity to participate in their child's activities, encouraging mentoring opportunities by placements and providing alternate options if in person ability to participate is impacted.

C. Well-Being

Well-Being Outcomes 1, 2, and 3

Well-being outcomes include: (A) families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs; (B) children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs; and (C) children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

1. Performance Data Highlights

Highlight the most notable state performance and provide a brief summary of the state's most recent, relevant, and quality data pertaining to the CFSR Well-Being Outcomes and supporting practices. Examples of relevant data: case record review results, administrative data such as participation in family team meetings, caseworker visits with children and parents, children receiving timely well-child visits; service utilization rates. Include a description of the state-produced measures (denominator and numerator), data periods represented, and methodology.

2. Brief Analysis

Briefly summarize the most salient observations, including strengths and areas needing improvement, and findings across data sources and practice areas, by answering the questions below. Consider how current statewide case review performance compares to CFSR Round 3 findings and PIP measurement, and the quality of the data.

- What is the trend in performance over time, and is the state trending in the desired direction?
- What information do other related data sources provide to inform state observations?
- What does performance data from the legal and judicial communities show with respect to the impact of court processes on child well-being outcomes?
- What does the performance data identify as areas of strength?
- What does the performance data identify as areas in need of improvement?
- Are there data quality limitations (e.g., completeness, accuracy, and reliability)?

3. Results of Deeper Data Exploration for Priority Focus Areas

Identify areas prioritized for deeper data exploration and reasons for selecting those areas. Briefly summarize results of data analysis, including evidence supporting the identification of contributing factors and potential root causes driving strengths and challenges. Consider observations from additional evidence that may have been gathered to deepen the state's understanding of the focus area (e.g., additional analysis of a target sub-population, qualitative data such as caseworker surveys or focus groups with key stakeholders).

- What meaningful differences were identified for sub-populations, including specific groups of children (e.g., age, race/ethnicity) and geographic location in the state?
- What events, conditions, or factors contribute to or lead to the strength or problem?
- What supporting evidence is provided by key stakeholders (e.g., caseworkers, supervisors, program managers, birth parents and youth, caregivers, and service providers) regarding the contributing factors and/or root cause(s)?
- Are there data or research pointing to the root cause(s) and/or contributing factors?

4. Information Regarding CQI Change and Implementation Activities, As Applicable

Briefly describe how the information and results of the analysis above relate to or build on results of prior data exploration and CQI change and implementation activities. Has progress been made and/or have lessons been learned from development, implementation, and monitoring of improvement activities included in the state's most recent CFSR/PIP, CFSP/APSR, and other systemic improvement processes? Are adjustments needed to existing strategies/interventions/plans, or are new CQI change and implementation plans needed to achieve desired outcomes?

State Response:

Item 12: Needs and Services of Child, Parents and Foster Parents

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Well-Being Outcome 1 (Items 12, 13, 14 and 15). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 12 has not been substantially achieved.

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 12: Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	62% (21/34)	38% (13/34)	0	34
NRO	96% (26/27)	4% (1/27)	0	27
SCRO	91% (21/23)	9% (2/23)	0	23
SERO	67% (4/6)	33% (2/6)	0	6
WRO	25% (2/8)	75% (6/8)	0	8
Total	76% (74/98)	24% (24/98)	0	98

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 12: Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	42% (11/26)	58% (15/26)	0	26
NRO	29% (4/14)	71% (10/14)	0	14
SCRO	61% (11/18)	39% (7/18)	0	18
SERO	57% (4/7)	43% (3/7)	0	7
WRO	0% (0/6)	100% (6/6)	0	6
Total	42% (30/71)	58% (41/71)	0	71

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1 (31%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 33% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 12
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate a positive trend, with Item 12 strength ratings increasing from 42% in 2024 to 76% in 2025
    - All five regions demonstrated growth
        - Notable gains include NRO (29% to 96%) and SCRO (61% to 91%)
- Contributing factors and summaries will be addressed in each subsection

Item 12A: Needs Assessment and Services to Children

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial

conformity for Well-Being Outcome 1 (Items 12, 13, 14 and 15). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 12A has been substantially achieved.

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 12A: Needs Assessment and Services to Children

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	91% (31/34)	9% (3/34)	0	34
NRO	100% (27/27)	0% (0/27)	0	27
SCRO	100% (23/23)	0% (0/23)	0	23
SERO	100% (6/6)	0% (0/6)	0	6
WRO	50% (4/8)	50% (4/8)	0	8
Total	93% (91/98)	7% (7/98)	0	98

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 12A: Needs Assessment and Services to Children

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	69% (18/26)	31% (8/26)	0	26
NRO	50% (7/14)	50% (7/14)	0	14
SCRO	72% (13/18)	28% (5/18)	0	18
SERO	86% (6/7)	14% (1/7)	0	7
WRO	17% (1/6)	83% (5/6)	0	6
Total	63% (45/71)	37% (26/71)	0	71

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1 (31%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 63% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 12A
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate continued improvement, with Item 12A strength ratings increasing from 63% in 2024 to 93% in 2025
    - All five regions increased their strength ratings from 2024 to 2025
    - NRO, SCRO and SERO obtained 100% in 2025

Contributing Factors

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
    - Children received initial and ongoing assessments
    - Many children did not have any needs outside of needs related to Items 16, 17 and 18
    - Children's social needs were met through peer engagement and recreational activities
- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
    - Children did not receive initial and/or ongoing assessments
        - This includes assessments related to independent living
    - Social skills including coping ability were identified, however services were not provided
    - Minimal contact contributed to the lack of assessment

Summary

Performance on Item 12A shows substantial improvement, from 63% in CFSR Round 3 and CQI case reviews in 2024 to 93% in 2025. All five regions demonstrated growth with NRO, SCRO and SERO obtaining 100% in 2025.

Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Well-Being Outcome 1; Item 12A has been substantially achieved based on current results. Continued focus should include ensuring children receive initial and ongoing assessments (including independent living) and providing services to meet their social needs.

Item 12B: Needs Assessment and Services to Parents

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Well-Being Outcome 1 (Items 12, 13, 14 and 15). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 12B has not been substantially achieved.

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 12B: Needs Assessment and Services to Parents

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	48% (12/25)	52% (13/25)	9	34
NRO	96% (24/25)	4% (1/25)	2	27
SCRO	95% (21/22)	5% (1/22)	1	23
SERO	100% (3/3)	0% (0/3)	3	6
WRO	33% (2/6)	67% (4/6)	2	8
Total	77% (62/81)	23% (19/81)	17	98

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 12B: Needs Assessment and Services to Parents

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	32% (7/22)	68% (15/22)	4	26
NRO	33% (4/12)	67% (8/12)	2	14
SCRO	60% (9/15)	40% (6/15)	3	18
SERO	50% (3/6)	50% (3/6)	1	7
WRO	0% (0/6)	100% (6/6)	0	6
Total	38% (23/61)	62% (38/61)	10	71

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1 (31%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 30% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 12B
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate a positive trend, with Item 12B strength ratings increasing from 38% in 2024 to 77% in 2025
    - All five regions increased their strength ratings
    - NRO, SCRO and SERO achieved strength ratings over 90% in 2025

Contributing Factors

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
    - Parents received initial and ongoing assessments
    - Identified needs and services provided include substance use, medical, grief, parenting education, mental health (including counseling) and domestic violence
    - Family history was reviewed as part of the assessment

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
    - Parents did not receive initial and/or ongoing assessments
    - Minimal contact contributed to the lack of assessment
    - Needs identified, but services not provided include substance use, parenting education, mental health, domestic violence and housing

Summary

Performance on Item 12B shows improvement yet continues to reflect challenges in substantial achievement. CQI case reviews indicate progress from 38% in 2024 to 77% in 2025. All five regions improved from year to year, with three regions receiving over 90%.

Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Well-Being Outcome 1 (Item 12B). Continued focus should include ensuring parents are met with frequently to receive need assessments and providing services to meet identified needs.

Item 12C: Needs Assessment and Services to Foster Parents

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Well-Being Outcome 1 (Items 12, 13, 14 and 15). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 12C has not met substantial achievement, however, is approaching the threshold.

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 12C: Needs Assessment and Services to Foster Parents

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	93% (26/28)	7% (2/28)	6	34
NRO	100% (21/21)	0% (0/21)	6	27
SCRO	95% (18/19)	5% (1/19)	4	23
SERO	67% (4/6)	33% (2/6)	0	6
WRO	33% (2/6)	67% (4/6)	2	8
Total	89% (71/80)	11% (9/80)	18	98

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 12C: Needs Assessment and Services to Foster Parents

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	94% (15/16)	6% (1/16)	10	26
NRO	56% (5/9)	44% (4/9)	5	14
SCRO	73% (8/11)	27% (3/11)	7	18
SERO	50% (2/4)	50% (2/4)	3	7
WRO	25% (1/4)	75% (3/4)	2	6
Total	70% (31/44)	30% (13/44)	27	71

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1 (31%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 56% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 12C
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate ongoing improvement, with Item 12C strength ratings increasing from 70% in 2024 to 89% in 2025
    - NRO, SCRO, SERO and WRO demonstrated gains from year to year while ARO remained stable
    - ARO, NRO and SCRO all received over 90% in 2025

Contributing Factors

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
    - Foster parents received ongoing assessments
    - Identified needs and services provided to assist foster parents in caring for children include mental/behavioral health, medical and mentoring
        - Childcare, clothing and transportation assistance were also provided
    - Unlicensed relatives received emergency relief stipends and were referred to public assistance as well
- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
    - Foster parents did not receive ongoing assessments
    - Minimal contact contributed to the lack of assessment
    - Needs identified, but services not provided include menta/behavioral health (related to the child) and transportation assistance

Summary

Performance on Item 12C demonstrates continued growth. CQI case reviews indicate progress from 70% in 2024 to 89% in 2025. Four regions made improvements from year to year, while ARO remained stable.

Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Well-Being Outcome 1 (Item 12C); however Alaska is approaching substantial achievement for Item 12C. Continued focus should include ensuring foster parents are met with frequently and providing services to meet their needs in caring for children.

Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Well-Being Outcome 1 (Items 12, 13, 14 and 15). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 13 has not been substantially achieved.

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	65% (20/31)	35% (11/31)	3	34
NRO	96% (25/26)	4% (1/26)	1	27
SCRO	96% (22/23)	4% (1/23)	0	23
SERO	100% (5/5)	0% (0/5)	1	6
WRO	43% (3/7)	57% (4/7)	1	8
Total	82% (75/92)	18% (17/92)	6	98

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	46% (12/26)	54% (14/26)	0	26
NRO	38% (5/13)	62% (8/13)	1	14
SCRO	67% (12/18)	33% (6/18)	0	18
SERO	57% (4/7)	43% (3/7)	0	7
WRO	0% (0/6)	100% (6/6)	0	6
Total	47% (33/70	53% (37/70)	1	71

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

ESS Data: Child Case Plans 2025

Region	Children With Current Case Plan	Children Requiring Case Plan	% Children With Current Case Plan
ARO	9,160	10,384	88%
NRO	4,262	4,750	90%
SCRO	5,319	6,707	79%
SERO	1,492	1,582	94%
WRO	2,079	3,195	65%
Statewide	22,312	26,618	84%

Source: ORCA

ESS Data: Child Case Plans 2024

Region	Children With Current Case Plan	Children Requiring Case Plan	% Children With Current Case Plan
ARO	8,825	10,273	86%
NRO	4,371	5,307	82%
SCRO	5,661	6,966	81%
SERO	1,647	1,718	96%
WRO	1,656	3,251	51%
Statewide	22,160	27,515	81%

Source: ORCA

ESS Data: Parent Case Plans 2025

Region	Parents With Current Case Plan	Parents Requiring Case Plan	% Parents With Current Case Plan
ARO	6,084	9,123	67%
NRO	2,773	4,192	66%
SCRO	3,123	5,065	62%
SERO	1,117	1,574	71%
WRO	776	2,563	30%
Statewide	13,873	22,517	62%

Source: ORCA

ESS Data: Parent Case Plans 2024

Region	Parents With Current Case Plan	Parents Requiring Case Plan	% Parents With Current Case Plan
ARO	4,767	8,003	60%
NRO	2,287	4,153	55%
SCRO	2,662	4,339	61%
SERO	874	1,322	66%
WRO	741	2,344	32%
Statewide	11,331	20,161	56%

Source: ORCA

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1 (31%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 39% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 13
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate a positive trend, with Item 13 strength ratings increasing from 47% in 2024 to 82% in 2025
    - All five regions demonstrated improvement
    - NRO, SCRO and SERO all achieved ratings over 90% in 2025

- ESS data indicates statewide growth from 2024 to 2025 for both children and parents
    - 81% of children had current case plans in 2024 and 84% in 2025
    - 56% of parents had current case plans in 2024 and 62% in 2025

Contributing Factors

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
    - Parents and children were involved in case planning
    - Developmentally/age appropriate case planning was utilized with children
        - Children's preferences were incorporated
    - Parents' strengths and needs were discussed as part of the case planning process
        - Barriers were discussed
        - Parents identified service providers to meet their case plan goals
- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
    - Parents and/or children were not involved in case planning
        - More specifically, fathers and children were continually not involved
    - Minimal contact contributed to the lack of involvement
    - When parents provided input regarding their case plans, it was not incorporated

Summary

Performance on Item 13 demonstrates improvement from Round 3 to 2025 CQI case reviews indicate progress from 47% in 2024 to 82% in 2025. All five regions had gains, with NRO, SCRO and SERO achieving over 90% in 2025. ESS data indicates improvements as well.

Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Permanency Outcome 1 (Item 13). Continued focus should include ongoing efforts to strengthen father and child participation in the case planning process.

Item 14: Caseworker Visits with Child

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Well-Being Outcome 1 (Items 12, 13, 14 and 15). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 14 has not been substantially achieved.

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 14: Caseworker Visits With Child

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	65% (22/34)	35% (12/34)	0	34
NRO	89% (24/27)	11% (3/27)	0	27
SCRO	83% (19/23)	17% (4/23)	0	23
SERO	67% (4/6)	33% (2/6)	0	6
WRO	0% (0/8)	100% (8/8)	0	8
Total	70% (69/98)	30% (29/98)	0	98

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 14: Caseworker Visits With Child

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	54% (14/26)	46% (12/26)	0	26
NRO	36% (5/14)	65% (9/14)	0	14
SCRO	61% (11/18)	39% (7/18)	0	18

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
SERO	57% (4/7)	43% (3/7)	0	7
WRO	17% (1/6)	83% (5/6)	0	6
Total	49% (35/71)	51% (36/71)	0	71

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

ESS Data: Caseworker Visits With Children 2025

Region	Children Visited	Children To Visit	% Children Visited
ARO	6,628	10,784	61%
NRO	3,581	4,917	73%
SCRO	5,162	6,985	74%
SERO	1,067	1,644	65%
WRO	2,003	3,345	60%
Statewide	18,441	27,675	67%

Source: ORCA

ESS Data: Caseworker Visits With Children 2024

Region	Children Visited	Children To Visit	% Children Visited
ARO	6,703	10,607	63%
NRO	3,321	5,471	61%
SCRO	5,218	7,184	73%
SERO	1,304	1,770	74%
WRO	1,507	3,385	45%
Statewide	18,053	28,417	64%

Source: ORCA

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1 (31%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 48% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 14
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate continuing growth, with Item 14 strength ratings increasing from 49% in 2024 to 70% in 2025
    - ARO, NRO, SCRO and SERO increased their strength ratings from 2024 to 2025, while WRO declined
- ESS data indicates minimal growth from 2024 to 2025
    - 64% of children received monthly caseworker visits in 2024 and 67% in 2025

Contributing Factors

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
    - Caseworker visits with children were frequent and meaningful
    - Visits were private to allow for open dialog
    - Discussions included child safety, permanency and well-being
- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
    - Caseworker visits with children were not frequent and/or meaningful
    - Visits did not occur privately to allow for open dialog
    - Discussions were not adequate in addressing child safety, permanency and well-being

Summary

Performance on Item 14 shows gradual improvement, yet continues to reflect challenges in caseworker visits with children. CQI case reviews indicate progress from 49% in 2024 to 70% in

2025. Four regions demonstrated growth, while WRO declined. ESS data indicates minimal growth from year to year.

Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Well-Being Outcome 1 (Item 14). Continued focus should include increasing frequency of caseworker visits with children and strengthening the quality of visits (including ensuring visits are private and age appropriate discussions include safety, permanency and well-being).

Item 15: Caseworker Visits with Parents

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Well-Being Outcome 1 (Items 12, 13, 14 and 15). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 15 has not been substantially achieved.

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 15: Caseworker Visits With Parents

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	28% (7/25)	72% (18/25)	9	34
NRO	80% (20/25)	20% (5/25)	2	27
SCRO	73% (16/22)	27% (6/22)	1	23
SERO	0% (0/3)	100% (3/3)	3	6
WRO	17% (1/6)	83% (5/6)	2	8
Total	54% (44/81)	46% (37/81)	17	98

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 15: Caseworker Visits With Parents

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	30% (7/23)	70% (16/23)	3	26
NRO	17% (2/12)	83% (10/12)	2	14
SCRO	40% (6/15)	60% (9/15)	3	18
SERO	50% (3/6)	50% (3/6)	1	7
WRO	0% (0/6)	100% (6/6)	0	6
Total	29% (18/62)	71% (44/62)	9	71

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

ESS Data: Caseworker Visits With Mothers 2025

Region	Mothers Visited	Mothers To Visit	% Mothers Visited
ARO	878	5,007	18%
NRO	764	2,344	33%
SCRO	825	3,071	27%
SERO	272	877	31%
WRO	289	1,391	21%
Statewide	3,028	12,690	24%

Source: ORCA

ESS Data: Caseworker Visits With Mothers 2024

Region	Mothers Visited	Mothers To Visit	% Mothers Visited
ARO	779	4,440	18%
NRO	635	2,392	27%
SCRO	721	2,557	28%
SERO	222	756	29%
WRO	185	1,322	14%
Statewide	2,542	11,467	22%

Source: ORCA

ESS Data: Caseworker Visits With Fathers 2025

Region	Fathers Visited	Fathers To Visit	% Fathers Visited
ARO	472	5,224	9%
NRO	490	2,390	21%
SCRO	493	2,986	17%
SERO	164	935	18%
WRO	239	1,490	16%
Statewide	1,858	13,025	14%

Source: ORCA

ESS Data: Caseworker Visits With Fathers 2024

Region	Fathers Visited	Fathers To Visit	% Fathers Visited
ARO	404	4,648	9%
NRO	425	2,377	18%
SCRO	405	2,610	16%
SERO	135	816	17%
WRO	100	1,354	7%
Statewide	1,469	11,805	12%

Source: ORCA

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1 (31%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 28% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 15
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate continued efforts, with Item 15 strength ratings increasing from 29% in 2024 to 54% in 2025
    - NRO, SCRO and WRO all had improvements from year to year
    - ARO had minimal declines, while SERO had substantial declines
- ESS data indicates minimal growth from 2024 to 2025
    - 22% of mothers received monthly caseworker visits in 2024 and 24% in 2025
    - 12% of fathers received monthly caseworker visits in 2024 and 14% in 2025

Contributing Factors

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
    - Caseworker visits with parents were frequent and meaningful
    - Visits were private to allow for open dialog
    - Discussions included child safety/permanency/well-being, parent progress, parent supports, barriers and court
- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
    - Caseworker visits with parents were not frequent and/or meaningful
    - Visits did not occur privately to allow for open dialog
    - Discussions were not adequate in addressing child safety/permanency/well-being, parent progress and barriers

Summary

Performance on Item 15 shows efforts to improve from Round 3, yet continued progress is needed. CQI case reviews indicate progress from 29% in 2024 to 54% in 2025. Three regions demonstrated growth, while ARO remained stable and SERO declined.

Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Well-Being Outcome 1 (Item 15). Continued focus should include increasing frequency of caseworker visits with

parents and strengthening the quality of visits (including ensuring visits are private and discussions include safety, permanency and well-being).

Item 16: Educational Needs of the Child

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Well-Being Outcome 2 (Item 16). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 16 has not been substantially achieved.

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 16: Educational Needs of the Child

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	96% (23/24)	4% (1/24)	10	34
NRO	100% (20/20)	0% (0/20)	7	7
SCRO	89% (17/19)	11% (2/19)	4	23
SERO	100% (4/4)	0% (0/4)	2	6
WRO	50% (3/6)	50% (3/6)	2	8
Total	92% (67/73)	8% (6/73)	25	98

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 16: Educational Needs of the Child

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	100% (16/16)	0% (0/16)	10	26
NRO	67% (6/9)	33% (3/9)	5	14
SCRO	92% (12/13)	8% (1/13)	5	18
SERO	100% (4/4)	0% (0/4)	3	7
WRO	75% (3/4)	25% (1/4)	2	6
Total	89% (41/46)	11% (5/46)	25	71

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 (85%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 85% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 16
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate a positive trend, with Item 16 strength ratings increasing from 89% in 2024 to 92% in 2025
    - SERO maintained 100% in both years, and NRO obtained 100% in 2025
    - ARO and SCRO remained stable with slight declines while WRO had a substantial decline

Contributing Factors

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
    - Children's educational needs were assessed and services provided
        - Services include education plans (IEP/504 plans), speech, language, special education, tutoring and GED/alternative education pathways
    - Collaterals were contacted to aid in the assessment such as school staff and family
- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
    - Children's educational needs were not assessed and/or services were not provided
        - Identified needs, but services not provided include education plans (IEP), early intervention, speech and GED/alternative education pathways

Summary

Performance on Item 16 demonstrates Alaska is approaching substantial conformity. CQI case reviews indicate progress from 89% in 2024 to 92% in 2025. Two regions received 100% in 2025, while two remained stable with slight declines. WRO had greater declines from year to year.

Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Well-Being Outcome 2 (Item 16). Continued focus should include asking children about their education and following up with collaterals (including the school) to ensure children's needs are being met.

Item 17: Physical Health of the Child

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Well-Being Outcome 3 (Items 17 and 18). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 17 has been substantially achieved.

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 17: Physical Health of the Child

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	100% (29/29)	0% (0/29)	5	34
NRO	100% (23/23)	0% (0/23)	4	27
SCRO	90% (18/20)	10% (2/20)	3	23
SERO	100% (6/6)	0% (0/6)	0	6
WRO	57% (4/7)	43% (3/7)	1	8
Total	94% (80/85)	6% (5/85)	13	98

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 17: Physical Health of the Child

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	90% (19/21)	10% (2/21)	5	26
NRO	60% (6/10)	40% (4/10)	4	14
SCRO	86% (12/14)	14% (2/14)	4	18
SERO	75% (3/4)	25% (1/4)	3	7
WRO	75% (3/4)	25% (1/4)	2	6
Total	81% (43/53)	19% (10/53)	18	71

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3 (50%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 68% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 17
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate substantial growth from CFSR Round 3, with Item 17 strength ratings increasing from 81% in 2024 to 94% in 2025
    - ARO, NRO, SCRO and SERO demonstrated improvement from year to year with all four regions receiving 90% or above in 2025
    - WRO declined from year to year

Contributing Factors

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
    - Children's physical/dental health needs were assessed and services provided
        - Services include routine physical health screenings, immunizations, routine dental health screenings/cleanings, routine vision screenings, dental surgery, complex medical care and medication management
    - Collaterals were contacted to aid in the assessment such as medical staff
    - Health records were maintained

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
    - Children's physical/dental health needs were not assessed and/or services were not provided
        - Identified needs, but services not provided include routine physical health screenings, routine dental health screenings/cleanings/procedures, routine vision screenings, substance use exposure, physical abuse allegations and medication management

Summary

Performance on Item 17 shows substantial improvement from CFSR Round 3. CQI case reviews indicate progress from 81% in 2024 to 94% in 2025. Four regions received 90% or above in 2025 while WRO declined.

Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Well-Being Outcome 3, however substantial achievement has been met for Item 17. Continued focus should include increased efforts in collateral contact with service providers, parents and foster parents to ensure children are receiving routine physical health screenings and providing identified services.

Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Well-Being Outcome 3 (Items 17 and 18). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 18 has not been substantially achieved.

