

## TRANSFORMING CHILD WELFARE OUTCOMES FOR ALASKA NATIVE CHILDREN STRATEGIC PLAN: 2016-2020

**Vision: Alaska Native culture keeps Alaska Native children safe.**

**Mission: Alaska Native children, families and communities are thriving through respectful government-to-government collaboration, community leadership, and aligned systems of care.**

### Values:

- We believe Alaska Native families and communities are the best place for Alaska Native children to thrive
- We believe Alaska Native children are the future of thriving Alaska Native cultures
- We believe providing care for Alaska Native children as close to home as possible achieves better outcomes
- We believe the values and spirit encompassed in the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) are in the best interest of Alaska Native children
- We believe it is vital that all partners involved in the welfare of Alaska Native children commit to engage in courageous, transparent and forgiving conversations without fear of reprisal
- We believe in the strength of partnership and collaboration, and our work will be conducted in coordination with the Tribal State Collaboration and other concurrent initiatives aimed at improving the lives of Alaska Native children and families
- We recognize the inherent right of Tribes to manage their own child welfare systems

### STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

<b>Respectful Government-to-Government Collaboration &amp; Partnership</b>	<b>Self-Governance</b>	<b>Embrace &amp; Implement the Spirit of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)</b>	<b>State Government Alignment</b>	<b>Community Engagement</b>	<b>Culturally Specific Services and Supports</b>
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### GOALS

<i><b>Achieve formal, friendly and forever recognition of Tribes by the State</b></i>	<i><b>Tribes self-govern the welfare of their children, and have the resources to do so</b></i>	<i><b>Embrace the spirit and values of ICWA to ensure Alaska Native children are with their families and community</b></i>	<i><b>Ensure state government systems are aligned and services provided based on the values and spirit of ICWA</b></i>	<i><b>Alaska's child welfare system operates as a partnership among the community, Tribes, State and Federal governments to keep Alaska Native children in their family and culture</b></i>	<i><b>Provide a continuum of culturally specific supports that ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of Alaska Native children</b></i>
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### OBJECTIVES

<p>A1: Develop and implement a Truth and Reconciliation process</p> <p>A2: Achieve formal recognition of Tribes by the State</p> <p>A3: Institutionalize Tribal Consultation with mutual power, authority, and decision-making</p> <p>A4: Establish enforceable agreements built on true collaboration and mutual cooperation</p> <p>A5: Align systems so that Tribal processes are respected and interactions are conducted with mutual respect between sovereign leaders</p>	<p>B1: Clearly define the role and responsibilities of the Tribe, state and federal government as it relates to child welfare and align state agencies to support a smooth transition to self-governance</p> <p>B2: Ensure Tribes have the opportunity to design their own models for addressing the welfare of their children</p> <p>B3: Create a resource development plan to develop and maintain Tribal capacity and ensure parity of resources</p> <p>B4: Compact Child Welfare Services with Tribes</p> <p>B5: Resolve sovereign immunity issues</p>	<p>C1: End institutional racism</p> <p>C2: Educate and advocate for policy and practice changes to align the interpretation of ICWA with the original legislative intent</p> <p>C3: Increase the number of children placed with family in their own communities and create and implement processes that support this goal</p> <p>C4: Improve awareness of the positive outcomes achieved as a result of Tribal participation in the judicial process</p>	<p>D1: Align agencies towards the shared value that protecting children is everyone's responsibility</p> <p>D2: Promote increased flexibility, coordination and collaboration across government to ensure effective and efficient allocation of resources and delivery of services</p> <p>D3: Identify and reduce barriers to collaboration and alignment</p> <p>D4: Research mechanisms for providing improved access to services for children and families</p>	<p>E1: Foster a better understanding of each community and partner's ability and responsibility to transform child welfare outcomes for Alaska Native children</p> <p>E2: Ensure communication among all partners is open, honest, and transparent</p> <p>E3: Help front-line workers meaningfully and respectfully engage with local Tribes</p> <p>E4: Solicit and incorporate feedback from the community</p> <p>E5: Provide continuity in engagement and interaction with families</p>	<p>F1: Collaboratively develop, implement and align individualized, culturally specific service plans</p> <p>F2: Support the availability and accessibility of a continuum of culturally specific services for children and families in their community, including focus on primary prevention and early intervention</p> <p>F3: Ensure systems, institutions and the OCS workforce are reflective of the culture and the community served</p> <p>F4: Address funding obstacles related to provision of culturally specific services</p>
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# Respectful Government-to-Government Collaboration & Partnership

