

Hello Group. Below are the general themes from all the public meetings and any additional notes that I received. Hope this is helpful in moving forward with recommendations to the state.

General Themes from Public Comment Activities

In reviewing OCS's strategic plan for 'Where we want to be in 2007,' I found they outline the following goals that are consistent with themes from public meetings.

- **Provide culturally appropriate services**
- **Increase the # of Alaska Native foster and adoptive homes**
- **Have community-based, family-focused, child-centered continuity of care**
- **Have qualified and stable workforce with manageable case loads**
- **Meet or exceed national standards and benchmarks**
- **Maximize sources of revenue**
- **Integrated Quality Assurance and Continuous quality improvement process.**

The public comment process did not greatly differ from these goals though there were more specific ideas around change.

Culturally appropriate services

- Simplify process of foster home certification or change process so that it is not so difficult for Native families to get certified to provide foster care.

Continuity of care

- Minimize the number of times a child is moved in the foster care system
- Increasing consistency between regional offices' procedures
- Collaborative 'working' case plans need to be the standard not the exception and they need to include the family as part of the development and implementation of the plan
- Implementation of a tracking system for children
- Increase collaboration / joint visit with Troopers and social workers for ROH

Qualified and stable workforce w/manageable case loads

- Increased state budget for staffing
- Minimizing the number of cases assigned to each case worker
- Increase standards for hiring OCS case workers.
- OCS Training on P&P and Cultural Sensitivity
- Accountability built in to the process for social workers
- More support (aides and assistants) for social workers
- Give training and rights to case workers to drug test with a UA 'on the spot'

Impact on families and communities

- Reach **all** Alaskan families who need help in a timely fashion
- Families should have an opportunity to interview case workers prior to assignment so that a 'good' match is made or to change case workers at least once for personality differences or have an opportunity for mediation.
- Education of Foster Parents
 - Boundaries
 - Drug and Alcohol Abuse
- Families served in their communities

- Allow for family to visit children outside of OCS office
- Special consideration for family members are foster care options
 - Expedite process for back ground checks for family members
- Increase local and state services for mental health

Quality Assurance

- Include process and funding for ensuring that adherence to P&P occurs
- Clearly defined grievance process that is consistent and accessible
- Benchmarks need to be set/Audits need to be routinely performed
 - Decrease the number of Alaska children victims
 - Minimizing the time it takes to respond to a complaint
 - Increased user satisfaction
 - Clearly defined performance standards for OCS Staff

Some them things that didn't really fall under a specific category:

- Allow for a separate court process (ie Family Court) for OCS cases
- Teens need to be addressed as a separate issue to include how to deal with Runaways, teen truancy and the lack of treatment facilities for teens.
- Need for specific guidelines to address children who are home schooled.
- Is there P&P around conflict resolutions?

Mental Health Issues

- Facilities in state need to be increased-counseling needs to be available
- Support for Foster Parents needs to be available
- Counseling for parents at risk of abuse or with ROHs that are not to a point of removing the child.