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	72% (13/18)	28% (5/18)	16	34
NRO	95% (19/20)	5% (1/20)	7	27
SCRO	100% (14/14)	0% (0/14)	9	23
SERO	67% (2/3)	33% (1/3)	3	6
WRO	50% (3/6)	50% (3/6)	2	8
Total	84% (51/61)	16% (10/61)	37	98

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	70% (7/10)	30% (3/10)	16	26
NRO	56% (5/9)	44% (4/9)	5	14
SCRO	90% (9/10)	10% (1/10)	8	18
SERO	75% (3/4)	25% (1/4)	3	7
WRO	40% (2/5)	60% (3/5)	1	6
Total	68% (26/38)	32% (12/38)	33	71

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

Analysis

- CFSR Round 3 found OCS was not in substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3 (50%, Alaska CFSR Final Report) with 45% of cases receiving a strength rating in Item 18
- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate a positive trend, with Item 18 strength ratings increasing from 68% in 2024 to 84% in 2025
    - All five regions demonstrated improvement from year to year with NRO and SCRO achieving 95% and above

Contributing Factors

- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate strength ratings had:
    - Children's mental/behavioral health needs were assessed and services provided
        - Services include neuropsychological testing, play therapy, counseling, medication management, hospitalization
    - Collaterals were contacted to aid in the assessment such as mental/behavioral health staff
- Narrative themes from CQI case reviews indicate areas needing improvement ratings had:
    - Children's mental/behavioral health needs were not assessed and/or services were not provided
        - Identified needs, but services not provided include formal assessments following child mental/behavioral health concerns and/or trauma history, counseling and child substance use
    - Collaterals were not contacted to aid in the assessment

Summary

Performance on Item 18 shows continued improvement from CFSR Round 3. CQI case reviews indicate progress from 68% in 2024 to 84% in 2025. All five regions demonstrated growth, with NRO and SCRO achieving 95% and above.

Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Well-Being Outcome 3 (Item 18). Continued focus should include ensuring mental/behavioral health evaluation for all children with a trauma history.

Section IV: Assessment of Systemic Factors

The statewide assessment includes a review of 18 items associated with 7 systemic factors that are used to determine the CFSR ratings for substantial conformity for each factor. For CFSR Round 4, the expectation is that the statewide assessment team will use relevant, well-constructed, valid, and defensible evidence that speaks to how well each systemic factor requirement functions across the state.

The Children's Bureau recognizes that in many states the information systems that house data submitted to the federal government for AFCARS and NCANDS also contain a wealth of administrative data that could be considered when evaluating the systemic factors. Where possible, we recommend that states make use of these and other available data sets to demonstrate systemic factor functionality.

Whether quantitative or qualitative evidence is used to demonstrate the functionality of systemic factor items, states are strongly encouraged to use systematic processes to assess state performance, include explanations regarding how well the data and/or information characterizes statewide functioning, and provide information regarding the scope of the evidence used.

If the federal review team determines that the statewide assessment does not conclusively demonstrate substantial conformity, the team may collect additional information through stakeholder interviews during the onsite phase of the CFSR. Stakeholder interviews on the Service Array and Case Review systemic factors, jointly conducted by the federal-state team, will be held in all states.

States are encouraged to review the CFSR Round 3 Systemic Factors report for examples of the combination of evidence used to demonstrate systemic factor functioning in Round 3, and the CB information briefs developed for each systemic factor (https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/report/systemic-factors-results-cfsrs-2015-2018) that provide additional ideas and suggestions for demonstrating functionality.

A. Statewide Information System

Item 19: Statewide Information System

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the statewide information system functioning statewide to ensure that, at a minimum, the state can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below. Ensure that you address each of the four components of this question.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.
- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.
- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?
- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?
- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?
- What does the evidence show with respect to how end users experience the statewide information system?
- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Alaska asserts that the Statewide Information System is an Area Needing Improvement. Alaska has carefully assessed the functioning of its statewide information system, the Online Resources for Children in Alaska (ORCA), against the four required components of Item 19 and finds that the system is not functioning statewide to consistently ensure ready identification across all four components. Specifically, foster care status and location identification are limited by placement documentation timeliness and permanency goal identification is limited by a structural system limitation in how goal information is organized within ORCA.

Alaska used four primary data sources to assess functioning across all four components: ORCA system functionality review examining the pathways, reports, and tools available to staff for locating required information; AFCARS data quality results for reporting periods 2024A, 2024B, 2025A, and 2025B; direct database queries analyzing placement documentation lag times over a five year period; and a statewide staff survey available to all ORCA users – both internal State staff and external partners – March 18 through April 17, 2026.

Alaska acknowledges the following limitations in the evidence base for this assessment. The statewide staff survey was available to all ORCA users but yielded responses from fewer than half of State staff, which may limit the representativeness of survey findings across all field

offices and user roles. Survey results did not capture respondent location, so Alaska cannot determine whether findings are consistent across field offices or concentrated in specific areas. These limitations are not repeated in the individual component sections below.

Alaska's geographic context presents a structural constraint on statewide system functioning. ORCA has no mobile capability and is dependent on sufficient internet connectivity to function effectively. In remote and rural areas of the state, connectivity can be unreliable or insufficient to support real time system use, and the absence of mobile capabilities means staff cannot access ORCA in field settings where connectivity is limited. Alaska is aware of these access limitations through IT support requests, though the frequency and geographic distribution of access issues has not been formally measured. This means that ready identification of required information is not consistently available to staff across all geographic contexts in which child welfare work occurs in Alaska.

Alaska received an Area Needing Improvement rating for Item 19 in Round 3. The challenges identified at that time persist, though evidence presented in the component sections below demonstrates sustained improvement in placement documentation timeliness over the PIP period and meaningful progress in addressing the data accuracy concerns CB identified in Round 3.

Permanency Goal Identification

While ORCA has the technical capability to capture and report permanency goal information, a structural limitation in how goal information is organized and surfaced within the system prevents Alaska from asserting that staff can consistently and readily identify a child's current permanency goal across all practice contexts. This structural limitation was not fully characterized in Round 3, where the Area Needing Improvement finding focused primarily on data accuracy and timeliness concerns. Round 4 evidence demonstrates that those specific accuracy concerns have been substantially addressed — AFCARS Elements 147 and 148 achieved 0% error rates across all four reporting periods reviewed, confirming that a valid permanency goal value is consistently captured and transmitted for every child in the AFCARS submission. However, accurate technical capture does not ensure ready identification in daily practice, and the structural issues described below represent the more substantive basis for the continuing Area Needing Improvement finding on this component.

The child case plan is the authoritative location for permanency goal documentation and the source from which AFCARS reporting is drawn. Goal-related information also appears in other ORCA locations — including the parent case plan, administrative review documentation, and court-related records — and these locations are not reconciled with the child case plan within the system. This creates two compounding challenges for ready identification. First, when a more recently entered document in another location reflects a different goal, staff have no system-level indicator identifying the child case plan as the authoritative source, creating the potential for staff to work from goal information that does not reflect the current authoritative goal. Second, the authoritative location itself may not reflect the most current goal if the child case plan has not been updated within policy timeframes, meaning that a more recently entered document in another location may reflect the accurate current goal even though it is not the authoritative source. Together these factors mean that ready identification of a child's current permanency goal depends heavily on a worker's knowledge of both system architecture and case history rather than on clear and consistent system design.

Alaska's statewide staff survey reflects this limitation. Overall, 45% of all respondents agreed they could readily identify a child's permanency goal in ORCA, the lowest agreement rate of any component. An additional 32% were neutral, selected N/A, or left the item blank, consistent with roles that do not routinely navigate to permanency goal information as part of their daily work. The remaining 23% disagreed.

Foster Care Status

Foster care status identification is limited by placement documentation timeliness, which prevents the system from consistently ensuring that current status information is available for ready identification. The Round 3 PIP identified placement documentation delays as a safety risk. Direct database analysis of worker-documented placements over a five-year period demonstrates that while this limitation persists, Alaska has made consistent and measurable progress. Alaska's analysis excluded placements documented by Help Desk staff reflecting data corrections, and a small number of records reflecting a known system bug that permits future documentation dates, as these do not reflect actual worker documentation practice.

Year	Average Days to Document	Policy Compliance Rate
2021	5.5	50.4%
2022	5.1	53.3%
2023	4.2	56.9%
2024	3.6	60.8%
2025	3.5	59.9%

Average documentation time has decreased by 36% over the five-year period and policy compliance has improved by nearly 10 percentage points, reflecting sustained progress over the PIP period. Nevertheless, approximately 40% of placements are still not documented within Alaska's 24-hour policy timeframe, and high staff turnover, increased caseloads, and the geographic and connectivity constraints inherent to Alaska's service environment are likely contributing factors. Weekly monitoring reports and Help Desk correction processes identify and resolve documentation errors on an ongoing basis but the underlying timeliness gap for initial placement entry persists.

Despite this limitation, ORCA's underlying system design for status identification is sound. Understanding what the system provides when information is present helps clarify that the ANI finding reflects a documentation practice gap rather than a system functionality failure. ORCA provides clear and consistent pathways for identifying foster care status when placement information is present. Placement history is displayed on the ORCA desktop with the most recent or current placement filtered to the top, including start and end dates. Point-in-time and date-range reports allow staff to identify foster care status for groups of children across specified periods. Since Round 3, Alaska strengthened its ability to capture foster care status by introducing the extraordinary circumstances placement type, which went live in January 2025. This mechanism ensures that children in atypical situations — such as those temporarily staying in an OCS office or a hotel — have an active record in ORCA, confirming their status and ensuring their location is documented even when a traditional foster care or relative placement is not available. AFCARS Elements 112 and 113, which capture placement status and placement type, are populated directly from the same placement episodes staff use to determine foster care status on the desktop, and Alaska achieved 0% error rates for both elements across all four reporting periods reviewed. Staff survey results reflect this — 75% of all respondents agreed they could readily identify a child's foster care status in ORCA. An additional 15% were neutral, selected N/A, or left the item blank, consistent with roles that do not routinely interact with placement status information. The remaining 10% disagreed. These results indicate that when information is present in the system, staff can generally locate it without difficulty. The ANI finding reflects not a navigation or accessibility failure but a documentation timeliness gap that affects whether current information is consistently present in the system at all.

Location

Location identification is limited by the same placement documentation timeliness gap that affects foster care status. When placement episodes are not documented within policy timeframes, a child's current physical location is not reflected in ORCA, preventing ready identification regardless of the system's navigational capabilities. As noted in the status section, only (approx.) 60% of placements meet Alaska's policy timeframe for documentation, extreme cases now exceed 100 days, and the limitation identified in the Round 3 PIP has not been resolved.

Despite this limitation, ORCA's underlying system design for location identification is sound. ORCA requires that every out-of-home placement includes complete provider information, including the physical address where the child is residing, and system logic prevents multiple open placements for a single child, ensuring that only one current location can be active at a time. Whether accessed through the placement episode on the case or through the provider record directly, both pathways draw from the same underlying data, ensuring location information is consistent regardless of how staff navigate to it. The extraordinary circumstances placement type, described in the status section above, also directly strengthens location identification by ensuring that a child's physical location is formally documented even when the circumstances do not meet the criteria for a traditional placement, addressing situations that previously had no formal placement type in ORCA and could go undocumented or documented incorrectly. Beyond individual placement records, ORCA also supports location identification at the system level through out-of-home placement reports that include detailed provider address information, allowing staff to verify a child's physical location at both a point in time and across a selected date range. The point-in-time report also identifies missing or incomplete placement documentation, which the ORCA Help Desk uses to correct records on an ongoing basis, ensuring that location information remains complete across all active cases statewide. Staff survey results reflect this — 73% of all respondents agreed they could readily identify a child's location in ORCA. An additional 14% were neutral, selected N/A, or left the item blank, consistent with roles that do not routinely need to identify a child's physical location as part of their daily work. The remaining 13% disagreed. These results indicate that when location information is present in the system, staff can generally locate it without difficulty. The ANI finding reflects not a navigation or accessibility failure but the same documentation timeliness gap affecting status identification.

Demographic Characteristics

Demographic information for children in ORCA is centralized on the Person record, including name, date of birth, race, ethnicity, gender, and Tribal information, allowing staff to readily locate key identifying information in a single consistent location. ORCA includes validation rules requiring name, date of birth, and gender to be completed before related actions can be taken — for example, date of birth must be documented before an out-of-home placement can be recorded, as Alaska's foster care base rate is age-based. Race, ethnicity, and Tribal affiliation fields are not system-enforced but are consistently completed through practice, as demonstrated by near-zero AFCARS error rates for those elements across all four reporting periods reviewed.

AFCARS core demographic elements — specifically elements 5, 6, and 13 through 21 — are populated directly from the same Person record fields staff use to identify demographic characteristics in ORCA. Alaska achieved 0% error rates for all core demographic elements across all four reporting periods reviewed. ICWA-related demographic elements, elements 7 through 12, were similarly strong, ranging from 0% to less than 0.5% across the same periods. Because the AFCARS source data and the staff navigation pathway are the same underlying fields, these results provide direct quantitative confirmation that demographic information is consistently captured in the location staff use to identify it.

Alaska's statewide staff survey results support the overall strength of this component. Overall, 85% of all respondents agreed they could readily identify a child's demographic characteristics in ORCA, the highest agreement rate of any component. An additional 11% were neutral, selected N/A, or left the item blank, consistent with roles that do not routinely access demographic fields as part of their daily work. The remaining 5% disagreed.

The Round 3 PIP identified demographic data verification against external systems as a concern, committing to addressing it through data interfaces as part of system modernization efforts. That work has not been implemented due to resource and funding constraints that have affected Alaska's modernization timeline. However, the ready identification standard Item 19 requires for demographic characteristics is met through existing system functionality, as demonstrated by the centralized Person record design, consistent field completion, and strong AFCARS and survey results described above.

B. Case Review System

Item 20: Written Case Plan

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that each child has a written case plan that is developed jointly with the child's parent(s) and includes the required provisions?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below. Ensure that you address each of the three components of this question.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.
- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.
- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?
- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?
- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?
- What does the evidence show with respect to families' experience with the case planning process?
- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Alaska asserts that Item 20 remains an area needing improvement; however, the state can demonstrate substantial progress from CFSR Round 3 to 2025. The most notable gain is the increase in children with a current case plan, rising from 56% to 84%, reflecting a dramatic improvement in documentation of case planning requirements. Despite this progress, additional work is needed to ensure every child receives a timely and current case plan.

Alaska celebrates the remarkable efforts by caseworkers to engage children in their case plans. The 2025 CQI case reviews show that children were consulted 97% of the time. Further progress, however, is needed in ensuring consistent engagement with parents. Aggregate 2025 CQI data reflects an overall engagement rate of 82% when assessing involvement of children, mothers, and fathers. This highlights a key distinction between "current case plan" data—pulled from ORCA—and CQI review findings, which measure both documentation and the quality of engagement. Although the CQI Case Review data is critical to understanding efforts made by the agency to involve the family in this process, it is limited by the sample size and may not reflect the experiences of all the families being served by OCS.

As part of the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) following the 2017 CFSR Round 3, Alaska met its PIP goal for Item 13, achieving 54% strength in Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning. Progress has continued, with 2025 CQI reviews showing 82% strength statewide.

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	65% (20/31)	35% (11/31)	3	34
NRO	96% (25/26)	4% (1/26)	1	27
SCRO	96% (22/23)	4% (1/23)	0	23
SERO	100% (5/5)	0% (0/5)	1	6
WRO	43% (3/7)	57% (4/7)	1	8
Total	82% (75/92)	18% (17/92)	6	98

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI Case Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning

Region	Strength	ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	46% (12/26)	54% (14/26)	0	26
NRO	38% (5/13)	62% (8/13)	1	14
SCRO	67% (12/18)	33% (6/18)	0	18
SERO	57% (4/7)	43% (3/7)	0	7
WRO	0% (0/6)	100% (6/6)	0	6
Total	47% (33/70	53% (37/70)	1	71

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

Essential Services Data provides statewide and regional tracking of children with current case plans. OCS Policy 2.7.2 requires case plans to be developed within 60 days of removal and jointly with parents or guardians. The case plan must remain current through six-month evaluations or sooner when significant changes occur. In 2025, SERO and NRO met or exceeded 90% of children with current case plans. Anchorage, the state's largest city serving the highest population, closely followed at 88%. Southcentral has remained generally stable, while the Western Region reflects slight improvement due to targeted increases in caseworker visits but continues to have the lowest rates.

ESS Data: Child Case Plans 2025

Region	Children With Current Case Plan	Children Requiring Case Plan	% Children With Current Case plan
ARO	9,160	10,384	88%
NRO	4,262	4,750	90%
SCRO	5,319	6,707	79%
SERO	1,492	1,582	94%
WRO	2,079	3,195	65%
Statewide	22,312	26,618	84%

Source: ORCA

ESS Data: Child Case Plans 2024

Region	Children With Current Case Plan	Children Requiring Case Plan	% Children With Current Case plan
ARO	8,825	10,273	86%
NRO	4,371	5,307	82%
SCRO	5,661	6,966	81%
SERO	1,647	1,718	96%
WRO	1,656	3,251	51%
Statewide	22,160	27,515	81%

Source: ORCA

Further disaggregated CQI data for Item 13A—engagement of children—shows most regions regularly engage both children and parents, although Anchorage struggles most with consistent parent involvement. Feedback from the Court Improvement Program (CIP) in 2025 and 2026

indicates that caseworkers often face time constraints that impede full family engagement. Contributing factors include turnover, high caseloads, and a lack of efficient field tools for developing timely case plans. CIP members emphasized that these constraints can lead to plans that do not fully reflect the child's needs. They recommended earlier engagement and the inclusion of key parties such as Tribes and Guardians ad Litem.

In a parent survey conducted in 2026, 42% of parents agreed that their worker encourages them to participate and have a voice in setting goals and in creating and/or updating the plan that will lead to their child returning home. This feedback reinforces the importance of strengthening consistent parent engagement across all regions.

Tribal partners echoed similar sentiment in the 2025 Tribal survey, reporting that they were invited to participate in initial case plan development only 57% of the time. Additional barriers identified in the 2026 CIP focus group include slow transfer of cases between initial assessment and family services workers and a need to involve family services staff earlier in the process. A small 2025 youth focus group further highlighted that nearly all participating youth felt engaged in discussions around their case plans and future planning, although these discussions sometimes occurred with independent living workers or Guardians ad Litem rather than caseworkers.

Item 13. CQI Case Reviews 2025

Region	Type	A. Child	B. Mother	C. Father
ARO	FC	100% (16/16)	50% (9/18)	53% (8/15)
ARO	IH	100% (5/5)	83% (5/6)	66% (2/3)
ARO	Overall	100% (21/21)	58% (14/24)	56% (10/18)
NRO	FC	100% (14)	93% (15/16)	93% (13/14)
NRO	IH	100% (4/4)	100% (6/6)	100% (3/3)
NRO	Overall	100% (18/18)	95% (21/22)	94% (16/17)
SCRO	FC	100% (13/13)	100% (18/18)	100% (11/11)
SCRO	IH	75% (3/4)	100% (4/4)	100% (3/3)
SCRO	Overall	94% (16/17)	100% (22/22)	100% (14/14)
SERO	FC	100% (3/3)	100% (3/3)	100% (1/1)
SERO	IH	N/A	N/A	N/A
SERO	Overall	100% (3/3)	100% (3/3)	100% (1/1)
WRO	FC	75% (3/4)	0% (0/3)	0% (3/3)
WRO	IH	100% (2/2)	100% (2/2)	100% (1/1)
WRO	Overall	83% (5/6)	40% (2/5)	25% (1/4)
Statewide Total	Overall	97% (63/65)	82% (62/76)	78% (42/54)

Geography continues to play a significant role in engagement challenges. Offices serving rural and village communities face travel barriers, limited year-round accessibility, and inadequate internet bandwidth. The Western Region, roughly the size of the state of Oregon, illustrates these challenges clearly: caseworkers based in Bethel serve 65 surrounding villages, each with its own access constraints.



Conclusion

While case planning remains an area needing improvement, Alaska has demonstrated significant recent gains and remains committed to ensuring every child has a current case plan and that families are actively engaged in the process.

To continue this progress, Alaska is implementing several key strategies:

- Stabilizing the workforce through the Wellness Program, launched in late 2023, which continues to enhance work culture and staff support.
- Addressing geographic barriers, including a Western Region pilot launched in November 2024 that achieved a 20% increase in caseworker visits with parents.
- Expanding team-based support models to meet fluctuating regional demands and provide relief in areas facing staffing shortages.
- Improving staff training, including an enhanced mentor program during Transfer of Learning week in 2025 and substantial 2026 training revamps that transition from virtual learning to assimilation-based training models.
- Data Modernization, OCS implemented a substantial enhancement to the Online Resource for the Children of Alaska (ORCA) system, finalized in August 2025. This update allows staff to create and upload PDF versions of text messages directly into case files, eliminating the need for manual transcription and improving documentation

accuracy. By expanding the methods available for uploading case information, caseworkers can dedicate more time to working directly with children and families.

Item 21: Periodic Reviews

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:

How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that a periodic review for each child occurs no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review?

In your analysis:

Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.
- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.
- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?
- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?
- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?
- What does the evidence show with respect to stakeholders' experience with the periodic reviews process?
- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Item 21: Periodic Case Reviews

Alaska asserts that Item 21 is a strength area. The state continues to ensure that cases receive periodic reviews at least every six months. AFCARS reporting data shows that Alaska remains in compliance, consistently maintaining rates of 90% or above for children receiving timely periodic reviews.

AFCARS A File Performance

Year	Percentage
2024	90.4%
2025	94.9%
2026	93.3%

For many years, six-month Administrative Reviews were centralized and conducted internally by the Evaluation Unit for all field offices. In 2020, during the Round 3 PIP, OCS and CIP implemented a strategy to increase parental engagement and court oversight by transitioning Fairbanks Administrative Reviews to the 4th Judicial District. The goal of this intervention was to promote timely permanency for children in care. During the PIP monitoring period, Fairbanks led the state in nearly every CFSR item. While multiple factors contributed to this success—including a stable workforce and leadership—the administrative review strategy may have been a contributing factor. Furthermore, a 2025 study conducted by the NCJFCJ found that post-intervention cases (those using the Bench Card and judicially conducted six-month

administrative reviews) reached case closure an average of 260 days sooner than pre-intervention cases.

In 2025, the NCJFCJ partnered with the 4th Judicial District to examine the effects of these interventions, focusing in part on administrative case reviews. The study compared case processing timeliness and outcomes before and after implementation of the judicial bench card and judicial-led six-month review hearings. Key findings from the 2025 Alaska BenchCard and Six-Month Judicial Review Hearing Implementation Evaluation included:

- Stronger Judicial Engagement with Parents: Judges were significantly more likely to engage directly with mothers, addressing them by name and increasing opportunities for them to be heard.
- Improved Hearing Attendance: Significantly more caseworkers, Guardian ad Litems, and Assistant General Counsel/District Attorneys attended hearings post-intervention.
- More Discussion: Significantly more discussions about notice/services for missing participants occurred post-intervention. Judges were also significantly more likely to discuss case plan progress, parental compliance, and agency support post-intervention.
- Faster Case Resolution: Time from petition filing to case closure, and from first hearing to case closure, decrease significantly post-intervention, reflecting improved case processing efficiency.
- Slightly Longer Time to First Permanency Hearings: Although overall timeliness improved, time from petition filing to first permanency hearing increased post-intervention.
- Timelier Milestones for ICWA Cases: ICWA cases had significant improvements in key timelines in the post-intervention cases.
- Increased Reunification: A higher proportion of cases closed to reunification in the post-intervention period, suggesting a potential shift in how judicial oversight supports family reunification.