## STRATEGIC GOAL

*Achieve formal, friendly and forever recognition of Tribes by the State*

## OBJECTIVES & TACTICS

### **A1: Develop and implement a Truth and Reconciliation process**

- A1a: Develop phased process for Truth and Reconciliation including research, education, and other processes, culminating in implementation
- A1b: Research traditional Tribal methods of Truth and Reconciliation
- A1c: Benchmark successful processes
- A1d: Work with partners such as First Alaskans Institute (FAI) to educate the public on the importance of Truth and Reconciliation
- A1e: Identify stakeholders and key partners to lead and participate in Truth and Reconciliation process e.g. government entities, legislators, Attorney General, Chief Justice, Department of Law, Department of Education, etc.

### **A2: Achieve formal recognition of Tribes by the State**

- A2a: Benchmark legislation in Alaska and in other jurisdictions
- A2b: Secure sponsors for legislation
- A2c: Draft legislation
- A2d: Hold public hearings

### **A3: Institutionalize Tribal Consultation with mutual power, authority, and decision-making**

- A3a: Benchmark existing policies
- A3b: In cooperation with Tribes across the state, develop and implement state policy on Tribal Consultation
  - Use meetings of entities such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Alaska Federal of Natives (AFN) as venues for convening and discussing Tribal Consultation
  - Clarify use of Consultation before decisions are made vs. Consultation on existing decisions
- A3c: Develop mutually agreed upon consequences for decisions made without Consultation
- A3d: Develop specific strategies to assist Tribes who do not already have the opportunity to Consult

### **A4: Establish enforceable agreements built on true collaboration and mutual cooperation**

- A4a: Bring Tribes into cases at the onset, before Case Plans are determined
- A4b: Recognize the impact of Tribal sovereignty on agreements
  - Work to secure agreements that do not require waiving Tribal sovereignty or with limited waivers
  - Narrow the language of waivers and stop using waivers as an “easy out”
- A4c: Identify venues for legal action – Tribal vs. state court
- A4d: Identify Tribal resources for dispute resolution

### **A5: Align systems so that Tribal processes are respected and interactions are conducted with mutual respect between sovereign leaders**

- A4a: Identify and align federal and state regulations
- A4b: Ensure systems and processes address agenda setting and timelines of Tribes

## Self-Governance

### STRATEGIC GOAL

*Tribes self-govern the welfare of their children, and have the resources to do so*

### OBJECTIVES & TACTICS

**B1: Clearly define the role and responsibilities of the Tribe, state and federal governments as it relates to child welfare and align state agencies to support a smooth transition to self-governance**

- B1a: Convene parties to develop clear definition of roles and responsibilities of Tribes, state and federal government
- B1b: Determine what services will transition to Tribes as part of Self-Governance and when transitions will occur; identify potential gaps and mechanisms to bridge these gaps

**B2: Ensure Tribes have the opportunity to design their own models for addressing the welfare of their children**

- B2a: Tribes to self-assess readiness
- B2b: Identify and build on successful models such as Foster care, Rural social service grants, IV-E Maintenance Agreements, In-Home Service Models

**B3: Create a resource development plan to develop and maintain Tribal capacity and ensure parity of resources**

- B3a: Work collaboratively to leverage mutual resources and seek additional resources
- B3b: Propose alternative methods to Federal government for developing resource plans
- B3c: Assign prioritized value to programs, services, functions and activities and ensure funding, technical support, and other resources follow the item
- B3d: Evaluate funding and resources available vs. number of children to be served

**B4: Compact Child Welfare Services with Tribes**

- B4a: Pilot self-governance compact with OCS
- B4b: Educate partners about compacting, including the benefits of compacting

**B5: Resolve sovereign immunity issues**

- B5a: Elevate the sovereign immunity discussion to the Cabinet level
- B5b: Leverage Tribal IV-E Consultations to address sovereign immunity issues