  The dataset of cases review included:

  - Pre-intervention cases: 32 cases (date range: 2016-01-11 to 2019-05-04). o This included 18 ICWA cases (56%)
  - Post-intervention cases: 161 cases (date range: 2021-01-04 to 2023-09-26). o This included 81 ICWA cases (50%)

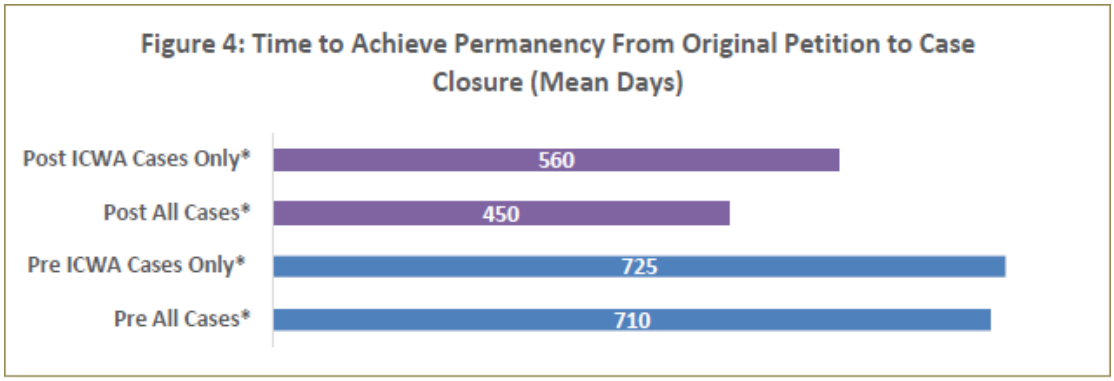
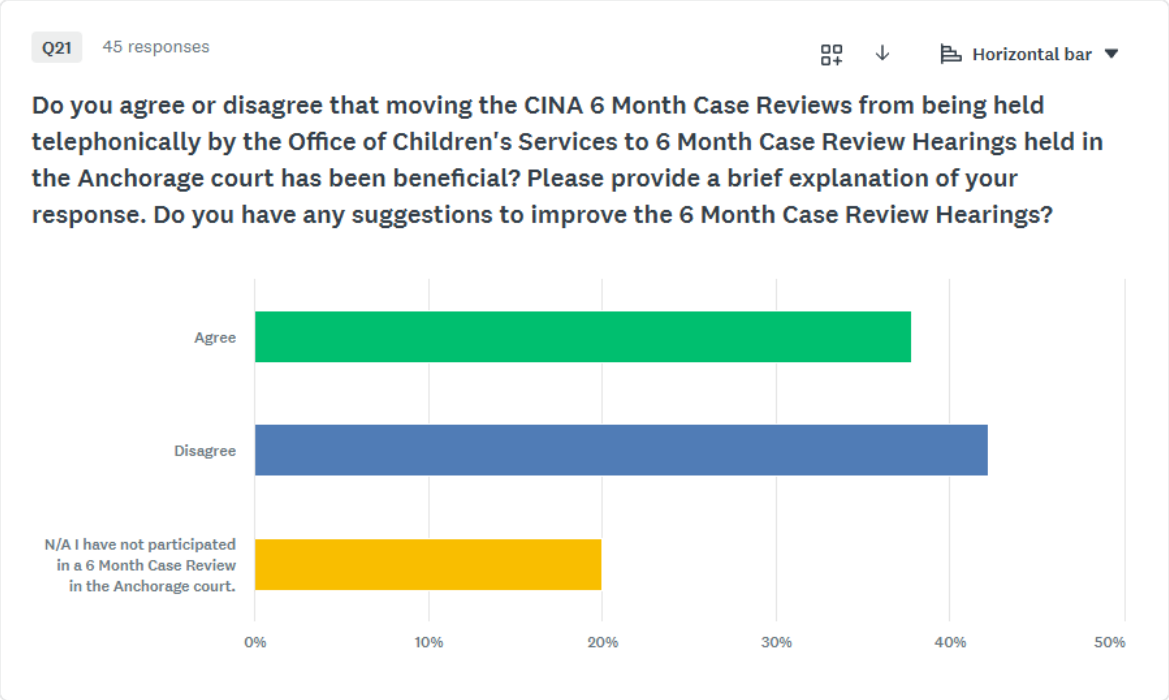


*Figure 4 *indicates statistically significant difference.*

Following the completion of the Round 3 PIP and monitoring period, Alaska expanded this approach by transitioning Anchorage six-month Administrative Reviews to the 3rd Judicial District effective January 2025.

Although a formal evaluation has not yet been conducted, a brief two-question survey was administered to legal parties in spring 2026 yielding 70 respondents. The first question asked whether respondents had participated in six-month administrative reviews held in Anchorage court; the second asked their level of agreement regarding court-conducted case reviews. Results were mixed, with parent and tribal advocates expressing more positive views than state and court staff. The survey report has identified some strategies to further improve the review process as they continue with implementation.



As mentioned in Alaska's recent APSR submission for FY 2027, as a result of the Roundtable meetings held in the Western Regions, a decision was made to transition the six-month administrative reviews from internal OCS meetings to the court system beginning in October 2026. The goal of this change is to improve outcomes for families. Currently, Anchorage and Fairbanks administrative reviews are being conducted by the court system, while all other regional offices continue to complete their reviews internally through the Evaluation Unit. With Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Western Region foster care cases moving to the court system, approximately 40% (515) of foster children will continue to receive internal administrative reviews, while about 60% (779) will be reviewed through the courts.

Conclusion: Item 21: Periodic Reviews continue to be a strength. Overall, Alaska's continued commitment to timely administrative reviews has contributed to stronger judicial engagement, improved hearing participation, and more efficient case processing. Early evidence from Fairbanks and the subsequent expansion to Anchorage suggests that court-led six-month reviews may support more meaningful oversight, enhanced family engagement, and improved permanency outcomes. While additional evaluation is needed, particularly for the Anchorage implementation, current findings indicate that these strategies hold potential for strengthening practice and advancing timely, positive outcomes for children and families across the state.

Item 22: Permanency Hearings

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:

How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that, for each child, a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body occurs no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter?

In your analysis:

Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.
- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.
- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?
- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?
- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?
- What does the evidence show with respect to stakeholders' experience with the permanency hearing process?
- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Alaska identifies permanency hearings as an area of strength. Data from the OCS ORCA system and the Alaska Court System demonstrate that most children in care receive timely permanency hearings—within 12 months of entering care and every 12 months thereafter. Since the Round 3 Statewide Assessment, Alaska has shown substantial improvement; at that time, the rate of initial permanency hearings was 67%. Current ORCA data shows that children who have been in care for at least 12 months received a permanency hearing within the previous 12 months at rates ranging from 81.7% to 79.7% in 2024 and 2025.

Percent of children in foster care for at least 12 months with a permanency hearing within the previous 12 months

[Date]	[Percentage]
12/31/2024	81.7%
12/31/2025	79.7%

Source: Orca

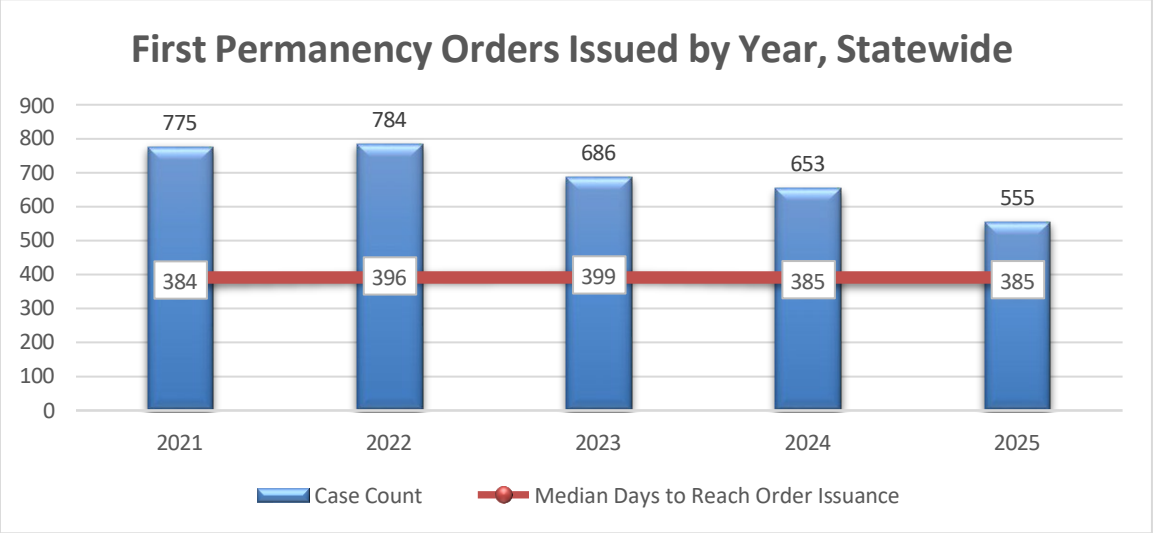
During Round 3, Alaska did not have a reliable internal method to measure whether permanency hearings occurred every six months for children in custody and relied on the Alaska Court System for this information. Since then, court order documentation has been centralized within a dedicated unit responsible for recording court hearing orders. Judicial staff from each district send orders directly to a central legal inbox, where staff update each child's ORCA legal tab with hearing dates and legal status.



Source: picture from two publications, Profile of Alaska Court System 2026 and Alaska Court System Statistical Report FY 2025 July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025.

Data from the Alaska Court System indicates that the average number of days before issuance of the initial permanency hearing order was 385 days in both 2024 and 2025. It is important to note that orders are not always issued on the same day as the hearing, and some lag between the hearing date and order issuance is expected.

When reviewing district-level data, significant variation appears in districts with small caseloads. For example, the Second Judicial District (Nome) had only 11 cases in 2025, and the Fourth Judicial District had only 28 the same year. These low numbers create volatility in regional averages, where one or two cases can substantially affect overall timeliness measures. The Alaska Court System data may be limited to certain field offices, as the numbers listed for each district do not reflect the statewide totals and only select field offices appear in each district's data pull.



First Permanency Orders Issued by Year – Median Days

[Year]	1st District Juneau	2nd District Nome	3rd District Anchorage	4th District Bethel	Statewide
2025	376	437	378	675	385
2024	413	384	370	475	385
2023	398	551	372	386	399
2022	405	386	380	376	396
2021	366	387	376	380	384

Source: CINA Dashboard for Judges

First Permanency Orders Issued by Year – Case Count

[Year]	1st District Juneau	2nd District Nome	3rd District Anchorage	4th District Bethel	Statewide
2025	19	11	203	28	555
2024	19	15	257	25	653
2023	29	22	285	32	686
2022	18	7	273	59	784
2021	26	18	333	39	775

Source: CINA Dashboard for Judges

Conclusion

Overall, Alaska continues to demonstrate strong performance in ensuring timely permanency hearings for children in care. Improvements since the Round 3 Statewide Assessment reflect the effectiveness of enhanced data tracking within the ORCA system and stronger collaboration with the Alaska Court System. Centralizing court order documentation has further strengthened the State's ability to monitor hearing timeliness and legal status updates. Although variations in district-level averages occur—particularly in regions with low case volume—the statewide data consistently shows meaningful progress and sustained commitment to meeting permanency hearing requirements for children and families.

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Item 23: Termination of Parental Rights

For this item, provide evidence that answer this question:
How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that the filing of termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings occurs in accordance with required provisions?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.
- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.
- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?
- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?
- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?
- What does the evidence show with respect to stakeholders' experience with the TPR process?
- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Alaska asserts this item remains an area needing improvement. OCS does not have an easily accessible automated statewide system to ensure that Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) petitions are filed timely in all cases that require it. When a TPR petition is filed it is not consistently documented in a way that would allow for statewide tracking of timeliness. Practices vary across the state regarding how TPR petitions are drafted and filed, and the date the petition is filed is not consistently documented in ORCA. Data is available to identify relative placement and the permanency goal of guardianship as compelling reasons to not require filing of a TPR petition, but there is not readily extractable available data to confirm how often other compelling reasons are the reason for a decided delay in filing. For example, compelling reasons may be documented in the narrative of a permanency report or on a permanency order.

In 2024 there were 956 children who entered OCS custody. Of those, 408 (or 43%) were discharged from custody prior to 15 months from the date of entry into foster care, including 332 through reunification and 44 through assumption of Tribal jurisdiction. At the time of 15 months from the date of entry into foster care, 76 children were with a parent on a trial home visit, 227 were in a relative placement, and 19 had a primary goal of guardianship accounting for an additional 34%. The remaining 23% would require manual review to determine if compelling reasons are documented or indicated.

The Alaska Court System provided data regarding TPR petitions filed in cases that were closed in calendar years 2024 and 2025. The data includes the number of petitions filed and the median days from the date the case opens, which is generally the date the emergency or non-emergency petition for adjudication is filed, to the date the TPR petition was filed.

CY	Count of Petitions Filed Statewide	Median Days
CY2024	774	544
CY2025	558	572

In analyzing this data it is important to note that the date the case opens will in almost all cases be close to the date of the child's removal, but the date of entry into foster care is calculated as 60 days from the removal or the date of judicial adjudication findings, whichever comes first. In Alaska adjudication findings are rarely entered sooner than 60 days following a child's removal. Therefore, TPR petitions are due approximately 17 months from the date of removal, or approximately 517 days.

In summary, based on the percentage of case closure prior to 15 months, placement with relative or guardianship as the permanency goal at the 15 month mark, the majority of cases do not require filing of a TPR petition. In cases where a petition is filed, Alaska generally does well on filing of TPR petitions close to the required timeframe. Alaska does concede it lacks an adequate data system to readily extract CQI data and information as it relates to the timing of the filing of TPR petitions.

Item 24: Notice of Hearings and Reviews to Caregivers

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care (1) are receiving notification of any review or hearing held with respect to the child and (2) have a right to be heard in any review or hearing held with respect to the child?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below. Ensure that you address both components of this question.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.
- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.
- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?
- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?
- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?
- What does the evidence show with respect to caregivers' experience with the hearing and review notification process?
- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

The state asserts that this item remains an area needing improvement, with no significant changes since Round 3. Alaska does not have a consistent or standardized method for providing caregivers with notices of court hearings or reviews. The current ORCA system is unable to automate notifications due to both system design and data limitations. As a result, responsibility for notifying caregivers continues to fall solely on the assigned Protective Services Specialist.

For internal administrative reviews, mailed notices are sent to grandparents, and when parental rights have been terminated, foster parents also receive mailed notices. However, there is no tracking mechanism to confirm when or whether these notices are sent.

Some regions—such as Fairbanks—utilize support staff to mail notices to caregivers and grandparents, but this practice is not consistent statewide and still lacks any method of tracking. These gaps highlight the need for modernization of Alaska's information system to support automated, reliable notification processes and help ensure caregivers receive timely and accurate information about hearings and reviews.

Overall, Item 24 continues to reflect a systemic need for improvement in how Alaska notifies caregivers of hearings and reviews. The absence of a standardized, trackable notification process—combined with limitations in the ORCA system and inconsistent regional practices—creates gaps that affect caregivers' ability to stay informed and engaged. Strengthening this

area will require modernizing Alaska's information systems, establishing uniform procedures statewide, and implementing reliable tracking methods to ensure caregivers receive timely and accurate notifications.

C. Quality Assurance System

Item 25: Quality Assurance System

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the quality assurance system functioning statewide to ensure that it is (1) operating in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, (2) has standards to evaluate the quality of services (including standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their health and safety), (3) identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, (4) provides relevant reports, and (5) evaluates implemented program improvement measures?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below. Ensure that you address each of the five components of this question.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.
- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.
- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?
- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?
- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?
- What does the evidence show with respect to stakeholders' experience with the QA/CQI process?
- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Alaska asserts a strength for Item 25. OCS has adopted and implemented a robust Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) framework grounded in the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) model. The Change Management Leadership Team (CMLT) meets monthly to evaluate implementation activities, monitor progress, and ensure statewide consistency in the use of CQI practices.

OCS's Quality Assurance (QA) System benefits from strong engagement with longstanding stakeholder groups, including the Tribal State Collaboration Group, Facing Foster Care in Alaska, the Foster Parent Advisory Board, and the Court Improvement Program (CIP). OCS further expanded lived-experience partnership through the establishment of the Parent Advisory Board.

The Evaluation Unit, commonly referred and known as the QA unit, is fully operational and responsible for conducting CFSR case reviews, administrative reviews, stakeholder surveys, special case reviews, fatality reviews, and annual reporting. Staff trained in the federal OSRI instrument support Alaska's approval to conduct a State-Led CFSR with continued OSRI case reviews. In addition to review responsibilities, the unit evaluates new and ongoing programs and

trainings, conducts fidelity checks, and completes structured assessments aligned with PDSA measurement plans.

The QA Unit is also integrated into leading unit-level trainings for field staff related to federal standards. In Fall 2024, the Capacity Building Center for States provided in-person training to the QA Unit on root cause analysis and teaming approaches, equipping staff with stronger analytic tools and collaborative problem-solving methods.

Following Round 3, the QA Manager became integral in distributing evaluation results and case review findings, providing presentations internally and to stakeholders, and facilitating discussions focused on improving existing systems.

The QA Unit also administers internal and external stakeholder feedback through surveys and focus groups, and this information is used to inform policy, practice changes, legislative partners, and other external stakeholders.

Evidence That the CQI System Is Driving Improvements:

Importantly, the changes made as a result of feedback serve as direct evidence that Alaska's QA System is functioning as intended – using CQI processes to identify issues, test solutions, and implement improvements. These improvements demonstrate that CQI processes are not theoretical but actively shaping agency operations and outcomes. Examples include:

- **Expansion of the Placement Search and Support Unit (PSSU)**
  Feedback obtained from focus groups and ORCA data reviews resulted in the expansion of the PSSU's availability and responsibilities. The program broadened its role to assist with relative searches and support existing licensed homes, improving placement stability and matching options statewide.
- **Comprehensive Overhaul of Staff Training**
  Findings from All-Staff Surveys, Exit Surveys, external partner feedback, and training evaluations identified major gaps in onboarding, consistency, transfer-of-learning, and supervisory support. As documented in enterprise reports, OCS implemented a full redesign of its training model, including updated orientation, a new transfer-of-learning structure, enhanced cohort-based training (e.g., SKILS 161), and expanded evaluation of training effectiveness.
- **Field Office Practice Improvements Guided by CQI Case Reviews**
  Annual CQI case review results helped field offices identify practice gaps and supervisory needs. Offices then developed targeted strategies, refined onboarding processes, improved fidelity monitoring, and implemented region-specific improvements to address identified issues—demonstrating local adoption of CQI-driven solutions.
- **Workforce Supports and Agency Adjustments Based on Staff Feedback**
  Surveys highlighted needs related to wellness support, technology barriers, policy clarity, and workload management. OCS responded by enhancing telework flexibility, updating on-call structures, improving ORCA usability training, expanding wellness supports, and strengthening cultural-resource and family-engagement training. These actions reflect consistent application of CQI principles: collecting data, analyzing root causes, and implementing responsive changes.
- **Joint Investigation Project Strengthening Cross-Divisional Coordination**
  CQI feedback and collaborative workgroups identified the need for clearer communication pathways and more consistent coordination between units involved in Joint Investigations. Staff used CQI tools to examine how information was shared, how roles were defined, and how investigative steps aligned across Protective Services, Licensing, and other partners. As a result, OCS refined expectations for cross-divisional collaboration, strengthened documentation practices, and improved communication

processes designed to reduce disruption, support decision-making, and promote consistent safety responses. These changes demonstrate the CQI system's role in elevating staff feedback, analyzing practice gaps, and implementing improvements that enhance the effectiveness and consistency of joint investigative work.

- **Strengthening IA Model: Enhanced Competencies, Improved Service Delivery, and Ongoing CQI Evaluation**
  OCS launched the Strengthening IA model in 2023 to enhance the competencies of IA staff, thereby improving service delivery for children and families, supporting manageable caseloads, and bolstering caseworker retention. Enterprise documentation describes the model's structured expectations for assignment practices, daily workflow, and supervision, all designed to promote consistent, high-quality assessments and reduce reactive workload pressures. Since implementation, the model has been continually evaluated through CQI processes, including fidelity monitoring, identification of practice drift, and ongoing refinements informed by data and leadership feedback. Regions needing additional support have received targeted retraining and guidance to reinforce core practice expectations and sustain consistent statewide application. These actions demonstrate how the CQI system actively drives improvement by assessing performance, responding with tailored supports, and ensuring the Strengthening IA model remains aligned with agency goals for safety, quality, and workforce stability.

  Taken together, Alaska demonstrates a mature and effective Quality Assurance System that leverages structured CQI principles, stakeholder collaboration, rigorous case review processes, targeted staff training (including specialized training from the Capacity Building Center for States), transparent communication of findings to leadership and partners, and—crucially—documented evidence of meaningful changes implemented as a result of feedback. These changes show that Alaska's CQI system is actively functioning to strengthen practice, elevate staff voice, and improve outcomes for children and families statewide.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Alaska's QA System reflects a mature, data-informed, and continuously improving framework that is firmly grounded in CQI principles. Through structured case reviews, comprehensive evaluation activities, and active engagement with staff, stakeholders, Tribes, youth, and parents, OCS demonstrates a strong commitment to understanding system performance and responding with meaningful, targeted improvements. The integration of feedback into decision-making—evident in program expansions, training overhauls, and field-office strategy development—shows the CQI framework is functioning as intended: identifying barriers, analyzing root causes, and guiding responsive, sustainable change. OCS's ongoing communication of findings to leadership, the administration, and federal partners reinforces accountability and transparency. Ultimately, Alaska's QA System serves as a driving force for elevating practice, strengthening partnerships, and improving outcomes for children and families statewide.

D. Staff and Provider Training

Item 26: Initial Staff Training

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the staff and provider training system functioning statewide to ensure that initial training is provided to all staff who deliver services pursuant to the CFSP so that:

- Staff receive training in accordance with the established curriculum and timeframes for the provision of initial training; and
- The system demonstrates how well the initial training addresses basic skills and knowledge needed by staff to carry out their duties?

"Staff," for purposes of assessing this item, includes all contracted and non-contracted staff who have case management responsibilities in the areas of child protection services, family preservation and support services, foster care services, adoption services, and independent living services pursuant to the state's CFSP.

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.
- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.
- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?
- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?
- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?
- What does the evidence show with respect to participants' experience with initial training?
- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Alaska asserts Item 26 as a strength. Through its partnership with the University of Alaska Anchorage Child Welfare Academy (CWA), OCS provides training to new Protective Service Specialists (PSS), Social Service Associates (SSA), licensing staff, and frontline supervisors. This brief offers an expanded analysis of statewide training, staff development, and workforce capacity using multiple datasets. Data sources include training implementation updates from the FY25 APSR Item 26 narrative, the 2026 new staff orientation update, statewide caseload data collected on February 13, 2026, SKILS competency testing results from July through November 2025, SKILS Feedback Survey from 2025 and All-Staff Survey results from 2023, 2024, and 2025. Together, these sources provide a comprehensive overview of workforce functioning and training effectiveness across the state.

Pursuant to Title IV-E standards, all PSS staff are required to attend Standards, Knowledge and Insight Leading to Success (SKILS) within their first two months of employment. Prior to attending SKILS, employees must complete Pre-SKILS requirements such as shadowing senior PSS staff and completing twelve online modules designed to provide foundational knowledge. The SKILS training series offers a structured, progressive learning pathway that builds knowledge, skills, and professional readiness for new child welfare staff. It begins with Pre-SKILS, an online prerequisite covering the OCS practice model, cultural humility, ICWA, interviewing basics, and other essential introductory content. Learners are then prepared for the first major training block, SKILS 161R, a four-week training that combines virtual instruction with field-based Transfer of Learning (TOL). This component focuses first on the Investigation & Assessment (I&A) process, including intake, safety determinations, maltreatment assessments, and risk evaluations, followed by the fundamentals of Family Services (FS). Participants apply these concepts through case scenarios, written summaries, and knowledge assessments. Orientation at the start of each cohort ensures technical readiness and provides initial exposure to the Services Array.

After completing SKILS 161R and the supplemental Intersession A online modules, participants advance to SKILS 162R, a two-week virtual training that deepens understanding of trauma-informed care, advanced safety assessment, substance use disorders, mental health, domestic violence, respectful communication, and ICWA. This phase includes Youth Mental Health First Aid certification, Alaska-specific cultural and historical content, and panel discussions with youth, foster parents, and Tribal representatives. The curriculum supports integration of field experiences with more complex decision-making, assessment strategies, and engagement skills, strengthening participants' ability to navigate diverse and challenging child welfare situations while maintaining resilience and cultural responsiveness.

The training sequence concludes with Intersession B modules and SKILS 163R, a one-week advanced course that refines critical thinking and applied practice skills. This capstone training focuses on advanced interviewing, trauma-informed practice, motivational interviewing, and casework strategies to support vulnerable youth populations. Participants reflect on field experiences, complete applied assessment and planning exercises, and receive instruction from legal partners on documentation and court preparation. Across SKILS 162R and 163R, role-specific breakout sessions ensure that Family Services workers receive targeted instruction on permanency planning and case management, while Investigation & Assessment workers focus on specialized investigative techniques. This tailored approach supports mastery of role-aligned competencies and enhances overall practice effectiveness.

SKILS training effectiveness is evaluated in multiple ways. From 2018–2024, outcomes were assessed using pre- and post-tests. Currently, weekly training evaluations are collected at the end of each training week to allow timely participant feedback. In addition, All-Staff Surveys and stakeholder focus groups provide further input on foundational training. SKILS post-test data from July to November 2025 illustrate competency development, with average scores ranging from 16.4 out of 20 in July to 19.2 in September, and other monthly averages consistently between 17.6 and 18.0 across I&A and FS participants. These results indicate that despite organizational challenges, including leadership turnover and incomplete measurement tools, new staff are demonstrating early understanding of critical competencies.

In addition to SKILS, new workers must complete several other required trainings, including ORCA virtual training during TOL weeks, ICWA I and II, Child Functioning training, Respectful Communication training, Child Forensic Training (for Initial Assessment staff), resiliency training, and more.

Survey and focus group findings consistently highlight the same core issue: while staff value the concepts introduced in initial training, they do not feel adequately prepared to apply these skills

in real-world practice. Supervisors and mentors report significant gaps between training content and field expectations, and staff continue to request more hands-on, practice-based learning.

1. **All-Staff Survey (2025)**
    - 67% of respondents (175/263) felt training and job development adequately prepared them.
    - Staff expressed interest in additional training topics and continued professional development.
    - Qualitative feedback affirmed a desire for ongoing learning opportunities.
    - These findings align with FY25 expectations that improvements to orientation and TOL would increase staff confidence and preparedness.
2. **SKILS Feedback Survey (2025)**
    - Participants were staff members who participated in SKILS from August 2024 to August 2025 with a 41% response rate (26/79)
    - Majority of respondents felt pre-SKILS prepared them for SKILS 161 (81%), and SKILS 161 provided a basic understanding of their role (76%)
    - 74% of participants felt Transfer of Learning (TOL) weeks helped them connect with what was learned in the classroom; TOL weeks include shadowing a mentor or experience caseworker and provide interviewing opportunities
3. **Supervisor Survey (April 2026)**
    - 47% (27/57) of supervisors across all OCS regions and programs participated.
    - Largest representation: FS (41%), followed by IA (22%), Licensing (11%), SSA (4%), and 22% Other (e.g. generalist supervisor, intake supervisor, mentor supervisor).
    - Strong regional representation, led by SCRO (41%) and ARO (26%).
4. **Mentor Focus Group (April 2026)**
    - 71% (5/7) of mentors participated

What works:

- Initial training introduces key concepts effectively (safety threats, trauma-informed practice, cultural humility, interviewing, and the six-question framework).
- Provides foundational exposure to the OCS practice model.

Key findings:

- Only 26% felt initial training prepared workers with basic knowledge and skills; 41% disagreed.
- Supervisors rated new staff as only slightly prepared (44%) or moderately prepared (41%); only 4% rated staff as very prepared.
- Topics viewed as adequately covered included roles and responsibilities (55%), documentation (32%), and policy requirements (27%).
- Major gap: applied case practice skills (only 9% felt adequately addressed).

- 88% agreed gaps exist between initial training and real-world practice needs.

Where gaps persist:

- New workers struggle to retain and apply concepts in the field.
- Staff frequently cannot recall basic SKILS concepts without repeated reinforcement.
- Training is often perceived as overwhelming, rushed, and disconnected from day-to-day responsibilities.
- There is a discrepancy between the caseworker's perception of their ability versus their supervisor's perception of the caseworker's ability to perform their duties; supervisors may have an expectation that staff will know everything they need to perform well when they complete training.

Overall Synthesis

- Staff feel generally positive about training but want greater depth and ongoing learning.
- Supervisors and mentors overwhelmingly report that initial training does not sufficiently prepare new staff for field practice.
- The most significant gaps are in applied case practice skills, critical thinking, documentation quality, and the translation of training concepts into real-world decisions.
- There is strong consensus on the need for more experiential, hands-on learning (shadowing, practice scenarios, in-person sessions, and ongoing reinforcement).

The cumulative evidence suggests that statewide functioning in initial staff training and development has improved relative to prior periods, particularly compared with CFSR Round 3 findings. While Round 3 identified deficiencies in training quality and supervision, current data show that enhancements in orientation, strengthened TOL supports, and revised training structures are producing measurable gains. These improvements align with Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) and Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) initiatives aimed at modernizing new staff preparation. Additionally, OCS is actively revising its initial training for new staff to address ongoing gaps identified through surveys and stakeholder feedback. Alaska demonstrates that Item 26 remains a strength area, with a comprehensive and consistent initial training system that ensures new PSS staff acquire essential skills and knowledge. The state also prioritizes continuous feedback and ongoing adjustments to meet workforce needs.

Item 27: Ongoing Staff Training

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:

How well is the staff and provider training system functioning statewide to ensure that ongoing training is provided for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP so that:

- Staff receive ongoing training pursuant to the established curriculum and timeframes for the provision of ongoing training; and
- The system demonstrates how well the ongoing training addresses basic skills and knowledge needed by staff to carry out their duties?

"Staff," for purposes of assessing this item, includes all contracted and non-contracted staff who have case management responsibilities in the areas of child protection services, family preservation and support services, foster care services, adoption services, and independent living services pursuant to the state's CFSP.

"Staff," for purposes of assessing this item, also includes direct supervisors of all contracted and non-contracted staff who have case management responsibilities in the areas of child protection services, family preservation and support services, foster care services, adoption services, and independent living services pursuant to the state's CFSP.

In your analysis:

Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below. Ensure that you address all of the components of this question, including the two bullets and all required staff as described above.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.
- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.
- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?
- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?
- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?
- What does the evidence show with respect to participants' experience with ongoing staff training?
- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Alaska identifies Item 27, Ongoing Staff Training, as an area needing improvement. The state does not currently require annual training hours for staff or supervisors, and OCS continues to face challenges in tracking and assigning annual training expectations beyond the first year of employment. Although the Child Welfare Academy (CWA) tracks course attendance, there is no comprehensive statewide system that ensures staff receive required annual, biannual, or

continuing-education training. Ongoing training for case-carrying staff is also not mandated or consistently monitored.

CWA maintains a website offering supplemental learning opportunities, and OCS staff have access to the Learning Management System "ASPIRE," which provides a wide range of trainings, including technical skills such as Excel and interpersonal skills such as respectful communication. Regional managers also invite local professionals to deliver topic-specific training during staff meetings based on local needs. However, CWA does not track webinar participation, and OCS lacks a reliable process for attendance verification. Additional training is made available through micro-learning videos, the biennial child maltreatment conference, the OCS website, and the monthly OCS newsletter.

Insights from the mentor team, gathered during the April 2026 focus group, indicate that ongoing training is viewed more favorably than initial training; however, it remains inconsistent in its ability to fully support staff growth. Mentors reported that ongoing training can reinforce essential concepts such as engagement, trauma-informed practice, and identifying safety threats when aligned with worker needs and led by knowledgeable trainers. Staff who applied learning from these sessions showed improvements in addressing personal biases, integrating trauma histories into family engagement, and applying safety concepts in practice. At the same time, some mentors felt that certain sessions were redundant, disconnected from day-to-day practice, or lacking in hands-on application. Workers also reported feeling overwhelmed by the volume of training and expressed a need for more practical learning opportunities, one-on-one mentoring, and guided reflection to strengthen skill application.

Mentors identified persistent gaps in ongoing training, including professional writing, effective use of safety plans, conducting difficult conversations, and achieving consistent reinforcement from supervisors. Several mentors also noted that when supervisors lack strong understanding of the practice model, it limits workers' ability to apply training effectively. Staff reflected mixed feelings—valuing refresher content while expressing concerns about balancing training expectations with high caseload demands. Mentors emphasized that all staff benefit from ongoing training but stressed the need for more structured opportunities to apply learning in the field.

While ongoing training for staff continues to require improvement, supervisor training has strengthened in recent years. Internal OCS documentation—including evaluations from Facilitated Attuned Interactions (FAN) cohorts, Coaching Supervisors to Best Practice (CSBP) cohorts, statewide staff surveys (2023–2025), supervisor surveys, mentor focus groups, retention and turnover data, and program improvement planning materials—indicates that the current system supports more consistent and effective supervisory practice. These data sources, spanning 2022–2026, show improvements in reflective supervision, communication, and supervisory support. Notably, turnover among case-carrying staff declined to 29% in 2025, the lowest level in at least six years.

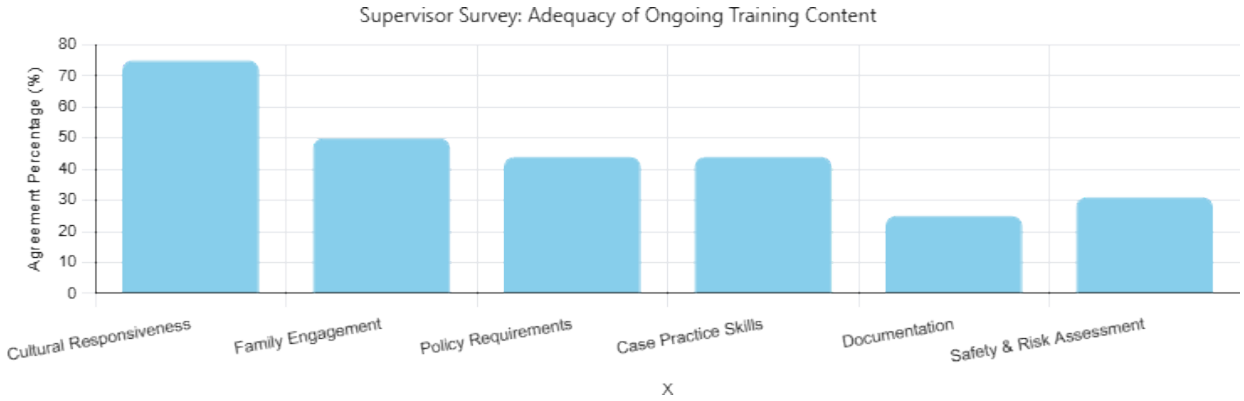
CSBP is a central component of OCS's supervisory development model and one of three required elements of the standardized sequence (Supervisor Core, FAN, and CSBP). CSBP focuses on strengthening supervisors' ability to coach staff through structured practice, modeling of skills, and ongoing feedback. As outlined in APSR Goal 1C and the Supervisor Development Plan, CSBP supports the development of reflective supervision, emotional attunement, decision-making support, and coaching for skill development. The annual training is delivered by OCS leaders and incorporates input from the Supervisor Development Plan workgroup, including lived-experience perspectives. CSBP is also embedded in the Training of Trainers (TOT) initiative to expand OCS's internal training and leadership capacity over time.

The FAN model has likewise become a core element of the statewide supervisory development strategy. Data collected across seven cohorts of supervisors show that FAN strengthens reflective supervision, promotes emotional attunement, and improves supervisors' ability to

support staff through structured, intentional interactions. FAN training has consistently contributed to stronger supervisory relationships, greater worker confidence, and improved case practice. Staff also consistently identify positive supervisor relationships as a leading reason for staying at OCS (53% in 2023, 54% in 2024, 57% in 2025).

In April 2026, 27/57 (47% response rate) supervisors from IA, FS, SSA, Licensing, and other units (e.g. intake and mentors) across all OCS regions participated in a survey assessing perceptions of both initial and ongoing training. FS supervisors represented the largest group (41%), followed by IA (22%), Licensing (11%), and SSA (4%); the remaining 22% selected "Other." Regionally, SCRO accounted for 41% of responses, ARO for 26%, and SERO, WRO, NRO, and State Office each contributed between 7% and 11%, reflecting broad representation.

Survey results showed that ongoing training was viewed more positively than initial training but still varied in effectiveness. Half (50%) of the supervisors agreed that ongoing training provides needed skills and knowledge, while 22% disagreed. Cultural responsiveness emerged as a significant strength, with 75% reporting adequate coverage, followed by family engagement (50%), policy requirements (44%), and case practice skills (44%). Areas with lower ratings included documentation (25%) and safety and risk assessment (31%). Supervisors reported that staff apply ongoing training sometimes (50%) or often (39%).



Perceptions of supervisory training were mixed. Half of supervisors expressed neutrality about whether the initial and ongoing training adequately prepared them for leadership responsibilities, while 39% agreed or strongly agreed that it was effective. Coaching and mentoring were identified as the strongest areas, endorsed by 87% of supervisors. Other well-supported areas included decision-making support (60%), policy oversight (53%), and performance monitoring (47%). Supervisors reported frequent application of training content, with 33% applying skills almost always and 39% applying them often. However, 28% indicated that supervisory training does not fully align with real-world challenges. Additionally, feedback from the monthly Practice Model Reboot Training indicated that some supervisors feel overwhelmed by the volume of required training, suggesting a need to streamline content and increase direct training to staff rather than relying primarily on supervisors to disseminate information.

Compared to CFSR Round 3, the current training system shows improvement; however, OCS recognizes the need to further assess the training needs of staff and supervisors. In collaboration with CWA, OCS is developing a more comprehensive onboarding and orientation tool to improve the tracking of initial and ongoing training. Another key focus area will be analyzing evaluation data to assess training effectiveness and its impact on practice. Alaska recognizes Item 27 as an area needing continued improvement due to the lack of a standardized, statewide system ensuring that training is readily available and accessible to all staff.

Item 28: Foster and Adoptive Parent Training

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the staff and provider training system functioning to ensure that training is occurring statewide for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of state licensed or approved facilities (who receive title IV-E funds to care for children) so that:

- Current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff receive training pursuant to the established annual/biannual hourly/continuing education requirement and timeframes for the provision of initial and ongoing training; and
- The system demonstrates how well the initial and ongoing training addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below. Ensure that you address all of the components of this question, including the two bullets and all required trainees as described above.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.
- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.
- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?
- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?
- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?
- What does the evidence show with respect to caregivers' experience with foster and adoptive parent training?
- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Overall, Foster and Adoptive Parent Training, Item 28 is a strength for Alaska. The information in this section will demonstrate how OCS is ensuring that provider training is occurring statewide for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and residential child care facilities (RCCF) and addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regards to foster and adoptive children. Alaska maintains a comprehensive training curriculum that delivers both initial and ongoing instruction to support the needs of foster homes, adoptive homes, and residential child care facilities in caring for children in placement.

The OCS provides grant funding to support the training and ongoing assistance and support of foster and adoptive families across Alaska. The current grantee, Northwest Resource Associates/ Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF), administers two major grants: the Resource Family Training Grant and the Post Adoption and Guardianship Grant. Through these grants, ACRF delivers essential training, tracks training completion, and maintains a toll-free support line for foster and adoptive families. ACRF and OCS Community Care Licensing Specialists also support

foster parents by facilitating access to community-based training and specialized resources when those supports cannot be provided directly. In addition, foster homes with therapeutic certification receive both routine and specialized training through the Child Placement Agencies (CPAs) responsible for their oversight. These foster parents may also access supplemental training and support through ACRF, which maintains ongoing collaboration with designated CPAs.

Under the Resource Family Training Grant, ACRF provides Core Training for newly licensed resource families. While it is no longer in regulation, it is in practice for licensed families to complete Core Training within one year of their initial licensure. This training equips caregivers with foundational knowledge in key areas including the structure and role of OCS and the expectations for resource parents, the impact of child abuse and neglect, separation, grief, and loss in children entering care, positive parenting and appropriate discipline, cultural awareness and collaboration with birth families, and transitions and reunification. ACRF offers Core Training through multiple accessible formats to meet the needs of families statewide. Onsite and live Zoom sessions provide 12 hours of instructor led-training with 4 hours of homework, while the web-based and self-study workbook offers 16 hours of flexible, self-paced learning.

Core Training prepares foster parents to meet the needs of children in care by clearly outlining their key responsibilities. Resource families learn requirements such as completing the child's EPSDT exam within 30 days, arranging transportation to medical and therapeutic appointments, and maintaining the child's school of origin unless a change is necessary. These expectations are reinforced through training modules. OCS believes this strong alignment between training content and caregiver duties supports the state's high compliance in these areas.

ACRF provides services statewide, supported by three regional offices located in Anchorage, Wasilla, and Fairbanks. The program employs 12 staff members who respond to inquiries, delivery training, and support both prospective and current foster parents, along with adoptive parents. Training is available statewide through multiple formats, ensuring families can meet licensing requirements and build the skills necessary to support children in care.

- **In Alaska, foster and adoptive parents receive an Individualized Training Plan (ITP) designed and strengthened to meet the needs of each child placed in the foster home. ITPs are updated each year and maintain required timeframes for provision licensure and ongoing renewals.**

ACRF tracks the annual training requirements for all licensed foster homes in Alaska. State regulations require foster families to complete individualized training plan (ITP) each year, with topics selected collaboratively by the foster parent and their licensing worker. Each foster parent is expected to complete three trainings on three distinct topics, tailored to the needs of both the child and the caregiver. To monitor compliance, ACRF enters each foster home into their database using the initial license date as the start of the annual training cycle. Foster parents must complete their required training hours within each 12-month licensing period.

ACRF conducts periodic point-in-time assessments to evaluate how many foster homes have met their annual training requirements. These assessments capture the number of families who, based on their individual renewal dates, have already completed the necessary training within their current licensing year. Homes that have not yet completed their training at the time of review are not considered out of compliance; rather, they are still within their active licensing period and have time remaining to fulfill their annual training obligations.

Between SFYs 23, 24, and 25, a total of 685 homes and 1,124 individuals participated in Core Training. During the same period, 1,199 new foster homes were added to the ACRF database, however, it should be noted this does include foster homes with specialized certification who may be working with a Child Placement Agency and receiving training through outside resources. Furthermore, the homes that entered the system in FY25 may not be out of compliance as they may take their training throughout 2026. This number also does not take into account foster

homes that opened and closed within the same year and may not have had the opportunity to complete initial training requirements.

When a foster parent is caring for a child with special needs, the OCS Protective Services Specialist (PSS) or Community Care Licensing Specialist may submit a referral to ACRF for additional or specialized training**.** If a foster parent requests training on a topic not currently offered, ACRF will either develop new training content or refer the family to an appropriate agency or organization that provides training on that subject. This ensures that families receive timely, relevant support aligned with the needs of the children in their care.

Foster Care Licensing Specialists regularly request training records from ACRF to verify compliance with annual requirements. If training is not completed, the Community Care Licensing Specialists will complete a Report of Inspection with Violations to create a Plan of Correction for the home. Currently our system does not allow us to track While unlicensed relatives are not required to maintain an ITP they are able to access any of the training available through ACRF. Alaska does not have an established training requirement for adoptive parents.

- **In Alaska, the initial and ongoing training addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adoptive children.**

ACRF provides a consistent and comprehensive set of training curricula for foster and adoptive families, including Core Training for Resource Families**,** Adopting Through OCS**,** Building Families Through Adoption, and Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI). In addition to these core offerings, ACRF delivers regular live training via Zoom and self-study formats to ensure accessibility for families statewide. Quarterly web-conferences cover a wide range of topics such as educational considerations, understanding substance use disorder, the legal side of foster care, and trauma basics. A monthly “Let’s Talk ICWA” session focuses on caring for Alaska Native youth, and a monthly teleconference series ensures training remains accessible to families in remote communities.

To further support individualized training needs, ACRF has developed self-study modules and information packets for all Individualized Training Plan (ITP) topics, ensuring foster and adoptive families can access relevant, on-demand learning materials tailored to their caregiving responsibilities.

ACRF tracks the annual training requirements for all licensed foster homes in Alaska. State regulations require foster families to complete individualized training plan (ITP) each year, with topics selected collaboratively by the foster parent and their licensing worker. Each foster parent is expected to complete three trainings on three distinct topics, tailored to the needs of both the child and the caregiver. To monitor compliance, ACRF enters each foster home into their database using the initial license date as the start of the annual training cycle. Foster parents must complete their required training hours within each 12-month licensing period.

All foster families entering their second year of licensure are required to complete a self-paced training titled “Understanding the Foster Care Regulations.” This 10-part, 10-hour series or alternative second year training cluster, covers essential topics such as the reasonable and prudent parent standard, birth parent and foster parent partnership, positive parenting, and other subjects that support long-term success in fostering. ACRF also partners closely with OCS to develop new curricula that meet evolving state and federal requirements, creating training materials and collaborating with licensing staff to distribute information through mailings, webinars, and individualized outreach.

When a foster parent is caring for a child with special needs, the OCS Protective Services Specialist (PSS) or Community Care Licensing Specialist may submit a referral to ACRF for additional or specialized training. If a foster parent requests training on a topic not currently offered, ACRF will either develop new training content or refer the family to an appropriate agency

or organization that provides training on that subject. This ensures that families receive timely, relevant support aligned with the needs of the children in their care.

Community Care Licensing Specialists regularly request training records from ACRF to verify compliance with annual requirements. If a foster parent does not complete the required hours within their licensing year, the home becomes not fully licensed, and foster care payments must be issued using state general funds rather than Title IV-E funding. Alaska does not currently have an established annual training requirement for unlicensed relatives or adoptive parents.

ACRF also uses training evaluation forms for every training delivered. Participants complete evaluations at the end of each session, including the key question: *"How well do you feel this training has added to your skills and knowledge?"* Feedback consistently shows that both live and self-study courses enhance caregivers' understanding and preparedness. Training evaluation data from FY23 through FY25 reflect consistently high levels of participant satisfaction and perceived competency gains. In FY23, of 1,042 training surveys, 96.8% were reported to contribute to increased knowledge and skills. FY24 demonstrated comparable outcomes, of 791 training surveys 96.8% identified were identified as contributing to increased knowledge and skills. In FY25, of 1,337 training surveys, 95.1% were reported to enhance knowledge and skills.

High satisfaction rates across training formats indicate that ACRF's curriculum and delivery methods effectively support foster parents in meeting the needs of children in their care.

The OCS QA Unit conducted a 2026 survey of licensed and unlicensed foster parents. The survey was sent to 1031 licensed foster parents. There were 423 foster parents who returned the survey for a response rate of 41%. Of those responding to the survey, 82% took part in training provided by ACRF. Most respondents (67%) felt that the training programs adequately prepared them for the challenges of fostering. However, the remaining reported that training is not always practical or reality based. It was noted that those families that have been fostering for long periods of time (6-10 years) indicated additional valuable training that they were able to access outside of ACRF (though it should be noted ACRF often times assists families with accessing these supports). Although the proportion of respondents reporting satisfaction with the training curriculum has declined since the previous Statewide Assessment, it is important to note that the survey population has changed substantially; including a decrease in the amount of people responding. The survey now includes unlicensed caregivers, who are not subject to formal training requirements. Additionally, relative caregivers are provided greater flexibility in how they access training, as they are not caring for the general foster care population but rather for specific relatives placed out of home.

Although OCS did not meet the performance thresholds for Needs Assessments for Children and Foster Parents (Items 12A and 12C) or for addressing children's educational, medical, and mental health needs (Items 16, 17, and 18), each of these areas has demonstrated substantial improvement over the past two years. These upward trends suggest that enhanced initial and ongoing training for foster parents has contributed, at least in part, to these gains. Increased caregiver competence and preparedness appear to support more consistent identification and responsiveness to children's needs, reinforcing the interconnected nature of training, assessment quality, and service provision outcomes within the broader child welfare system.