## Embrace & Implement the Spirit of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

### STRATEGIC GOAL

*Embrace the spirit and values of ICWA to ensure Alaska Native children are with their families and community*

### OBJECTIVES & TACTICS

#### **C1: End institutional racism**

- C1a: Differentiate institutional racism as it relates to child welfare
- C1b: Educate child welfare partners and the general public about institutional racism
  - Identify and leverage resources to assist with education efforts
- C1c: Create engaged dialogue leading to implementation and responsibility
- C1d: Train staff of OCS and child welfare partners to better assess institutional racism at the individual and institutional level
- C1e: Recognize the impact of the conflicting value systems of Western and Tribal cultures

#### **C2: Educate and advocate for policy and practice changes to align the interpretation of ICWA with the original legislative intent**

- C2a: Assess policy, procedure, and practice across Divisions as it relates to ICWA; update as needed to ensure consistency with the spirit and values of ICWA
- C2b: Ensure training aligns with embracing the spirit and values of ICWA
- C2c: Provide basic education for state agencies about ICWA and each agency's role in implementing the spirit and values of ICWA
- C2d: Ensure values of ICWA are evident in outcomes

#### **C3: Increase the number of children placed with family in their own communities and create and implement processes that support this goal**

- C3a: Strengthen strategies to support family preservation, including providing Tribal family members with assistance such as child care, mental health care, etc.
- C3b: Implement Regional Tribal State Recruitment and Retention Plans
- C3c: Redefine important terms such as "risk" and "wellness" to include cultural values
- C3d: Review Team Decision Making (TDM) process to ensure it reflects / incorporates Tribal processes and culture
- C3e: Assess and improve staff awareness of personal bias in placement selections
- C3f: Review In-Home Service Plans generated by Tribes to identify and replicate best practice

#### **C4: Improve awareness of the positive outcomes achieved as a result of Tribal participation in the judicial process**

- C4a: Assess judicial process impacts
- C4b: Provide better training and resources to support Tribal participation and representation in the judicial process from the beginning to end of a case
- C4c: Involve the Court Improvement Program (CIP) in implementation

## State Government Alignment

### STRATEGIC GOAL

*Ensure state government systems are aligned and services provided based on the values and spirit of ICWA*

### OBJECTIVES & TACTICS

#### **D1: Align agencies towards the shared value that protecting children is everyone's responsibility**

- D1a: Ensure leadership at DHSS is aligned around shared values of ICWA
- D1b: Assess DHSS organizational structure to determine how it can be improved to better serve Alaska Native children and families
- D1c: Communicate Strategic Plan to all stakeholders including providers, court system, etc.
- D1d: Ensure all child welfare related agencies are involved in strategic plan implementation
- D1e: Hold regularly scheduled, joint meetings among state government staff; make attendance at these meetings a priority
- D1f: Leverage the Court Improvement Program (CIP) as a vehicle for aligning agencies towards shared values

#### **D2: Promote increased flexibility, coordination and collaboration across governments to ensure effective and efficient allocation of resources and delivery of services**

- D2a: Analyze information flow to determine and enhance what information can be shared among agencies
- D2b: Evaluate funding streams and develop mechanisms to better leverage available funds
- D2c: Improve coordination across agencies to get more citizens enrolled in Medicaid
- D2d: Educate staff regarding formal and informal resources available; train staff on how to access these resources
- D2e: Develop more public / private demonstration projects that foster innovation and creativity

#### **D3: Identify and reduce barriers to collaboration and alignment**

- D3a: Conduct assessments with staff to assess and address barriers to collaboration and engagement
- D3b: Develop quarterly innovation recognition awards for employees and/or divisions
- D3c: Develop accountability process to ensure collaboration is a priority for staff

#### **D4: Research mechanisms for providing improved access to services for children and families**

- D4a: Research effectiveness and efficiency of a "single point of entry" system for clients to access state services
- D4b: Analyze current case flow
- D4c: Research what has worked well in other States

## Community Engagement

### STRATEGIC GOAL

*Alaska's child welfare system operates as a partnership among the community, Tribes, State and Federal governments to keep Alaska Native children in their family and culture*