Adoption Training

OCS does not require ongoing training for adoptive families, but they are encouraged to pursue continuing education. ACRF maintains a registry of OCS adoptive families and regularly notifies them of upcoming trainings and events. Families requesting post-adoption support or subsidy changes may be referred to ACRF by the OCS adoption unit. ACRF provides a wide range of adoption-specific courses and encourages adoptive and guardianship families to access the same high-quality trainings available to resource families.

When specialized training needs arise, Protective Services Specialists may refer families to ACRF for additional support. After completing an adoption home study referral, ACRF invites families to relevant classes, adds them to its mailing list, conducts a training assessment, and prepares a tailored training packet. Adoptive families may access ACRF training at any time to address emerging needs, and all adoptive families in Alaska remain eligible for ongoing post-adoption support.

The Preparation for Adoption Readiness for Kids in Alaska (PARKA) program provides intensive preparation for families interested in adopting special-needs children from foster care. Established in 2010, PARKA serves Anchorage and nearby communities. After completing the program, OCS refers a home study and PARKA partners with regional OCS offices for matching services. All participating families complete the Adoption Learning Path, which includes Core Training, Adopting Through OCS, Building Families Through Adoption, and TBRI. From 2010 through June 2025, PARKA has trained 162 families; 89 children have been placed, and 58 have finalized adoptions. ACRF also hosts a dedicated support group for PARKA families.

Residential Child Care Facilities

The State of Alaska has 30 licensed Residential Licensed Child Care Facilities (RCCF). Each facility has a system for training staff. Regulation 7 AAC 50.250(e) Orientation and Training states that a residential child care facility shall ensure that each caregiver, other than volunteer, receives a minimum of 15 hours of training a year. The 15 hours must be in addition to orientation, training in CPR, and first aid.

RCCFs may be licensed to provide specialization services such as: night time care in child care facilities, boarding care, emergency shelter care, emergency shelter care for runaway children, supervised transition living, care for pregnant and parenting adolescents, substance use, wilderness and adventure experiences and maternity homes. Each specialization has additional training requirements outlined in Alaska regulations. Each facility monitors the effectiveness of their training. The Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) Licensing Unit monitors that training requirements are met during on-site inspections for the purpose of licensing, a licensing renewal, or an investigation.

Generally, RCCF licenses are renewed once every two years. During SFY 26, the DBH completed 22 on-site inspections for RCCFs scheduled for license renewal. During the non-renewal year facilities are provided a self-inspection packet to complete and submit to DBH. During a licensing inspection, the licensing specialist reviews and documents training hours per state statutes and regulations. Employee orientation and training documentation are reviewed for full-time, part-time and volunteer staff. The DBH reviews all new hires and a sample of continuously employed staff including auxiliary staff (maintenance, cooks, janitorial, office, etc.). No data is available to determine if training prepares RCCF staff for the position they are employed.

When training hours are not met for RCCFs, corrective action is required. Of the 22 facilities that had training records reviewed onsite, only 3 facilities had one or more staff out of compliance, with a total of 3 staff members not having the required number of annual training hours documented. These facilities were provided a Plan of Correction to address the non-compliance.

Overall, Alaska has demonstrated, through the data and information presented above, that CFSR Item 28 is an area of strength. The state maintains a comprehensive, statewide training curriculum for current and prospective foster parents, adoptive parents. Alaska ensures training for staff of state-licensed or approved facilities. This curriculum is designed to ensure that caregivers and facility staff acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively fulfill their responsibilities and meet the diverse needs of children in care.

E. Service Array and Resource Development

Item 29: Array of Services

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the service array and resource development system functioning to ensure that the range of services specified below is available and accessible in all political jurisdictions covered by the CFSP?

- Services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs;
- Services that address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment;
- Services that enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable; and
- Services that help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency.

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below. Ensure that you address all four components of this question.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.
- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.
- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?
- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?
- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?
- What does the evidence show with respect to children and families' experience with the availability, accessibility, and delivery of services?
- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Alaska utilizes a variety of contracted and community providers, including Tribes for service provision. OCS provides child protection services to all communities and villages in Alaska, with the exception of three Tribal communities with exclusive jurisdiction. Due to the vast geographical nature of Alaska, it is difficult to ensure all services are accessible in all political subdivisions. While this cannot be changed, it is the number one challenge regarding having a fully functioning service array.

There are significant gaps in the services array throughout the state, especially in rural areas where communities are not connected by roads. A visual representation of Alaska's regional geography is provided in Appendix III. The map illustrates the vastness between Alaska's communities as well as colored dots to indicate where existing grant services are located.

The OCS Service Array Section manages funding for services provided under Title IV-B Subparts 1 & 2, Chafee, ETV, CAPTA, Title IV-E, CBCAP, Adoptions and Legal Guardianship Incentive Funds, and state general funds to provide services including:

- Child Advocacy Centers (CAC)s and the associated Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDT);
- Family Support Services: Community prevention services available to non-OCS involved families;
- Family Preservation Services: In-home services to prevent removal for families identified by OCS to have children at high risk of maltreatment;
- Family Reunification Services: Services to promote the return of children to their parents' home following out-of-home placement. These services provide family contact/visitation services;
- Plans of Safe Care: Service coordination and support for families with infants born with substance exposure.
- Emergency Shelter Services: Supporting the needs of youth in transition;
- Mentorship Services: Identifying and fostering supportive relationships for youth;
- Chafee Independent Living Services: Assisting youth in their transition to independence;
- Education and Training Voucher Program: post-secondary education support services for youth;
- Services for adoption and guardianship support;
- Adoption and Guardianship Assistance.

Alaska has identified this item as rated as an area in need of improvement, in part, due to the lack of services available, specifically substance abuse and mental health treatment services statewide. The Division of Behavioral Health supports provision of mental and behavioral health services through grants to providers. According to the Alaska Behavioral Health Systems Assessment Final Report (2015), mental health and addiction issues in Alaska create a high need for improved service provision. With the limited amount of federal and state funding allocated to the OCS Service Array section programs, it is difficult to meet the needs of children, youth and families in all communities across the State.

OCS continues to refine strategies and integrate new evaluation elements as practice shifts over time for each region, while also working with managers and stakeholders to define what grant programs are necessary, which are functioning and which need to be modified.

OCS relies on grantees, community agencies, organizations and Tribal partners for service delivery to children and families. OCS leadership provides direction for the development and direction of grant and contract services based on agency priorities as well as available funding sources. Once a grant is awarded to a grantee in a competitive process, the grantee enters into program funding for approximately three years. At each new fiscal year during this cycle, a new continuation grant is awarded. This gives OCS the opportunity to formally clarify and give new programmatic direction to the grantee to change or modify grant services or funding as needed. At this time, quarterly grant reporting and meetings with the OCS offices who interact with the grantee inform changes, modifications and corrections to the grantee's process, which helps improve the grant program or grantee functioning.

Alaska's system of granting funds does not meet the extent of Alaska's needs. The awarded grantee agency typically provides services within the community of their location, and sometimes communities located nearby. The amount of funding awarded is often insufficient to pay for the personnel or travel which would be necessary for adequate service provision in

areas outside of the immediate community. Alaska has a significant number of remote communities which are only accessible by plane or boat. Based on OCS's history of grant soliciting, it is clear that efforts to solicit for a grantee are often unsuccessful in the more rural areas, particularly in the Western Region. The map provided in Appendix III shows the lack of formal OCS grant service provision in the Western Region and rural areas throughout the State. As the grant solicitation is a formal competitive process, there is no built in opportunity for feedback from community's about why they did or did not submit a proposal to provide the solicited services.

In an effort to determine statewide needs for strengthening families in Alaska communities, OCS conducted a one-time community assessment; these Community Cafes were completed in SFY16, and was completed so that OCS could learn about what communities need to help strengthen their families. The needs assessment was qualitative in nature, its quality was high. Participants of the Community Cafés included a broad representation from each community, including interested community members, professionals, leaders and parents of children. The Cafés occurred in all five of the OCS service regions and included the communities of Anchorage (providers n=30) (families n=50), Hooper Bay (n=100), Kotzebue (n=40), Sitka (n=15), Sutton (n=15), and Wasilla (n=25). Qualitative data was collected and analyzed. This needs assessment focused on gathering community and parent input on what the priorities are for each area to strengthen families in their communities. There was surprising uniformity in the top priorities across the various cafes conducted in the different regions.

Here is a list of the top community needs identified through the Community Cafes:

- Provide services locally;
- Connect families with someone to help them access services;
- Encourage workplaces and employers to be flexible and understanding;
- Connect families with someone to help them access services;
- Host community gatherings and events;
- Share cultural traditions, language, stories and skills;
- Hands-on, in-home coaching for new parents;
- Engage elders and extended family to support new parents;
- Help parents tend to their own personal and emotional needs;
- Help parents provide an environment for their children that is nurturing and loving.

Other important themes received from the findings from the Community Cafés related to the OCS Service Array:

- In all of the cafés, participants expressed the need for service providers and the children and families they serve to build trust, form alliances and bridge cultural and other divides. This was expressed through concerns from service providers about how to engage families in services and supports, how to share information about resources that exist; and from families about the lack of support and feeling that the service provider was working against them and not towards a common aim.
- Participants identified the need to increase access to mental health services for parents, particularly for parents with FASD and other cognitive deficits.
- Participants consistently prioritized connecting families with a helpful, trusting person who can help families advocate, navigate and connect to needed resources. While most participants agreed there were resources available in their communities, often families

and service providers were not aware of available services. A peer helper, or family navigator, is necessary to create bridges and connect families with resources.

The café findings are consistent with the 2015 Tribal survey (n=217) with a response rate of 44% where qualitative comments underscored the need for service availability in local communities as a means to prevent removal, for outreach to AK Native families to encourage them to become foster parents and for services to be more supportive and responsive and less judgmental. OCS is using the data in various ways. The themes produced by the Tribal survey report are being used in decision making about improvements and changes to existing grants or the formulation of new grants which can help fill gaps across regions. The information has informed the development of a parent navigation program to meet the identified needs of connecting OCS-involved parents to services and supports.

1. Services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs.

OCS partners closely with the Tribes and other community service providers to assess strengths and needs and to determine other service needs. In addition, OCS case workers are often relied upon by the community and OCS-involved children and families, to identify the child and family strengths and needs; the informal and community resources available; and ways to meet the identified needs when there are no other resources available within the community.

The OCS case worker is often the conduit for the family to access services as the case worker makes the formal referral for the necessary service and will authorize special needs funding to help the family pay for services if there are no other resources available. OCS utilizes special needs funds to pay for services and/or transportation to services which might not otherwise be available to children and families to meet their needs, such as substance abuse and mental health assessments for parents and children. OCS provides special needs funding for services and travel to services because not all services are accessible throughout the different OCS service regions, children and families cannot afford to pay for the services and there may be a lack of Medicaid providers to help cover necessary services.

While the Medicaid system should be able to pay for some services, barriers in the system make it difficult to impossible for the child or family to obtain these services using Medicaid resources. Some of these challenges include: 1) no Medicaid providers in the community;2) the Medicaid providers available are not seeing new clients; or 3) the agency in the community who can provide the services has chosen not to be a Medicaid provider due to the billing challenges of the Medicaid system.

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is not yet meeting the 90% threshold for substantial conformity for Item 12: Needs and Services of Child, Parents and Foster Parents. However, CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate a positive trend – Item 12 strength ratings increased from 42% in 2024 to 76% in 2025. All five regions (ARO, NRO, SCRO, SERO and WRO) demonstrated growth from year to year with notable gains in NRO (29% to 96%) and SCRO (61% to 91%).

Performance varies across the subsections of Item 12. For Item 12A: Needs and Services to Children, Alaska reached substantial achievement in 2025, increasing from 63% in 2024 to 93% in 2025. For Item 12B: Needs and Services to Parents, performance has not been substantially achieved; however, there has been substantial growth from 38% in 2024 to 77% in 2025. For Item 12C: Needs and Services to Foster Parents, Alaska is approaching substantial achievement, improving from 70% in 2024 to 89% in 2025.

Alaska does not have a formal, established routine for collecting needs assessment data from communities regarding service array, resource development and service gaps. Nor, is the service array routinely included as an aspect of the OCS CQI processes. Although OCS frequently engages in meaningful discussions about needs and gaps in various community and

stakeholder meetings, there is no process to systematically evaluate the data in order to make decisions which will contribute to an improved functioning of services array.

The need for an increase of the number and quality of services to meet identified needs is a recurring theme in various community needs assessments which have been conducted by other state agencies and communities. Areas of need continue to be identified, specific to mental health and substance abuse services. The Alaska Behavioral Health Systems Assessment Final Report (2015) listed various barriers facing Alaska's Behavioral Health System. OCS faces these same barriers with the children and families served and would concur with the findings of this report. These barriers are:

- Gaps in the continuum of care for mental health and substance abuse services
- Medicaid presents challenges to Alaska's behavioral health system, billing capacity is lacking
- Documentation challenges presented by requirements of Medicaid
- Workforce development to meet increased need for behavioral health services
- Geographic differences make it difficult to know which resources are available; and divides between the behavioral health system and other systems.

Source: Alaska Behavioral Health Systems Assessment Final Report (10/22/15).

The OCS Independent Living (IL) program provides assessment and independent living services to eligible youth ages 16 and older is available statewide. Currently, there are seven Regional Independent Living Specialists who specialize in services to older youth; these specialists provide the Casey Life Skills needs assessments for youth and assist them in developing individualized transition plans which identify needed resources and services to help youth meet their goals. NYTD data for FFY25 shows that approximately 62% of eligible youth received a service. Alaska's NYTD survey participation rates exceed national averages at ages 17, 19, and 21, demonstrating strong youth engagement and effective follow-up practices, including the ability to maintain contact with young adults after they exit care.

NYTD Outcome data from Cohort 4 (FFYs 2020-2024) identified Alaska having higher rates of homelessness. In response, the state has strengthened efforts to expand access to stable housing, including increased coordination with the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation and prioritization of transition aged youth through the Keeping Families Together project. While progress is ongoing, Alaska recognizes that rural communities do not have access to housing voucher programs, which continues to impact housing stability. The state is addressing these challenges through cross agency collaboration, flexible service delivery, and continued investment in housing focused services and supports.

2. Services that address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment.

OCS supports an array of evidence-based services available statewide and regionally through access to Child Advocacy Center (CAC) programs. These services help address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment. The CACs are currently the largest grant programs managed within the OCS Service Array Section. CACs respond to the high volume of child sexual and physical abuse allegations in the state as well as some cases involving criminal neglect, child exploitation, and victims of severe domestic violence. CACs also provide consultation and linkage to services for families who have children with serious problematic sexual behaviors. If a community does not have a functioning CAC, travel is provided by OCS or law enforcement to the identified CAC for the area. There are currently 12 fully-established CACs and 3 satellite programs which provide assessment and determine other service needs for children and families in Alaska. Additionally, there is one federally funded CAC located in Sitka and developing programs in Cordova, St. Paul, and

Hooper Bay. Sitka. All but 2 of Alaska's CAC grantees are accredited by the National Children's Alliance. OCS supports the accreditation process through grant funding as well as training and technical assistance to CACs to help them meet the rigorous national standards necessary for accreditation. The OCS grants require CACs to offer victims of abuse and their non-offending caregivers quality and comprehensive services that meet all of their critical medical, mental health, case management, legal and other needs following an incident of abuse.

In Between SFY21 and SFY25, CACs served 2,151 children and their families on average annually. As of 2026 all but two of Alaska's CACs are now accredited by the National Children's Alliance. Two additional programs have been added to Alaska's statewide network of CACs which now includes 12 programs with facilities in 15 communities. The Legislature also provided an additional 5.5 million in funding during this period to ensure continuing adequate resources for the CAC programs and to replace federal funding no longer available.

3. Services that enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable

Current in-home or family preservation grant services are not sufficient or accessible statewide. OCS has experienced an increase in the number of children in custody; an effective family preservation service may be useful as a means to ensure children with manageable safety threats can be maintained in their own homes. OCS does not have a formal in-home service model; however, OCS CPS policy, 2.2.10.2, Case Decision, indicates that OCS must open a case if a child is at high risk of future maltreatment or the child is unsafe, but can be maintained in their own home with a safety plan in place. It has long been an OCS philosophy that children should be maintained in their own homes whenever possible; however, OCS has struggled over many years with in-home case identification and management.

Item 2: Services to Families to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry

Based on available CFSR data, Alaska is not currently meeting the threshold for substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 2 (Items 2 and 3). Current CFSR data indicates Alaska's performance in Item 2 is approaching the threshold for substantial achievement.

QA Unit CQI CFSR Reviews by Region, 2025
Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry Into Foster Care

Region	Percent Strength	Percent ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	94% (17/18)	6% (1/18)	16	34
NRO	100% (18/18)	0% (0/18)	9	27
SCRO	93% (14/15)	7% (1/15)	8	23
SERO	50% (1/2)	50% (1/2)	4	6
WRO	20% (1/5)	80% (4/5)	3	8
Total	88% (51/58)	12% (7/58)	40	98

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

QA Unit CQI CFSR Reviews by Region, 2024
Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry Into Foster Care

Region	Percent Strength	Percent ANI	N/A	Total
ARO	63% (10/16)	38% (6/16)	10	26
NRO	55% (6/11)	45% (5/11)	3	14
SCRO	67% (6/9)	33% (3/9)	9	18
SERO	100% (3/3)	0% (0/3)	4	7
WRO	50% (2/4)	50% (2/4)	2	6
Total	63% (27/43)	37% (16/43)	28	71

Source: CFSR OMS OSRI

When OCS opens a case for in-home case management, OCS may refer the family to in-home family preservation services delivered by OCS grantees. The chart below shows the communities with available grantees as well as numbers served.

SFY23-25 Family Preservation Data

Circles of Support Family Preservation Services - Data Overview	FY23	FY24	FY25	Grant Totals
Total Families Served:	104	131	149	**384**
Total Adults Served:	138	159	168	**465**
Total Children Served:	215	339	323	**877**

Circles of Support Family Preservation Services Agency Reported Data Breakdown	AFS	CITC	NCC	RCPC
FY23 - Families Served	17	62	12	13
FY24 - Families Served	20	72	14	25
FY25 – Families Served	14	57	47	31
Total Families Served:	**51**	**191**	**73**	**69**
FY23 - Adults Served	20	85	20	13
FY24 - Adults Served	26	87	14	32
FY25 - Adults Served	18	60	56	34
Total Adults Served:	**64**	**232**	**90**	**79**
FY23 - Children Served	44	127	22	22
FY24 - Children Served	42	199	30	68
FY25 - Children Served	38	128	82	75
Total Children Served:	**124**	**454**	**134**	**165**

Circles of Support Family Preservation Services Agency Reported Service Hours Delivered	AFS	CITC	NCC	RCPC
FY23 - Hours	347	3301	529	211
FY24 - Hours	306	1320	94	185
FY25 – Hours	205	478	unavailable	229

Source: OCS Circles of Support Family Preservation Grant Reports, SFY23-25, 7/1/2023 to 6/30/2025.

OCS collects data on the delivery, reach and effectiveness of in-home services provided by service providers who receive the OCS grant. Parent education, coaching, case management and facilitated connection to resources based on identified needs through assessment, are delivered to families who have touched the OCS system, with parents who have their children home in their care. Program participants have been referred to these grant programs from OCS.

The grant requires the awarded partners to be versed in Strengthening Families and the Five Protective Factors. Successful use of the Protective Factors Survey for service evaluation and program efficacy is impacted by compounding factors, including but not limited to: inadequate amount of hours delivered to the

family for the survey to be valid, lack of follow through in survey completion from program participants, families no longer involved with OCS choosing to disengage from the service.

Alaska's service grantees have experienced the same challenges to hire and retain a fully staffed workforce as OCS in the years since 2020. This has been a consistent issue across Alaska. When there is turnover, service provision to families decrease or new referrals are not made. This grantee staff turnover has the most impact in the rural area grants when the grantee agency may only have one or two staff delivering the services. Aside from formal in-home family preservation grant services, there are in-home services being delivered by Tribal entities or other community service providers.

4. Services that help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency

a. Services to promote reunification of children with their families

The OCS Family Contact Services grant program and the Anchorage Supervised Family Contact contract program provide services to families referred by OCS who have a child in out-of-home care. These services consist of supervised visitation, parent coaching and support, as well as transportation. Due to the high number of children in out-of-home care, OCS relies on community partners to assist in delivering these services.

SFY23-25 Family Contact Services (Reunification) Grant Data

Family Contact Services Grants SFY23-25: Data Overview	FY23	FY24	FY25	Grant Totals
Total Families Served:	89	74	49	**212**
Total Contact Hours:	3563	3795	1901	**9259**

Family Contact Services Grant Agency Reported Data Breakdown	AFS	CITC	KNIK	RCPC
SFY23 - Families Served	18	25	9	37
SFY24 - Families Served	23	19	9	23
SFY25 - Families Served	20	9	10	10
SFY23 - Contact Hours Scheduled	517	1248	523	1275
SFY24 - Contact Hours Scheduled	1252	1208	400	935
SFY25 - Contact Hours Scheduled	666	507	257	471

SFY23-25 Family Contact Services (Reunification) Contract Data

Family Contact Services Contract: Beacon Hill - Data Overview	FY23	FY24	FY25	Contract Totals
Total Families Served:	28	27	31	**86**
Total Contact Hours:	893	905	1244	**3042**

The above charts articulate a summary of SFY23-25 service delivery data compiled from quarterly grant and monthly contract reports for the OCS Family Contact Services grants and the Anchorage Supervised Family Contact contract.

Family contact requires time-intensive efforts including coordinating schedules, arranging significant transportation, supervision of the contact and documentation. OCS Caseworker workloads are large, resulting in a high level of support being needed from grant or contract awarded agencies, Tribal organizations, other community providers, or foster parents in order to meet the family contact needs for families to assist in reunification.

b. Services to Promote Adoption and Guardianship when children cannot be reunified

Unfortunately, the number of children who cannot be returned home and need permanent homes each year exceeds the number of families who are available to meet this need. Based

on ORCA data as of May 2026, there were 325 children in out-of-home care who are legally free. While many of these children may be placed with relatives or other potentially permanent homes, an undetermined number are not with a permanent placement. Data entry into ORCA is not a reliable source of information as to whether children are with an identified permanent placement or not. It is important for OCS to have accuracy in the data regarding how many children in out-of-home care are not in potentially permanent homes, in order to target strategies to promote adoption or guardianship for these children and youth.

OCS funds a grant to provide guardianship and adoption home studies for families who have been identified as permanent placements for specific children in OCS foster care. Home studies serve as an assessment of the prospective permanent family, but they are also designed to help the family prepare and develop awareness about the concept of adoption and guardianship and some of the changes they may expect for their family and the child. Home studies are required to finalize an adoption or guardianship in Alaska, therefore, they promote permanency for children. Home study services are delivered statewide by a grantee, through assigned, subcontracted home study writers. Home study writers travel throughout the state to the home of the potential adoptive or guardianship family to conduct the requirements of home study assessment. Quarterly reports submitted by the grantee show adherence to timely completion of the home study despite challenges due to family schedules, weather delays, and the assessment of sometimes complicated family situations. Home study delays can also be caused by an OCS delay in referring the family in a timely manner. The OCS Regional Permanency Specialists are responsible for reviewing the home studies for quality and completeness. If the study does not meet quality standards, it is returned to the grantee for revisions.

Subsidized adoption and guardianships are provided to families who adopt and become guardians for children who cannot return to their home of origin; this is available statewide and for families adopting, or becoming guardians of, OCS children who reside in other states. This service promotes adoption and guardianship by easing the costs of meeting a child's ongoing needs in post-adoption or guardianship. This service may provide a monthly payment negotiated to assist the family in meeting the special needs of the child, and most subsidies provide Medicaid coverage, which is important for families in meeting the children's medical and behavioral health needs in post-adoption.