### OBJECTIVES & TACTICS

#### **E1: Foster a better understanding of each community and partner's ability and responsibility to transform child welfare outcomes for Alaska Native children**

- E1a: Institutionalize strategic priorities by presenting the strategic plan to policy leaders, funders, and groups such as the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), and the Council for the Advancement of Alaska Natives (CAAN)
- E1b: Develop and implement joint statewide campaigns to increase awareness of child welfare issues and to educate the public about the strengths and successes of Alaska Native culture
- E1c: Implement *Knowing Who You Are* in school districts to embed importance of cultural identity
- E1d: Improve understanding of organizational structure of OCS and its child welfare partners
- E1e: Celebrate successes and highlight programs and initiatives that work well

#### **E2: Ensure communication among all partners is open, honest, and transparent**

- E2a: Model open, honest communication among child welfare partners
- E2b: Evaluate whether current systems of communication assume "western" ways of communicating
- E2c: Mutually agree what information can be shared among groups so children's needs are better met
  - Ensure communication does not violate confidentiality; create Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with Tribes to allow sharing of information
- E2d: Continue and expand OCS-led community conversations with stakeholders such as parents and foster parents
- E2e: Conduct an assessment with OCS frontline staff to identify and address barriers to engagement with the community
- E2f: DHSS and Tribes will develop strategies to promote relationship building e.g. potlucks to welcome new OCS workers
- E2g: Develop strategies to hold each other accountable to community engagement activities
- E2h: Develop shared calendars

#### **E3: Help frontline workers meaningfully and respectfully engage with local Tribes**

- E3a: Identify and build on existing models of successful community engagement e.g. Fish & Game model
- E3b: Improve understanding among OCS staff of importance of relationship-building with Tribes
- E3c: Ensure all state employees understand the value of traditional activities
- E3d: Conduct periodic staff meetings to share successes and challenges; translate these across agencies
- E3e: Increase job shadows of Tribal staff

#### **E4: Solicit and incorporate feedback from the community**

- E4a: Solicit the expertise and guidance of Tribal and community leaders regarding transformation of the child welfare system
- E4b: Develop mechanisms to track and follow-up on ideas generated by partners and the community
- E4c: Develop specific strategies for engaging foster parents and youth who have aged out of the system

#### **E5: Provide continuity in engagement and interaction with families**

- E5a: Identify single point-of-contact for families
- E5b: Consider team case management system including OCS and Tribal / village representatives

## Continuum of Culturally Specific Services and Supports

### STRATEGIC GOAL

*Provide a continuum of culturally specific supports that ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of Alaska Native children*

### OBJECTIVES & TACTICS

#### **F1: Collaboratively develop, implement and align individualized, culturally specific service plans**

- F1a: Equip child welfare workers with the tools needed to determine and define culturally specific services for each family and Tribe
- F1b: Expand the meaning of service to include informal community resources
- F1c: Involve more Tribal elders in the process of identifying cultural practices that enhance resiliency and reduce trauma

#### **F2: Support the availability and accessibility of a continuum of culturally specific services for children and families in their community, including focus on primary prevention and early intervention**

- F2a: Ensure OCS policy and training is supportive of culturally specific service delivery
- F2b: Inventory services and resources provided by OCS, providers and Tribes (formal and informal)
- F2c: Formalize referral processes for services across agencies / Tribes / state
- F2d: Expand training to Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) to provide more culturally specific services
- F2e: Cross-walk available culturally specific services to billable codes
- F2f: Improve coordination across systems as it relates to early intervention
  - Inventory and build on existing models of successful early intervention programs (e.g. Fatherhood is Sacred, Health Families, etc.)

#### **F3: Ensure systems, institutions and the OCS workforce are reflective of the culture and the community served**

- F3a: Improve efforts to recruit Alaska Native workers to OCS
- F3b: Evaluate how OCS jobs are posted and modify as needed so postings are more inclusive and easier to access

#### **F4: Address funding obstacles related to provision of culturally specific services**

- F4a: Explore options to leverage and expand resources
- F4b: Ensure Tribal representation in Medicaid Section 1115 Waiver process
- F4c: Gather resources on resiliency (e.g. Seaalaska and Heritage)