Adoption and Guardianship Annual Data, SFY 2021-2025

Adoptions Funded through Title IV-E Funds	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**
Current (Continuing + New - Aged Out - Disrupted)	3360	3399	3473	3433	3376
Adoptions Funded by the State of Alaska	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**
Current (Continuing + New - Aged Out - Disrupted)	371	342	295	250	198

Guardianships Funded through Title IV-E Funds	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**
Current (Continuing + New - Aged Out - Disrupted)	222	268	264	272	272
Guardianships Funded by the State of Alaska	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**
Current (Continuing + New - Aged Out - Disrupted)	140	173	185	202	219
TOTALS	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**
Continuing Adoptions & Guardianships	4093	4182	4217	4157	4065

Source: OCS Subsidized Adoption and Guardianship Annual Data for SFYs 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025.

The above table articulates the number of adoption and guardianship subsidies signed in SFY 2021 – SFY 2025. Services to promote adoption and guardianship for children continues to be a need, considering the approximate average of children who discharge from care through reunification is 50%, the other 50% need to exit through another permanency option such as adoption or guardianship. As the table indicates, the total number of new adoption and guardianship subsidies in SFY 2024 & SFY 2025 have been slightly declining which can be attributed to a number of factors including an increased number of reunifications and economic strain increasing hesitance by resource families to transitioning from foster care to adoption or guardianship.

Item 30: Individualizing Services

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:

How well is the service array and resource development system functioning statewide to ensure that the services in Item 29 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency?

Services that are tailored to individual developmental needs, responsive to disabilities and special needs, or accessed through flexible funding are examples of how the agency meets the unique needs of children and families.

In your analysis:

Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations, including strengths and areas needing improvement, and findings by answering the questions below.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.
- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.
- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?
- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?
- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?
- What does the evidence show with respect to children and families' experience with accessing and participating in individualized services?
- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

1. Data Sources

Question: What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe the analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.

Alaska OCS used the following data sources to inform this assessment of Item 30:

- **Alaska First Annual Progress and Services Report to the 2025–2029 CFSP (APSR, July 2025)**. Documents statewide progress on systemic factors including Service Array (Item 29 and Item 30), staff training, workforce, and CQI activities. Includes 2024 CQI case review results by region, ORCA administrative data, and narrative updates on initiatives. Data period: FY 2024–2025.
- **2025 Foster Parents Survey Report (OCS, August 2025)**. Distributed May 8–June 2, 2025, to 1,031 licensed and relative foster homes statewide. A total of 423 participants responded (41% response rate). Used yes/no, multiple-choice, Likert scale, rank-order, and open-ended formats. Narrative responses were thematically analyzed.

- **Court Improvement Program (CIP) Steering Committee Focus Group Discussions (April 2025 and May 2026)**. A semi-structured focus group facilitated by the OCS QA Unit Manager with 22 participants in 2025 and 12 in 2026 representing the judiciary, attorneys, tribal representatives, youth and family service workers, and community organizations including AFN and Providence Health and Services. Topics included case planning, service availability, court hearings, and data use.
- **Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) 2025–2029**. Documents Alaska's statewide service array, cultural responsiveness strategies, inter-agency collaboration, and strategic priorities for individualized service delivery.
- **Alaska's Fifth Annual Progress and Services Report to the 2020-2024 CFSP (5th APSR, July 2024)**. Documents PIP Round 3 case review results, workforce data, service array developments, and Item 30 activities through the prior CFSP cycle. Provides longitudinal trend data on needs assessment and service provision (Item 12), child and family involvement in case planning (Item 13), and case plan currency from 2020-2023. Data period: FY 2020–2024.
- **2024 and 2025 CQI Case Reviews (OCS)**. Statewide case reviews conducted across all five regions (ARO, NRO, SCRO, SERO, WRO) using the OSRI instrument. Results for Item 12 (Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents) and Item 13 (Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning) are directly relevant to individualizing services. Data period: CY 2024 and 2025.
- **ORCA Administrative Data**. OCS case management system data on case plan currency for children and parents, caseworker visit rates, and other essential services metrics. Data periods: 2020–2024.
- **CFSR State Data Profile dated February 2026**.

2. Limitations of the Evidence

Question: Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)?

Alaska OCS acknowledges the following limitations in the evidence used for this assessment:

- The 2025 Foster Parents Survey reflects the perspectives of licensed and relative foster parents only and does not directly capture the experiences of birth parents, youth, or community-based service providers.
- The CIP Steering Committee Focus Group involved 22 participants in April 2025 and 12 in May 2026. While representative of key system roles, results may not fully reflect the breadth of regional variation across Alaska's diverse geography.
- ORCA, Alaska's case management system of record, is aging infrastructure that no longer fully meets CCWIS requirements. ACF placed OCS on notice of possible suspension of CCWIS funding in June 2024. Data quality improvement is an active priority, including reduction of duplicate or conflicting data entry, establishment of a data governance framework, and continuous quality improvement of federal reporting submissions. These limitations affect the completeness and reliability of some administrative data fields, including those that may capture disability status, language needs, and service tracking.
- ORCA does not currently link with court system data, limiting the ability to track individualized service delivery across the child welfare and judicial systems. The CIP Focus Group identified this as a key data gap.

- The 2024 and 2025 CQI case reviews are drawn from regional samples and may not be fully representative of all cases and communities statewide, particularly in the most rural and remote field offices.
- Alaska's vast geography and the concentration of service infrastructure in urban areas may mean that aggregate data understates service access challenges in rural and remote regions.

3. Statewide Functioning

Question: What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?

Alaska OCS has established a range of mechanisms to individualize services for children and families with diverse cultural, disability-related, developmental, and linguistic needs across the state. Evidence from the APSR, CFSP 2025–2029, the 2025 Foster Parents Survey, the 2024 and 2025 CQI case reviews, and the April 2025 and May 2026 CIP Focus Group describe a system with meaningful infrastructure for individualizing services, alongside significant ongoing gaps—particularly in rural and remote regions and those affected by workforce instability.

A. **Cultural Individualization**

Cultural Resource Guide

Alaska OCS continues to update and utilize the Cultural Resource Guide as a primary mechanism to individualize services for AN/AI families and families with other cultural service needs. As documented in both the CFSP 2025–2029 and the APSR, the Cultural Resource Guide icon is located on all OCS employee computer desktops and is updated quarterly by Regional ICWA Specialists and the Public Information Team for DFCS. The guide includes a regional appendix listing culturally appropriate services in each region of Alaska, as well as instructions for OCS workers on the process for securing and authorizing cultural service purchases using state general funds.

The guide assists OCS staff in linking families to traditional healing and cultural services provided through traditional healers, tribal members and peer mentors, and tribal elders. All parents with an active in-home or out-of-home OCS case plan are eligible to engage in services with a Cultural Services Support Provider, identified collaboratively among the Tribe, parent, and OCS. Cultural Services Support Providers can receive compensation or reimbursement from OCS for their services—for example, a Tribal Elder providing family support can be compensated through this mechanism. Multiple families have utilized this process. OCS also continues to offer support for the purchase of culturally significant items, such as beading materials, through the Request for Funds process.

ICWA Implementation and Tribal Partnership

Alaska's approach to individualizing services for AN/AI children is grounded in ICWA compliance and active tribal partnership. The APSR notes that ICWA Specialists partner with Tribes to identify cultural resources as part of case planning (CFSP Goal 2.C). The 2025 Foster Parents Survey found that 89% of foster parents are familiar with ICWA (up 7% from 2024). Among foster parents who had fostered an ICWA child, 61% reported engaging with Tribal representatives (up from 58%), and 39% had utilized OCS ICWA workers to connect children to their cultural heritage. Foster parents supported cultural identity through traditional foods, music, and cultural activities (67%), community cultural activities (67%), spiritual support (25%), and cultural planning with youth and caseworkers (17%).

The April 2025 CIP Focus Group reinforced the value of tribal partnership in case planning for individualized services. Participants noted that Tribal Partners are routinely invited to case planning meetings and that culturally appropriate services are collaboratively identified. Stronger outcomes were observed when OCS and Tribes partner with families on planning. The APSR also notes that the First Judicial District is making initial efforts to stand up an ICWA court, with

collaborative efforts underway between the First Judicial District, Tlingit and Haida, and OCS. The APSR also reports that ACRF has been trained to offer the Positive Indigenous Parenting Curriculum, with an in-person offering through Copper River Native Association and a virtual series available statewide.

B. **Service Individualization Through Case Planning**

The 2024 and 2025 CQI case reviews provide quantitative data on the extent to which children and families are receiving individualized services through the case planning process. Item 12 (Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents) showed statewide variation in 2024, with SCRO achieving the highest rate of cases rated as a strength at 61% and WRO at 0%, and in 2025 with NRO achieving 96% and WRO at 25% —with the lack of caseworker contact with parents in rural areas cited as a primary driver of the failure to assess needs and engage families in individualized services in both years. Item 12A (Child Needs and Services) showed stronger performance (2024 range: 17%–86%, 2025: 50% - 100%), while Item 12B (Parent Needs and Services) was more challenging (2024 range: 0%–60%, 2025: 33% - 100%), particularly for in-home cases and in the Western Region. Item 13 (Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning) also varied significantly by region, from 0% (WRO) to 67% (SCRO) in 2024 and from 43% (WRO) to 100% (SERO) in 2025.

ORCA data shows that 81% of children statewide had a current case plan in 2024 and 84% in 2025—relatively stable over time—but only 56% of parents had a current case plan in 2024 and 62% in 2025, a decline from 66% in 2020. The Western Region had the lowest rate of parents with current case plans at 30%.

The CIP Focus Group and the APSR both emphasize that timely, individualized case planning requires adequate workforce capacity. The APSR (Goal 2.C) states directly that in regions and offices not at full staffing capacity, individualized case plans cannot be consistently delivered to all families—with priority given to essential safety services. The APSR identifies enhanced training on the Cultural Resource Guide, identification of community services, and focus on individualized case plan creation as strategies for improving individualized service delivery.

C. **Service Array Supporting Individualization**

The APSR documents Alaska's continued efforts to expand the service array in support of individualized services. Key initiatives include:

- **1115 Medicaid Waiver**: OCS continues to pursue expansion of 1115 Waiver services in partnership with DBH, which would allow families to access behavioral health services through Medicaid funding—expanding the individualized service array particularly in underserved regions. The Family Services Training Center (FSTC) has provided multiple trainings on available 1115 Medicaid services to support OCS workers in connecting families to individualized behavioral health options.
- **DOH-DFCS Complex Care Steering Committee**: Collaboratively created by DFCS and DOH to identify solutions to systemic gaps in access to care for patients with complex needs, provide forward-looking guidance, and implement identified solutions—directly supporting individualization for children and families with complex needs.
- **CarePortal**: OCS partnered with Beacon Hill to launch CarePortal in two regions, connecting families in need with community volunteers for concrete support such as rent assistance and commodity needs. CarePortal is being evaluated for scaling to additional regions.
- **Help Me Grow and Parents as Teachers (PAT)**: OCS partners with DBH on Help Me Grow expansion and with DPH to increase grant opportunities for PAT providers—both supporting developmental individualization for young children and families.

- **Respite Program Expansion**: A piloted respite program launched in Wasilla and Palmer was expanded to Anchorage and then statewide effective June 1, 2025, providing individualized relief for resource families caring for children with varied needs.

D. Disability and Special Needs

OCS individualizes services for children and families with disabilities through inter-agency collaboration with DBH, DPH, DHCS, and SDS, and through the Special Needs Hotline operated through the Placement Search and Support Unit (PSSU).

In 2025, 60% of foster parents reported using the Special Needs Hotline. Among those, 64% reported satisfaction (28% very satisfied, 36% satisfied). However, service delivery times declined compared to 2024: the proportion receiving requested items or authorization within 48 hours dropped from 47% to 26%, and 42% reported waiting more than a week, compared to 26% in 2024. The APSR notes that the PSSU underwent a program evaluation by the Quality Assurance unit in 2024 and continues to support the field in locating placements—a role closely related to matching children to individualized placement resources.

ACRF continues to offer psychoeducational groups led by mental health professionals specifically tailored to the needs of resource families caring for children with special needs, including: Post Adoption Skills and Support (PASS), Adoptive Dads, Parenting Youth with a FASD, Parenting Adolescents, and Parenting through TBRI Principals.

E. **Developmental Needs**

In Alaska, Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) screenings are available to Medicaid-eligible children from birth through age 20, and the schedule follows the American Academy of Pediatrics' "bright futures" periodicity guidelines. The assessment includes screening for developmental delays, autism, and behavioral concerns.

The 2025 Foster Parents Survey found that 76% of respondents received sufficient background information about children prior to placement to allow them to meet children's needs—a 4% increase from 2024. However, 24% reported never receiving adequate pre-placement information, and only 15% reported always receiving it. The APSR notes that the Placement Search and Support Unit underwent a program evaluation in 2024 and that Team Decision Making meetings were expanded statewide in January 2025 to allow for a teamed approach to placement decisions—an advancement that supports consideration of developmental needs in placement matching.

Physical health needs (Item 17) are generally being addressed, with most regions rated above 75% strength in 2024 CQI reviews and most regions above 90% in 2025 CQI case reviews, but notes coordination challenges when children changed placements. Mental and behavioral health needs (Item 18) showed greater variation in both 2024 and 2025 CQI case reviews, with WRO at 40% strength to SCRO at 90% in 2024 and WRO at 50% strength to SCRO at 100% in 2025 —reflecting the reality that rural communities face the greatest challenges in accessing individualized behavioral and mental health services, including limitations with telehealth due to bandwidth and connectivity issues.

OCS has a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Health, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services Infant Learning Program (ILP) outlining provisions and procedures for the referral of a child under age three who is involved in a substantiated case of child abuse or neglect to Part C of IDEA Early Intervention services. The purpose of this agreement is to formally specify the way in which ILP and OCS will collaborate in the provision of services to children ages birth to 34.5 months of age with developmental delays or who are "at-risk" for developmental delays and their families. Assessment tool used by the Alaska ILP program include Ages and Stages Questionnaire, 3rd edition (ASQ-3). There are challenges to timely referrals and waitlists for the service depending on the location in Alaska.

F. **Linguistic Needs**

OCS utilizes Alaska Relay, 711 for TTY-Based Telecommunications Relay Service, Alaska Institute for Justice, Language Link, Language Line, and Tribal services for Alaska language assistance. Frontline staff are trained to ask about the need for interpretation services when working with families. ORCA captures primary language on the person management page, but it is not a required field and lacks accuracy.

G. **Workforce Capacity and Its Effect on Individualization**

A cross-cutting finding from the APSR is that Alaska's ability to deliver individualized services is directly constrained by workforce capacity. The APSR reports that the OCS turnover rate was 46% by end of 2023, and that this high turnover affects all areas of case practice—including the ability to conduct thorough needs assessments, develop individualized case plans, and maintain continuity of service delivery. The APSR explicitly states that in regions with high vacancy rates, caseworkers are directed to prioritize essential safety services, meaning individualized case planning may be deferred.

CQI reviews confirmed regional variation driven by workforce stability: the Northern and Southcentral regions, with more stable staffing, performed well above statewide averages on needs assessment and service provision (Item 12), while the Western Region—with significant rural coverage and persistent vacancies—had 0% of cases rated as strength in 2024 and 33% in 2025 on Item 12B (Parent Needs and Services).

OCS has initiated a comprehensive five-year workforce retention and recruitment plan anchored in the U.S. Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being. In FY25, 86% of staff reported having tools to stay resilient on the job. However, turnover in central support functions—including the Talent Acquisition Team and the Child Welfare Academy—delayed several workforce initiatives planned for FY25.

4. Areas of Strength

Question: What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?

- **Cultural Resource Guide**: A regularly updated, regionally specific guide supporting OCS workers in linking AN/AI and other families to traditional healing, cultural services, and culturally appropriate community resources. Updated quarterly by Regional ICWA Specialists, accessible on all OCS desktops.
- **Cultural Services Support Provider Model**: All parents with an active OCS case plan are eligible to engage a Cultural Services Support Provider identified collaboratively by the Tribe, parent, and OCS—with OCS compensation available for providers, including Tribal Elders. Multiple families have utilized this model.
- **ICWA Engagement and Tribal Partnership**: 89% of foster parents are familiar with ICWA (up 7% from 2024); 61% engaged Tribal representatives in ICWA cases (up from 58%). CIP Focus Group participants confirmed that Tribal Partners are routinely included in case planning and that culturally appropriate services are collaboratively identified. Initial steps toward an ICWA court in the First Judicial District are underway.
- **Positive Indigenous Parenting Curriculum**: ACRF has expanded its cultural training capacity, now offering the Positive Indigenous Parenting Curriculum both in-person (through Copper River Native Association) and via a virtual series available statewide.
- **Parent Engagement in Case Planning**: CIP Focus Group participants identified active parent involvement in case planning as a key strength—building trust, empowering families, and supporting reunification through individualized identification of needed services. The APSR's new Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), which held its first in-

person meeting in May 2025, further institutionalizes parent voice in system-level service planning.

- **Inter-Agency Collaboration and Service Expansion**: OCS collaborates with DBH, DPH, DHCS, SDS, and community agencies to expand individualized service access. The DOH-DFCS Complex Care Steering Committee, 1115 Waiver efforts, CarePortal launch, Help Me Grow, Infant Learning Program agreement and Parents as Teachers expansion all reflect active investment in broadening and individualizing the service array.
- **Special Needs Hotline**: 64% of foster parents who used the Special Needs Hotline in 2025 reported satisfaction, and 60% of all foster parents used it—reflecting broad awareness and utilization as a mechanism for individualized resource support.
- **ACRF Training for Specialized Needs**: ACRF offers psychoeducational groups tailored to the needs of resource families caring for children with FASD, complex behavioral health needs, and other specialized circumstances, including Post Adoption Skills and Support, Parenting Youth with a FASD, and Trust-Based Relationship Intervention (TBRI) groups.
- **Respite Program Expansion**: A piloted respite program expanded statewide in June 2025, providing individualized relief for resource families—directly supporting stability of placements for children with complex needs.
- **ACRF Distance Training**: ACRF held 92 distance delivery classes with 977 participants in FY24, and 82% of foster parents participated in ACRF training in 2025 (up 7% from 2024), reflecting strong reach even in rural areas.

5. Areas Needing Improvement

Question: What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?

- **Workforce Instability Limiting Individualized Service Delivery**: The APSR identifies caseworker turnover as the most significant systemic barrier to individualized services. With a 33% case-carrying staff turnover rate during the 2024 CQI review period and a statewide turnover rate of 46% at end of 2023, regions with high vacancies are explicitly directed to triage essential safety services rather than delivering individualized case plans to all families. The CIP Focus Group and the 2025 Foster Parents Survey (57% of foster parents reported negative impacts from caseworker turnover) corroborate this finding.
- **Low Rates of Individualized Needs Assessment and Service Provision for Parents**: The 2024 CQI case reviews found statewide performance on Item 12B (Parent Needs and Services) ranging from 0% (WRO) to 60% (SCRO), with a statewide average well below the R3 PIP benchmark of 37% in several regions. Regional variability continued in 2025, however there were overall improvements – ranging from 33% in WRO to 100% in SERO. The lack of sufficient caseworker contact with parents in rural areas, particularly in Northern and Western regions, is a primary driver—preventing adequate ongoing assessment of individual parental needs and engagement in individualized services.
- **Declining Parent Case Plan Currency**: Only 56% of parents statewide had a current case plan in 2024 and 62% in 2025, down from 66% in 2020. The Western Region had the lowest rate at 30% in 2025. Without current, individualized case plans for parents, the foundation for individualized service delivery is undermined.
- **Standardized Rather Than Individualized Case Planning**: CIP Focus Group participants identified a need to move away from template language in case plans

toward plans that reflect each family's specific circumstances. Participants recommended engaging parents in reviewing complete assessments—not just recommendations—and avoiding the assumption that all families have the same needs.

- **Rural Service Access and Provider Shortages**: Both the APSR and the 2025 Foster Parents Survey document persistent shortages of service providers in rural areas, particularly for mental health, behavioral health, and specialized medical services. The APSR notes that bandwidth and connectivity limitations in rural communities compound these gaps by limiting telehealth options. 31% of foster parents reported children in their care did not receive necessary services.
- **Declining Special Needs Hotline Response Times**: The proportion of foster parents receiving requested items or authorization within 48 hours dropped from 47% (2024) to 26% (2025), and 42% now wait more than a week—a significant decline that may delay individualized support for children with disabilities or special needs in foster care.
- **Inconsistent Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning**: CQI reviews found Item 13 (Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning) ranging from 0% (WRO) to 67% (SCRO) in 2024 and from 43% (WRO) to 100% (SERO) in 2025. Meaningful family involvement is a prerequisite for identifying individual needs and tailoring services—and the data reflects significant regional inconsistency in this foundational practice.
- **Data Gaps Limiting Assessment of Individualization**: The APSR's documentation of ORCA limitations, combined with CIP Focus Group recommendations, highlight significant data gaps: no systematic tracking of time from removal to first service connection; limited monitoring of service referral follow-through; absence of data linking OCS and court systems; and gaps in data from Tribal communities. These gaps constrain Alaska's ability to fully assess the extent to which services are individualized statewide.
- **Pre-Placement Information Sharing**: Only 15% of foster parents always received sufficient background information prior to placement, limiting the ability to individualize services from the outset of a placement.

6. Children and Families' Experience

Question: What does the evidence show with respect to children and families' experience with accessing and participating in individualized services?

A. Foster Parent Perspective (2025 Foster Parents Survey)

- 69% of foster parents reported that children in their homes received necessary educational, medical, or mental health services—a 2% improvement from 2024. However, 31% reported children did not receive needed services, citing provider shortages, long waitlists, and coordination failures.
- 76% of foster parents received sufficient pre-placement background information at least some of the time, but only 15% reported this always occurred—limiting individualized planning from the point of placement.
- 71% of foster parents were involved in decision-making for children in their homes, and 63% felt their opinions and experience were respected—slight improvements from 2024.
- Among foster parents caring for AN/AI children, 61% worked with Tribal representatives and many incorporated traditional foods, cultural activities, subsistence practices, and language learning into daily care, reflecting meaningful individualized cultural support.

- 60% of foster parents used the Special Needs Hotline; however, satisfaction declined in 2025 (28% very satisfied, down from 43% in 2024) and response times worsened significantly.

B. Judicial, Legal, and Tribal Community Perspective (CIP Focus Group, April 2025)

- When OCS engages parents meaningfully in case planning—reviewing complete assessments and identifying individual needs rather than applying standardized plans—families experience greater trust in the system and stronger engagement in services.
- Participants raised concerns that families, particularly parents, often do not fully understand the services available to them or how to access those services, including how to use insurance benefits or connect to tribal service providers—suggesting that access to individualized services may be hindered by insufficient orientation and navigation support.
- Tribal representatives noted that culturally appropriate services are identified through collaborative case planning with tribal partners and that this meaningfully supports families' cultural connections. However, not all families may be aware that cultural services and ICWA worker support are available.
- High caseworker turnover negatively affects families' experience with individualized services, requiring parents to repeatedly rebuild trust and re-explain their circumstances to new workers—delaying meaningful service engagement.

C. Parent Voice (APSR, July 2025)

The APSR documents OCS's commitment to integrating parent voice into service planning and delivery. OCS contracted and developed a Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), currently comprising five Parent Leaders and eight Parent Voices. The PAC and OCS leadership held their first in-person meeting in May 2025 to establish shared goals, with ongoing sessions planned for parents to share recommendations and collaboratively implement parent-led initiatives. Additionally, a resource parent and youth panel participates in new employee training to share lived experience with new OCS staff regarding family engagement, meeting needs, respect, and collaboration—directly informing staff capacity to individualize services.

7. Comparison to CFSR Round 3 and CQI Activities

Question: How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

Round 3 Item 30 Rating: Area Needing Improvement. In the Round 3 (2017) Statewide Assessment, Alaska self-assessed CFSR Item 30, Individualizing Services, as an area needing improvement. Due to limited services being available, individualized services were not always available or accessible to children and families. This determination was based on limited flexible funding, insufficient community-based supports, significant geographic barriers, and cultural and linguistic barriers that prevented full individualization of services for all children and families served by the agency.

The Round 3 Statewide Assessment also self-assessed Item 29 (Array of Services) as an area needing improvement, noting that Alaska did not have a fully functioning or effective service array—with significant gaps in rural areas, limited behavioral health services statewide, and no systematic process for evaluating service effectiveness. These foundational service array gaps directly limited the state's capacity to individualize services.

The Round 3 Statewide Assessment documented the following baseline performance data directly relevant to service individualization:

- **Item 12 (Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents)**: In CY 2016, 61% of cases were rated strength (up from 32.9% in CY 2015)—but well below the national standard of 95%. Out-of-home cases performed better (66%) than in-home cases (55%). The Round 3 Statewide Assessment identified the lack of caseworker contact as the primary barrier to conducting ongoing needs assessments and engaging families in individualized services.
- **Item 13 (Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning)**: In CY 2016, 60% of cases were rated strength (up significantly from 28.5% in CY 2015). Out-of-home cases (73%) outperformed in-home cases (45%). This baseline reflects the state's starting point for individualized case planning at the onset of Round 3.
- **Cultural continuity for Alaska Native children**: A 2015 Tribal Survey (n=217, 44% response rate) found that only 37% of respondents agreed that cultural continuity of Alaska Native children was maintained while a child was in out-of-home care—a critical measure of culturally individualized services. 57% of respondents agreed that OCS-Tribal worker collaboration had strengthened service quality for Alaska Native children.
- **Rural service access**: The Round 3 Statewide Assessment documented that Rural Child Welfare (RCW) grants—primarily delivered by Tribal agencies—were serving approximately 19% of Alaska Native/American Indian children placed in out-of-home care in rural communities, highlighting the significant gap between individualized service need and actual delivery in rural areas.
- **Service array capacity**: Community Cafes conducted in SFY2016 across all five OCS regions identified top community needs that directly relate to individualizing services: providing services locally; connecting families with someone to help navigate services; sharing cultural traditions, language, and skills; engaging elders and extended family; and hands-on in-home coaching for parents. These findings were largely uniform across regions, urban and rural alike.
- **1115 Waiver**: In the Round 3 Statewide Assessment, Alaska noted it was in the early stages of developing a 1115 Medicaid waiver application to expand behavioral health service access—a key mechanism for individualizing services that remained in development throughout the subsequent CFSP cycle.

The Round 3 Statewide Assessment also identified the following systemic barriers to individualizing services that have remained relevant throughout the subsequent CFSP period:

- Limited flexible funding resources insufficient to meet unique individual needs given the scope of Alaska's population and geographic spread;
- Cultural and racial barriers in service delivery to minority populations, including fear and mistrust of OCS by Alaska Native families and limited cultural competency among some OCS workers;
- Workforce turnover for both OCS staff and service providers as a barrier to sustaining individualized service relationships;
- Gaps in the behavioral health continuum of care, including Medicaid billing barriers, lack of Medicaid providers in rural communities, and workforce shortages in behavioral health;
- No formal, established routine for collecting needs assessment data from communities regarding service array gaps—limiting data-driven planning for individualized services;
- Cultural interventions not universally accepted or accessible within the system, limiting their integration into individualized service plans.

A. Progress Since Round 3

Since the last CFSR, Alaska OCS has made the following documented improvements related to individualizing services:

- Cultural Resource Guide fully implemented and sustained: The Cultural Resource Guide has been on all OCS staff desktops and regularly updated by Regional ICWA Specialists since 2020. During the 2020-2024 CFSP period, the Guide was identified as a PIP strategy and a transfer of learning tool was developed by the Mentor Program to ensure new staff are trained on its use as part of onboarding.
- Cultural Services Support Provider Model: Established and actively utilized across the 2020-2024 CFSP period, enabling compensation of Tribal Elders, peer mentors, and traditional healers as part of individualized case plans. Multiple families utilized this model through the final year of the prior CFSP.
- 1115 Medicaid Waiver partnership deepened: During the 2020-2024 CFSP period, OCS partnered with DBH, Optum (the Administrative Service Organization), and the Family Services Training Center (FSTC) to expand 1115 Waiver service access and train OCS workers on available services. The FSTC delivered multiple trainings including Alaska Native Cultural Health and Wellness Strategies, Home Visiting Safety, and Early Essentials of Home Visiting—directly supporting culturally and developmentally individualized service referrals. Challenges with providers actually delivering approved 1115 services despite billing capacity were identified as an ongoing barrier.
- Individual Training Plans (ITPs) for foster parents: In FY23, Alaska transitioned from an hours-based training requirement to an Individual Training Plan for each foster family, providing more focus on training that meets the specific needs of the children in the home. ACRF works with each family to complete their ITP, with Training Cluster Packets developed to address individualized needs.
- Help Me Grow: OCS continued to promote Help Me Grow statewide throughout the prior CFSP cycle, providing families, caseworkers, and resource families a direct connection to statewide service providers for children, adults, and concrete needs—supporting individualized service navigation.
- Parents as Teachers (PAT) expansion: OCS partnered with DPH to increase funding for PAT affiliates in Alaska, aimed at increasing the number of providers offering this evidence-based developmental support program to families.
- Increased ICWA familiarity among foster parents: 89% of foster parents are familiar with ICWA in 2025 (up 7% from 2024); 61% engaged Tribal representatives in ICWA cases. During the prior CFSP period, ICWA cases showed positive cultural connection practices including children participating in cultural activities provided by the Tribe even in non-native placements.
- Parent Advisory Committee: Launched toward the end of the 2020-2024 CFSP cycle with initial parent member engagement at the OCS Leadership Gathering, and fully stood up in 2025 with five Parent Leaders and eight Parent Voices—institutionalizing parent voice in service design.
- ACRF training expanded: Positive Indigenous Parenting Curriculum added; new self-study courses on Reunification, Attachment, Boundaries in Foster Care, and TBRI-based parenting; and FY24 delivery of 92 distance classes with 977 participants.
- Respite program expanded statewide June 2025; Team Decision Making meetings expanded statewide January 2025; CarePortal launched in two regions.

- CQI case reviews utilizing CFSR's OMS OSRI indicate a positive trend:
    - Item 12 strength ratings increasing from 42% in 2024 to 76% in 2025
    - Item 13 strength ratings increasing from 47% in 2024 to 82% in 2025
    - Item 16 strength ratings increasing from 89% in 2024 to 92% in 2025
    - Item 17 strength ratings increasing from 81% in 2024 to 94% in 2025
    - Item 18 strength ratings increasing from 68% in 2024 to 84% in 2025

B. Persistent and Emerging Challenges

- PIP Round 3 case review performance on needs assessment and service individualization (Item 12) did not achieve the PIP goal: All-sites combined performance on Item 12 (Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents) declined from 35% in 2022 to 31% in 2023 against a PIP goal of 40%. Anchorage dropped from 31% to 19%, and Juneau from 19% to 25%, though Fairbanks improved significantly to 69%. The common theme across sites was insufficient caseworker contact with families to conduct ongoing needs assessment and engage parents in individualized services.
- PIP Round 3 performance on child and family involvement in case planning (Item 13) also fell short of the goal: All-sites performance on Item 13 fell from 69% in 2022 to 48% in 2023 against a PIP goal of 54%. Anchorage declined from 61% to 43%, Juneau from 56% to 37%, and only Fairbanks remained above the goal at 69%. The 5th APSR noted that decreasing caseworker visit rates directly limited opportunities to involve families in individualized case planning.
- Caseworker turnover was the primary driver of unmet PIP goals: The Northern Region had a 57% case-carrying staff turnover rate and Anchorage a 50% rate during the 2023 PIP review period. The 5th APSR documented that turnover rates of 49%–57% persisted throughout the prior CFSP cycle despite active retention strategies, with a statewide turnover rate of 46% by end of 2023.
- Parent case plan currency declined from 66% (2020) to 61% (2023) under the prior CFSP, continuing to fall to 56% statewide in 2024 with a slight improvement in 2025 (62%), with the Western Region at 30%—undermining individualized service planning.
- Rural service access gaps and provider shortages persisted throughout the 2020-2024 CFSP period. The Western Region—covering 65 villages in an area the size of Utah—consistently showed the lowest performance across service-related items. Weather, geography, bandwidth, and connectivity issues were cited as persistent barriers to individualized service delivery in rural communities.
- 1115 Waiver service delivery gaps: Despite the billing structure being in place, OCS and DBH identified during the prior CFSP that providers approved to deliver 1115 Waiver services were often not actually building and delivering those services—limiting the practical expansion of individualized behavioral health services.
- ORCA system limitations constrain data-driven assessment of individualized service delivery, and no new CCWIS modernization funding was received in FY25.
- Declining Special Needs Hotline response times represent a new area of concern in 2025 compared to prior years.

C. CQI Adjustments and Next Steps

The APSR outlines the following CQI activities directly relevant to improving individualized services under CFSP Goal 2.C (Improved Delivery of Family Services):

- Improved training on and enhancement of the Cultural Resource Guide

- Identification and mapping of community services to better engage families
- Focus on creation of individualized, family-centered case plans and measurement of behavioral change in new training for family services workers
- ICWA Specialists partnering with Tribes to identify cultural resources
- Parent Advisory Committee providing guidance on what is needed to engage families in individualized services

The APSR acknowledges that in regions with workforce capacity limitations, these goals must be balanced against the prioritization of essential safety services—and that achieving consistent, individualized service delivery for all families statewide will require continued investment in workforce stability.

F. Agency Responsiveness to the Community

Item 31: State Engagement and Consultation With Stakeholders Pursuant to CFSP and APSR

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the agency responsiveness to the community system functioning statewide to ensure that in implementing the provisions of the CFSP and developing related APSRs, the state engages in ongoing consultation with Tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals, objectives, and annual updates of the CFSP?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below. Ensure that you address all elements of this question.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.
- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.
- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?
- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?
- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?
- What does the evidence show with respect to stakeholders' experience with the ongoing consultation process?
- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Alaska asserts a strength rating for item 31. The Office of Children's Services (OCS) continues to demonstrate strong statewide functioning in stakeholder engagement and consultation. Alaska maintains ongoing partnerships with Tribal representatives, families, youth, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and a wide variety of public and private child- and family-serving agencies. Feedback from these partners informs the development, implementation, and improvement of the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR), supporting OCS's ongoing efforts to strengthen outcomes for children and families.

In addition to these partners, OCS collaborates with the Alaska Children's Trust and Alaska Impact Alliance. These partners consult with OCS at least annually, and many partners—such as Tribes—engage with OCS more frequently.

Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) Engagement

During the CFSP period, OCS advanced implementation of the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) to strengthen lived-experience integration. The PAC includes Parent Leaders—who serve as the primary decision-makers—and Parent Voices, who contribute input flexibly. OCS aims to have two Parent Leaders in each of Alaska's five regions; at the time of this writing, all regions except the Western and Northern regions have at least one Parent Leader. Parent Leaders meet monthly, commit approximately four hours per month, and receive a $200 monthly stipend to support participation. Parent Voices provide input when available without required monthly meeting attendance.

Parent Leaders meet regularly with OCS Regional Managers and the OCS Executive Team to collaborate on agency initiatives and identify systemic needs. They also participate in targeted workgroups with OCS leadership focused on peer navigation supports, family-friendly tools that help parents understand case expectations and tasks, and other improvements to parent supports. Several PAC members have already engaged in statewide OCS convenings (e.g., Leadership Gatherings), where lived-experience perspectives were highlighted as influential elements of the summit.

PAC members partner with the OCS Evaluation Unit to design statewide parent surveys and refine questions to ensure meaningful, accessible data collection addressing topics that include case planning, service delivery, court involvement, and foster parent relationships with parents, and much more. OCS launched its first statewide parent survey with PAC input; findings are incorporated into continuous improvement planning in objectives outlined in the CFSP.

Court Improvement Project (CIP) Collaboration

OCS maintains active collaboration with CIP. The CIP steering committee meets three times per year to review workgroup progress, analyze statewide and district-level court data, and share pertinent OCS data (e.g., maltreatment trends, foster care entries, permanency timelines, disproportionality, and foster home information).

Through ongoing collaboration with the courts, Alaska continues to strengthen judicial oversight of child welfare cases, particularly in the area of periodic reviews. CIP's work with the courts has supported progress on transitioning six-month administrative reviews into the court setting, improving consistency, transparency, and opportunities for meaningful engagement with parents, youth, relatives, and Tribal partners. Anchorage formally transitioned its six-month administrative reviews to the court in January 2025, and early feedback has been positive, reflecting more timely review practices and stronger alignment with permanency goals. Western Region courts are planning to implement this same transition in fall 2026, building on lessons learned from Fairbanks and Anchorage. These continued efforts demonstrate strong collaboration between OCS and the judicial system and reinforce shared commitment to improving court oversight and permanency outcomes statewide.

CIP workgroups—currently focused on education, permanency, family contact, and ICWA—meet more frequently than the steering committee. These groups evaluate data and system functioning across regions, update tools such as CINA 101, examine permanency delays, review levels of family contact supervision, and support emerging ICWA-aligned court models. Their collaboration with OCS strengthens shared accountability, improves transparency in court processes, and informs statewide system improvements.

Resource Family Feedback and Foster Care Support Improvements

OCS integrates foster parent perspectives—collected through focus groups, surveys, and advisory boards—into program improvement efforts. Over recent years, foster parent input has been used to evaluate and refine the Placement Search and Support Unit (PSSU), implemented in 2023 to improve placement matching and caregiver support. Foster parents emphasized needs that informed adjustments to PSSU practice, including:

- Providing more child-specific information during placement searches to help families evaluate fit;
- Improving communication-tracking systems to reduce duplicate placement calls;
- Strengthening support calls when a new placement is under consideration.

Centralized Special Needs Hotline (SNH) – Foster Parent Feedback Integration

OCS created a centralized Special Needs Hotline (SNH) in direct response to foster parents expressing the need for a more efficient way to facilitate special-needs funds requests, navigate reimbursement processes, and receive timely support. Internal communications note that OCS has centralized multiple services for resource families—including child care assistance, commodities, travel reimbursement, stipends, and more—to ensure caregivers receive answers quickly and consistently.

Feedback regarding the SNH is collected annually through the foster parent survey. Survey reviews (including discussion of year-to-year satisfaction analysis) confirm that OCS actively monitors these metrics and uses them to refine the program. This annual feedback cycle ensures that the SNH continues evolving in ways that reflect the needs and experiences of foster families.

Tribal Collaboration

Efforts to improve Alaska's caseworker visit objective have been consistently challenged following the pandemic, largely due to ongoing field-level staff vacancies. Through continued collaboration with Tribal partners, Alaska is actively pursuing an amendment to Title IV-B that would authorize Tribal workers to conduct caseworker visits. This change would provide significant benefit to rural communities that are difficult to access and strengthen service continuity for children and families. Alaska is currently working with the Children′s Bureau as the Office of Children′s Services continues its planning efforts toward this potential amendment.

Collaboration with Alaska Children's Trust (ACT)

In 2025, Alaska Children's Trust invited OCS to participate in planning Alaska's first statewide Sexual Abuse Prevention Plan. OCS attended the Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Convening hosted and facilitated by ACT, which emphasized reducing opportunities to offend, perpetration-prevention strategies, community-driven protective factors, and statewide awareness. OCS continues participating in ACT-hosted meetings and webinars focused on mandated reporter training and broader prevention efforts to align with CFSP prevention goals and strengthen partnerships around safety and awareness.

Staff Feedback Driving Recruitment and System Improvements

Overwhelming feedback from OCS staff has emphasized recruiting foster parents able to care for children with complex care needs. This priority has led to:

- Streamlining the foster parent licensing process
- Exploring the use of technology through Benti to modernize licensing workflows
- Expanding kinship care by collaborating with Tribal partners to identify and support relatives early
- Beginning statewide planning for a kinship certification process
- Increasing the base stipend for foster parents in 2025 using caregiver feedback to identify financial barriers

Conclusion

Stakeholder input from Tribes, lived-experience parents, youth, resource families, service providers, courts, and statewide partners continues to guide Alaska's priorities across safety, permanency, well-being, and prevention. OCS uses this input to drive continuous quality improvement, refine CFSP strategies, and ensure APSR updates reflect the experiences of families, partners, and professionals—demonstrating strong functioning in Item 31 through broad engagement, sustained consultation, and meaningful incorporation of lived-experience perspectives.

Item 32: Coordination of CFSP Services With Other Federal Programs

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the agency responsiveness to the community system functioning statewide to ensure that the state's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.
- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.
- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?
- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?
- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?
- What does the evidence show with respect to children and families' experience with service coordination between child welfare and other federal programs?
- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Alaska demonstrates a strength in its statewide coordination of CFSP services with other federal and federally assisted programs. The State maintains broad, well-established partnerships across health, education, public safety, Tribal, and social service systems, supported by formal agreements, shared technology, and ongoing inter-departmental collaboration. These coordinated efforts ensure that families and children receive comprehensive supports across agencies and that services are aligned, accessible, and responsive to community needs. Alaska's commitment to cross-system cooperation is reflected in the extensive collaboration with the Division of Behavioral Health, Division of Public Assistance, Department of Revenue, Department of Education, Bureau of Vital Information, Division of Health Care Services, Department of Public Safety, and Tribal partners statewide.

Division of Behavioral Health (DBH)

The **Division of Behavioral Health** plays a central role in coordinating behavioral health services that support children and families served by the CFSP. Through Medicaid mechanisms such as the 1115 Behavioral Health Waiver and 1915(c) waivers, DBH expands access to early intervention, crisis stabilization, intensive case management, therapeutic treatment homes, and home-based family supports. DBH collaborates with the **Office of Children's Services (OCS)** and the **Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)** to review placement requests, coordinate on complex behavioral health cases, and participate in multidisciplinary review processes ensuring youth receive services at the most appropriate level of care. DBH also manages statewide crisis response initiatives, supports provider training, strengthens tribal-state collaboration, and advances community-based care models that directly reinforce CFSP goals.

Division of Public Assistance (DPA)

The **Division of Public Assistance** works with OCS to align Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Medicaid eligibility for families served under the CFSP. Collaboration includes efforts to increase access to financial supports for kinship caregivers, utilize TANF funds to expand prevention-focused child welfare strategies, and ensure families can meet basic needs that contribute to child safety and stability. Recent internal coordination has focused on strengthening relative placements and supporting prevention activities that reduce the need for out-of-home care.

Department of Revenue (DOR)

The **Department of Revenue** contributes to CFSP coordination through its management of financial systems relevant to child welfare, including Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) allocations and claims. Efficient processing by divisions such as the PFD Corporation, Treasury Division, Tax Division, and Administrative Services ensures child welfare financial transactions, reimbursements, and benefits are managed accurately to support timely service delivery. DOR's work helps OCS verify family income, process documents required for program eligibility, and maintain consistent financial oversight necessary for case planning.

Department of Education & Early Development (DEED)

The **Department of Education & Early Development** supports coordinated efforts to meet the educational needs of children involved with OCS. Collaboration includes information sharing to ensure immediate school enrollment, alignment between OCS case plans and individualized education programs (IEPs), coordination with early childhood programs, and support for improving educational stability. DEED also partners with statewide initiatives focused on early literacy, trauma-informed school practices, and behavioral supports in educational settings—efforts that directly benefit CFSP-served children.

Bureau of Vital Information (BVI)

The **Bureau of Vital Information** facilitates critical coordination through timely access to birth, death, and other vital records required for child welfare casework. This includes verifying parentage, obtaining legal documents for court proceedings, and ensuring children have accurate identifying information for medical, educational, and placement-related needs. BVI's consistent and efficient processing of vital records supports safety assessments, permanency planning, and federal documentation requirements under the CFSP.

Division of Health Care Services (DHCS)

The **Division of Health Care Services** administers Medicaid programs that directly support medical and behavioral health services accessed by children and families in the CFSP. DHCS coordinates eligibility, manages coverage for in-state and out-of-state treatment needs, and collaborates with DBH, OCS, DJJ, and the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services to ensure children receive medically necessary care. DHCS participates in cross-divisional review committees, oversees compliance with Medicaid policy, and helps ensure timely authorization of services for children with complex needs.

Department of Public Safety (DPS)

The **Department of Public Safety** collaborates closely with OCS on child protection investigations, law enforcement involvement in maltreatment cases, and coordinated responses to child abuse. DPS helps ensure timely transmission of investigative information, supports multidisciplinary teams, and partners with CACs statewide. DPS participation is essential in cases requiring immediate safety assessments, emergency placement decisions, or criminal proceedings related to child maltreatment.

Tribes and Tribal Entities

Alaska's Tribal governments and Tribal organizations are foundational partners in CFSP coordination, representing nearly half of Alaska's federally recognized Tribes. Collaboration includes joint case planning, ICWA compliance, Tribal Title IV-E pass-through agreements, and prevention services offered through compacted Tribal agencies. Tribal partners support diligent relative searches, licensing of Tribal foster homes, facilitation of family contact, and delivery of community-based prevention services grounded in cultural values and Tribal sovereignty.

Infant Learning Program (ILP)

The **Infant Learning Program**, Alaska's Part C early intervention system under IDEA, partners with OCS to ensure developmental screening, early intervention, and family support for infants and toddlers who experience maltreatment or are at heightened developmental risk. Coordination includes referrals from OCS to local ILP providers, collaborative planning with parents and caregivers, and integration of developmental information into case plans. ILP's statewide service network ensures children receive early developmental supports aligned with CFSP well-being goals.

Child Advocacy Centers (CACs)

Child Advocacy Centers strengthen CFSP-related coordination by providing multidisciplinary, trauma-informed responses to allegations of child abuse. CACs unite law enforcement, medical providers, mental health clinicians, victim advocates, prosecutors, and OCS staff to streamline forensic interviews, reduce duplication of services, and improve investigative quality. CAC coordination enhances child safety, reduces trauma during investigations, and improves access to treatment and supports for children and families.

Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)

The **Division of Juvenile Justice** coordinates closely with OCS to support youth involved in both the child protection and juvenile justice systems. Collaboration includes joint oversight of dual-status cases, information sharing on youth behavior and placement needs, operational support during placement crises, and coordinated case tracking. DJJ assists OCS with supervision needs and contributes to multidisciplinary teams reviewing complex youth cases. This partnership strengthens continuity of care, enhances case planning, and supports stability for crossover youth.

G. Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

Item 33: Standards Applied Equally

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning statewide to ensure that state standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-B or IV-E funds?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.
- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.
- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?
- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?
- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?
- What does the evidence show with respect to stakeholders' experience with state standards being applied equally?
- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Alaska has identified CFSR, Item 33, Standards Applied Equally, as a strength area. OCS ensures consistent application of state requirements across all licensed or approved foster family homes and residential child care facilities that receive Title IV-B or IV-E funding. For children in OCS custody who require out-of-home care, placement occurs in the following settings: a licensed foster home, an unlicensed relative home, or a residential child care facility. Licensed foster homes and residential child care facilities must comply with statutory and regulatory licensing standards outlined in AS 47.32, 7 AAC 50, and 7 AAC 10.

Unlicensed relative homes are exempt from these licensing requirements and do not receive foster care payments. State statutes, regulations, and the Community Care Licensing Manual collectively establish the rules, standards, and procedures that guide consistent licensing practices statewide.

As of January 2026, Alaska had a total of 1,117 foster homes. Of these, 992 were fully licensed and received foster care payments supported through Title IV-E and state general fund appropriations. The remaining 125 homes were not fully licensed and therefore did not qualify for Title IV-E reimbursement; these homes were funded exclusively through state general fund dollars.

Licensing standards:

Licensing requirements for foster homes are established within Alaska statutes and regulations. To be licensed, a foster parent must be at least 21 years old, provide three references (including at least one unrelated individuals), pass a criminal history background check, and ensure the home meets basic fire, safety, and sanitation standards. The home must also provide adequate space and sleeping arrangements, and the applicant must complete core and ongoing training requirements.

A foster home is classified as "not fully licensed" when one or more essential licensing standards are unmet, most commonly due to incomplete annual training or missing background checks. This status occurs most commonly when a child requires immediate placement, and an emergency license is issued. Although issues may arise outside emergency licensure, these instances are less common. Children placed in homes that are not fully licensed are temporarily ineligible for Title IV-E reimbursement. To monitor this impact, a monthly report is maintained to identify foster homes that do not meet IV-E eligibility criteria. The accompanying table reflects the average number of open homes compared with the average number designated as Not Fully Licensed for each reporting year.

Year	Not Fully Licensed (avg)	All Licensed Providers (avg)
2023	158	1257
2024	158	1134
2025	150	1107

Source: special report run by ORCA research unit

In 2025, OCS Licensing initiated a focused effort to reduce the number of Not Fully Licensed homes. The measurable progress in addressing outstanding licensing requirements. It is important to note that, during this period, the Department experienced significant delays in fingerprint-based background check approvals, believed to be associated with system updates within the Alaska Department of Public Safety. These delays have since been largely resolved and are likely a contributing factor to the reduction in Not Fully Licensed homes observed in 2026. Specific reasons for a home's Not Fully Licensed status are not currently generated through automated reporting and require manual documentation. The licensing team recently implemented a structured tracking mechanism to improve data precision, strengthen program oversight, and enhance support to foster families. This information is maintained in an Excel-based dataset and reviewed monthly by licensing supervisors and program management.

OCS Licensing Investigations, Maltreatment in Care, Residential Child Care Facility Licensing Investigations

The OCS regional foster care licensing is notified via an ORCA autogenerated messaging system when there is a complaint of alleged foster care statute or regulation violation for a licensed foster home. This may also include a complaint involving reports of child maltreatment within a licensed foster home. Regional licensing supervisors review each complaint and determine whether it should be "screened-in" for investigation or "screened-out" as a "no-merit". Complaints that are screened-in are assigned to a licensing specialist for an investigation based off regulatory violations. When there are allegations involving child maltreatment, an accompanied case is screened-in concurrently and worked from a joint perspective between the licensing specialist and Protective Services Specialists. For Residential Child Care Facilities, the screening process aligns closely with the procedures used for OCS foster care licensing. However, referrals are processed through the Department of Behavioral Health's internal system rather than ORCA, and are assigned to an internal staff member, typically a Health Program Coordinator or Manager.

Barrier Crimes and/or Conditions:

The OCS maintains policies and procedures aligned with federal Title IV-E requirements regarding disqualifying criminal offenses for foster, adoptive, and guardianship caregivers. Federal requirements prohibit reimbursement in situations where caregivers have certain felony convictions, including crimes involving child abuse or neglect, spousal abuse, crimes against children, violent offenses such as sexual assault or homicide, and certain felony assault or drug-related convictions within the past five years.

Alaska statute and regulation further identify barrier crimes and barring conditions that disqualify individuals from licensure, certification, or payment. Under 7 AAC 10.905, barrier crimes include offenses inconsistent with the standards of care required for vulnerable populations. Alaska Statute 47.05.310(c)(1) also establishes barring conditions related to substantiated abuse or neglect findings, regardless of jurisdiction.

OCS implements a statewide, consistent Background Check Variance process for individuals who have barrier crimes or conditions and seek licensure or approval. Variance applications undergo a two-tier review process: (1) regional OCS review, followed by (2) Department of Health (DOH) Barrier Crime Variance Committee review and recommendation to the DOH Commissioner. Applicants may also request reconsideration. Determinations are based on consistent statewide criteria, including the relationship between the offense and caregiving duties, time since the offense, safety considerations, evidence of rehabilitation, and completeness of application materials.

Data demonstrates ongoing implementation and functioning of this process. In CY 2024, OCS approved 7 of 10 variance requests (70%), and in CY 2025, approved 11 of 22 (50%). Most variance requests originate from relative placements, supporting child-specific connections while maintaining safety. Updated variance data also indicate continued statewide utilization:

Year	OCS Background Check Variances	Approved
2022	25	23
2023	30	28
2024	10	7
2025	22	1

OCS and DOH have collaboratively strengthened the variance process by updating application materials, removing employment-based requirements irrelevant to caregiver applicants, and identifying areas for further improvement. Planned future enhancements include automated variance assignment and tracking through the New Alaska Background Check System (NABCS), which will improve timeliness, reduce manual workload, and support compliance with regulatory timelines.

General Variances:

Licensed foster homes and applicants may request a general variance for non-health and safety requirements in the licensing regulations. OCS may grant a general variance when an applicant can demonstrate the licensing requirement can be met through an acceptable alternative method. Examples include but are not limited to: window size that does not meet current standards, water temperature, available space or a request to increase the license capacity.

General variance requests are reviewed by the OCS regional variance committees. Each regional committee includes at least four members: An OCS licensing manager, a licensing supervisor, a protective services manager or supervisor, and a Tribal representative. Both licensing managers participate in all general variance committee meetings to ensure consistent decision-making statewide. If a general variance is denied by the regional committee, the recommendation is forwarded to the statewide variance committee for a second-review and is chaired by the Social Services Program Officer that oversees foster care licensing. The foster

parent may request a redetermination if a general variance is denied at the statewide committee level. A redetermination is reviewed by executive leadership.

In CY 2025 there were 299 variances submitted. Of these, 288 were approved and 11 were denied.

Region	Received	Approved
Anchorage Regional Office (ARO)	126	123
Southeast Regional Office (SERO)	3	3
Western Regional Office (WRO)	24	23
Southcentral Regional Office (SCRO)	69	65
Northern Regional Office (NRO)	77	74

General variances denied in CY26 were determined to present unresolved safety concerns and did not include any acceptable alternative method capable of meeting the intent of the governing regulation or statute. Because the identified requirements are designed to safeguard the health and well-being of children placed in the home, variances were denied when compliance could not be achieved without compromising these protections.

Residential Child Care Facilities follow the same procedures used for evaluating barrier crime and general variances. Variances in these settings may be requested to authorize the admission of a child when the facility has reached its licensed capacity, or to allow a youth who reaches age 18 while in treatment to complete the prescribed program prior to transitioning to a lower level of care.

Review of Licensing Files:

In April of 2026, the Administration for Children and Families conducted a primary review of Alaska's title IV-E foster care program. For the title IV-E audit, 112 licensing files were reviewed. While official results have not yet been finalized, a preliminary determination identified that Alaska was in substantial compliance with federal eligibility requirements for the period under review (4/1/2025-9/30/2025).

Adoption:

Licensed foster parents and unlicensed relatives may pursue adoption or guardianship when reunification is no longer a viable permanency option. Finalization requires completion of a standardized home study, which includes an assessment of the household and verification of Child Protective Services history checks and fingerprint-based background checks. Regional Permanency Specialists review each study for required content and assess the adequacy of the family evaluation.

In summary, Item 33 demonstrates strength, as Alaska applies these standards consistently across all regions, as evidenced by the information presented above.

Item 34: Requirements for Criminal Background Checks

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning statewide to ensure that the state complies with federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements, and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below. Ensure that you address all components of this question.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.
- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.
- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?
- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?
- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?
- What does the evidence show with respect to stakeholders' experience with the criminal background check process?
- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Item 34 is a strength area for the Office of Children's Services (OCS). OCS has established comprehensive, statewide procedures to ensure timely completion of criminal and civil background checks consistent with federal requirements for foster care and adoption placements. These processes include fingerprint-based checks, APSIN criminal history checks, child abuse and neglect registry checks, National and Alaska sex offender registry checks, and JOMIS checks for youth ages 12 and older.

Statewide Background Check System Functioning

OCS partners with the Department of Health's Alaska Background Check Program (BCP) to conduct all fingerprint-based and civil background checks. The BCP processes background checks through the New Alaska Background Check System (NABCS), which flags active background check recipients. If an individual with an approved determination is subsequently charged with a crime, BCP revokes the clearance and immediately notifies OCS. Currently, 3,704 individuals monitored by OCS are active in NABCS. It should be noted that some NABCS action items initially require manual entry and tracking, leading to possible delays or incomplete documentation. Overall, however, the system works timely and efficiently.

APSIN Monitoring and Real-Time Criminal Alerts

The OCS APSIN Unit conducts criminal history checks on all emergency licenses, unlicensed relative placements, and household members aged 16 and older. APSIN flags are placed on all licensed and

unlicensed caregivers and relevant household members to ensure that OCS receives real-time criminal activity alerts (T-messages). When a flagged individual is charged with a crime, APSIN sends a terminal message directly to the assigned Protective Services Specialist, licensing worker, and supervisors, enabling immediate assessment and action.

The APSIN Unit also conducts child abuse registry checks and JOMIS checks for individuals aged 12 and older.

APSIN Monitoring Data

Fiscal Year	APSIN Checks Completed	Individuals Flagged	Flags Removed	T-Messages
2022	17,082	2,283	2,331	183
2023	16,910	2,113	2,341	243
2024	14,847	2,304	1,983	280
2025	15,037	2,177	2,001	217

OCS continues to enhance the thoroughness and timeliness of background checks by using NABCS to track key action items such as missing fingerprints, rejected fingerprints, expiring determinations, eligibility status changes, new hires, and pending variances. Notifications generated through NABCS support licensing managers and supervisors in ensuring that individuals are properly flagged in APSIN.

Improvements in monitoring and notification systems have significantly increased APSIN flagging improvements made in recent years affect comparability with older data (i.e. earlier years may represent under-flagged caseloads).

Real-Time Civil Barrier Identification

In 2024, OCS identified delays in recognizing substantiated civil barriers after background check determinations had been issued. To address this, OCS developed a real-time reporting process that notifies the BCP immediately when substantiated findings occur. This change reduced potential delays of up to five years in revoking background check eligibility. During FY 2025, 115 additional individuals with substantiated abuse or neglect findings have been identified and appropriately addressed.

OCS hopes to expand this system to include real-time identification of Child in Need of Aid (CINA) civil barriers. This initiative will include improved access to court documentation, enhanced documentation of CINA findings in the ORCA system, and automated identification of both parents involved in CINA cases.

Adoption:

All families pursuing adoption or guardianship must have an approved home study, which includes verification of the Child Protective Services history check and the fingerprint-based background check, before finalization can occur. Completion of these background checks is required to establish eligibility for state and Title IV-E adoption or guardianship subsidies. The OCS Adoption and Guardianship Eligibility Team is responsible for confirming that fingerprint-based background checks have been completed as part of the subsidy eligibility determination. In FY25, 309 eligibility determinations were completed and found to be in compliance.

In summary, Item 34 remains a strength for Alaska. The state maintains a fully operational system that ensures completion of all required background checks statewide and incorporates a structured variance process to address safety considerations and the needs of foster and adoptive families.

Item 35: Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:
How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning to ensure that the process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the state for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed is occurring statewide?

In your analysis:
Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.
- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.
- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?
- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?
- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?
- What does the evidence show with respect to children and families' experience with the ensuring a diversity of foster and adoptive parent homes?
- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

Alaska has identified that CFSR, Item 35, is a strength. OCS maintains consistency to ensure that efforts to recruit foster and adoptive families align with the racial and ethnic diversity of the children statewide who require placement. Alaska's licensed and unlicensed foster homes experienced substantial disruption during the COVID-19 pandemic. Consistent with national trends, the state saw a significant decline in available foster parents. Although this decline began to stabilize as the pandemic subsided, the number of foster homes has not yet returned to pre-2020 levels. In May 2026, OCS had 2,369 children in out of home placement. Of this number, 1,285 or 54% were placed with a relative, fictive kin, or tribally approved home. Additionally, OCS had a total of 1,085 foster homes of which 496 were child specific homes. While our data reports cannot specifically identify the percentage, experience confirms that the majority of child specific homes are either relatives or fictive kin. Additionally, there were 337 unlicensed relative providers during this same period.

The tables below present the identified race of providers accepting child placements (both licensed and unlicensed) and the identified race of children in care. Because individuals may identify with multiple races, numbers do not equal the total number providers and children. The tables indicate that the racial composition of children in care is generally aligned with that of providers, with the exception of Alaska Native and American Indian populations.

Race	Providers
White	2562
Black/Afr. Am.	370
Asian	124
Amer. Indian	131
Unknown	228
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	133
AK Native	1204

Source: OCS Custom ORCA Report, run 5/2026

Region	Children	White	Black	Asian	Pacific Islander	AN/AI
Anchorage	896	280	151	36	64	589
Northern	384	116	22	8	5	300
Southcentral	658	339	58	14	12	410
Southeast	157	62	5	3	5	129
Western	203	2	0	0	2	202
Out of State	81	49	23	2	3	27
Total	2379	848	259	63	91	1657
Percentage	100.0%	35.6%	10.9%	2.6%	3.8%	69.7%

Source: OCS Custom ORCA Report, run 5/2026

Alaska Native/ICWA Foster Homes:

In Alaska, Alaska Native and American Indian individuals make up about 20% of the state's population. As shown by the chart above, the 69.7% of children in care disproportionately represent this same population. In 2025, OCS had 111 general foster homes with a bed capacity of 248 where at least one parent in the household was able to provide documentation indicating their race as Alaska Native or American Indian.

A child placed in an ICWA preference home does not necessarily indicate whether the household parents were Alaska Native or American Indian. Preference of the placement is based off both extended family as well as Tribal members and therefore could involve 1st preference familial placements who are not Alaska Native or American Indian. This is why we also take into consideration the number of children placed in preference home as referenced above. Of that number (2,369), 1,641 were identified as Alaska Native or American Indian (13 children were undetermined) and 882 or 54% were placed with a relative, fictive kin, tribal member, other tribal approved home, or had returned home.

OCS, in coordination with the licensing team and the Alaska Center for Resource Families, has implemented a focused strategy to increase kinship placements, including placements with fictive kin. Given the disproportionate number of Alaska Native and American Indian children in custody, recruitment efforts for general foster homes prioritize engagement with Alaska Native Tribes and Tribal families.

In 2017, the State initiated Tribal Compacting with approximately 18 cosigners, representing about 166 Tribes, to carry out identified scopes of work on behalf of the Department. As of 2026, the Compact has expanded to include 20 Tribal Cosigners. In 2018, this work broadened to include licensing assist to better support Alaska Native families caring for children in out of home care. Tribal Compacting—particularly the licensing assist component—enhances service delivery for Alaska Native families and communities by addressing barriers faced by families who may be uncomfortable with, or unable to engage directly with, OCS licensing staff, who maintain an in-person presence in only seven field offices statewide. Compacting Tribes are located throughout Alaska and often have closer proximity to, and stronger relationships with, the state's most rural communities, improving access and responsiveness to families' needs.

Diligent recruitment efforts:

Across all regions, recruitment efforts prioritize strengthening community partnerships and expanding engagement opportunities with prospective foster families. As part of the statewide Resource Family Recruitment and Retention initiative, each of Alaska's five regional teams submits an annual Recruitment and Retention Plan and associated budget. These multidisciplinary teams include OCS staff—such as licensing specialists, protective services specialists, ICWA specialists, and permanency planning specialists—alongside community representatives, tribal partners, and resource families. Teams convene at least quarterly to evaluate plan implementation, assess progress toward established goals and baselines, and adjust strategies as needed. Efforts remain focused on supporting existing resource families, including licensed and unlicensed homes, while also generating new resource family capacity. Across all regions, recruitment and retention efforts remain focused on increasing families within the following categories:

- ICWA preference resources families
- Resource families willing to care for children with complex medical needs
- Resource families willing to care for sibling groups and teens
- Emergency Shelter Care and therapeutic foster care in rural Alaska

During FY26, regional licensing teams used foster care promotional materials ("tangibles") to support community-based recruitment efforts. These materials provided information on the Alaska Center for Resource Families and outlined the process for becoming a foster parent. Items were distributed at outreach events statewide, including health fairs, education summits, cultural gatherings, nursing conferences, the Alaska State Fair, and other community events.

Across all five OCS regions, licensing staff engaged in ongoing community-based foster care recruitment and retention activities. Regional teams routinely participated in public events; collaborated with tribal organizations, community agencies, schools, healthcare providers, and nonprofits; and distributed foster care informational materials and promotional items. Regions also coordinated recruitment presentations, hosted meet-and-greet opportunities, and organized Resource Family appreciation or retention events to support both prospective and current foster parents. Several regions maintained recurring engagement opportunities such as monthly outreach events or standing meetings with tribal partners to address licensing needs and strengthen community relationships.

State Office and executive leadership coordinated targeted recruitment initiatives focused on specialized care needs, including autism, FASD, and complex medical conditions, in partnership with relevant community programs. Efforts also included outreach to the Polynesian community to expand culturally appropriate placement resources. State Office leadership continued collaboration with Beacon Hill of Alaska, Alaska Impacts Alliance, and similar organizations supporting least-restrictive placements. Public outreach efforts expanded through increased use of social media, streaming platforms, and general advertising in partnership with the DFCS Public Information Team and ACRF, with additional television and radio advertising currently in development through Gray Media.

Adoption:

Alaska no longer partners with any national or regional adoption exchanges. These exchanges demonstrated limited utilization and did not produce meaningful outcomes for Alaska's children. Additionally, Alaska continues to experience a significant disproportionality of Alaska Native children in out-of-home care. To support the long-term well-being of Alaska Native children, it is essential to prioritize placements that maintain their cultural, familial, and community connections. While some circumstances may necessitate out-of-state placement, the Department makes every effort to ensure children remain in Alaska whenever possible,

connected to their land, relatives, fictive kin, and Tribal communities. Instead, the Department has prioritized strengthening partnerships with Alaska-based programs that provide child-specific matching services, ensuring matching efforts are locally informed and better aligned with the unique needs of Alaska's children.

Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK) is a program administered by a nonprofit organization that receives grant funding from the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. The program serves youth residing in the Anchorage and Mat-Su regions. WWK conducts diligent recruitment activities to identify permanent families for up to 13 children, including locating birth relatives or other adults with prior connections to the youth. These children are typically legally free and have remained in care without an identified permanent placement. In addition, WWK monitors up to 10 children who have transitioned into their permanent placements. All services are individualized and tailored to each child's specific needs. The data indicate that the program consistently served 22 legally free youth annually, with an average match rate of approximately 23%. While the proportion of matched youth remains limited, these outcomes are considered successful given that the majority of participating youth have experienced extended time in custody and present with significant behavioral, mental health, and medical complexities.

Year	Youth Served	New Matches	Adoptions Finalized	Resources Contacted
2024	22	5	0	91
2025	22	5	3	113

Source: Wendy's Wonderful Kids

Beacon Hill's Permanency Department, a 501 C3 faith-based organization, along with community partners collaborates with OCS to provide adoptive home recruitment for children in OCS custody without a permanent placement or identified adoptive home. OCS refers children who need a permanent family through adoption or guardianship and Beacon Hill currently holds 54 child referrals. For some children referred, Beacon Hill utilizes the Heart Gallery of Alaska for youth who, together with their team of professionals, desire to tell their story to recruit for adoptive homes through organized professional photos, completed narratives to go with each photo, and an informative orientation to guide families in adopting through foster care. Currently 12 children are featured through the Heart Gallery. Beacon Hill is managing the photo listing website, OCS permanency referrals with monthly meetings with the child's care team and is fielding inquiries from interested families. Beacon Hill is also helping families develop family profiles and works with Alaska Center for Resource Families to equip families who are interested in adoption with appropriate training and resources. Beacon Hill's Permanency Department hopes to find the best family equipped to meet the child's needs. This service is currently available to children in all regions of Alaska.

Beacon Hill also helps prepare youth who need permanency through the SEEN Initiative (no associated acronym) which is a healing centered trauma informed mentorship program. The mentor meets tangible needs and helps prepare the youth for lasting stability, shortening the time the youth is in care without an adoptive family or relational permanency. SEEN mentorship is currently being offered to youth located in Anchorage and Mat-Su and serves 18 youth.

Both programs operated by Beacon Hill are in the early stages of implementation, with pilot activities beginning in 2024, and neither program has completed a full year of service delivery. Over the next one to two years, the programs are expected to yield more reliable data as implementation is fully established.

In Summary, the information provided in this section demonstrates that Item 35 is a strength area. OCS has a fully functioning, statewide process to license, recruit, and retain foster and adoptive families that meet the ethnic and racial diversity of the children in out of home care.

Item 36: State Use of Cross-Jurisdictional Resources for Permanent Placements

For this item, provide evidence that answers this question:

How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning to ensure that the process for ensuring the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children is occurring statewide?

Please provide relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information that show the state's process for ensuring the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children is occurring statewide.

Please include quantitative data that specify the percentage of all home study requests received to facilitate a permanent foster or adoptive care placement that are completed within 60 days.

In your analysis:

Using relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information, briefly summarize the most salient observations and findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement, by answering the questions below.

- What data sources were used/analyzed to inform state observations? Briefly describe your analysis, including data periods represented, measures, and methodology.
- Are there limitations to the evidence and information (e.g., completeness, accuracy, reliability)? Briefly describe those limitations.
- What does the evidence show with respect to the system functioning statewide?
- What does the evidence identify as areas of strength?
- What does the evidence identify as areas in need of improvement?
- What does the evidence show with respect to stakeholders' experience with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children process overall?
- How do the findings compare to CFSR Round 3 performance in this area? Describe improvement efforts made during the PIP and/or CFSP, if applicable. To what extent does current information reflect those improvements?

State Response:

The statewide assessment identifies this as an area needing improvement. While some items have had dramatic improvement, particularly increasing timeframes for adoption assessments within 90 days and an increase of the overall percentage of home studies completed within under 60 and under 90 days, the majorities of home studies take over 60 days to complete as allowed by the Safe and Timely Families Act.

The barrier to timely completion continues to be staffing issues at the field offices, which in turn cause workers to have high caseloads. Alaska is required to prioritize essential services, which can cause a delayed response to ICPC requests. Another significant cause of delay occurs when a provider or household member is determined to have a criminal or child protection-based barrier. The review process, whether through a variance or through the procedure outlined for parents or unlicensed relatives, can take months to complete to ensure the barrier-related concerns have been mitigated. Another contributing factor to this is that the contract agency for adoption home studies has 90 days, per the contract, to complete those studies.

Additionally, the department has made changes to better manage Out-of-Town Requests (OTRs) for placement of children across regional lines, integrating the requests, assignments and completion into our SACWIS ORCA. Since 2023, approximately 250 OTRs have been assigned.

The Alaska ICPC office has implemented and is continuing several strategies to decrease the time to out of state home study completion and placement determination.

- ICPC continues to be co-supervised with the statewide permanency unit, sharing resources and leveraging intersectional work for more timely outcomes.
- We have implemented new workflows including establishing a shared e-mail box for all ICPC staff that inquiries from within and out of state can be funneled to, and digital file maintenance.
- We have established internal deadlines and expectations for acting on work to get caught up after a prolonged vacancy and maintain efficiency in the future.
- ICPC staff are empowered to directly request home studies and obtain needed court records, vital docs, medical records and background checks
- Alaska continues to operate in NEICE along with 46 other states.
- ICPC training is routinely provided to field staff and support units for greater understanding of expectations, challenges, and timeframes
- ICPC and the division's policy team meet on a monthly basis to update policies, procedures and forms.
- We follow up with home study writers every two weeks on home studies that are coming due soon or are overdue to check on progress toward completion.
- We are hosting planning meetings with field and permanency staff on a case-by-case basis regarding ICPC cases needing immediate intervention or creative problem solving to overcome interjurisdictional issues.
- We created templates to use to notify other states when there are delays in the home study process.
- We updated the home study template to make the questions clearer, and to better ensure compliance with the content requirements identified in the ICPC regulations.
- We have significantly reduced the required documentation supplied by field staff creating referrals.
- ICPC & Permanency leadership meet on a monthly basis to assess the status of all youth out of state requiring permanency, and coordinate with stakeholders on next steps to reach finalization.

2025 Home Study Completion Compliance

ALL	Number of ICPC requests	Percentage in 60 Days	Percentage in 90 Days	Percentage in Over 90 Days
Adoption	10	0%	60%	40%
Licensed	25	20%	24%	56%
Parent	9	56%	33%	11%
Relative	24	21%	25%	54%
Total	68	22%	31%	47%

Source: OCS ORCA ICPC Home Study Completion Time Report (run date of 4/30/2026)

Appendix: CFSR State Data Profile

[The State Data Profile is available from the state or the Children's Bureau upon request, and is posted at https://acf.gov/cb/data-research/data-and-statistics-cfsr-statewide-data-indicators.]