

# ALASKA'S CHILDREN 2005

## Alaska's Children At a Glance

State Population (2003) <sup>1</sup> .....	648,818
State Population, Children	
Under 18 (2003) <sup>2</sup> .....	189,289
State Poverty Rate (2003) <sup>3</sup> .....	9.7%
Poverty Rate, Children	
Under 18 (2003) <sup>4</sup> .....	13.8%
Poverty Rate, Children	
Ages 5-17 (2003) <sup>5</sup> .....	11.6%
Poverty Rate, Children	
Birth to Age 4 (2003) <sup>6</sup> .....	16.3%

## CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

- In 2002, 10,002 children were referred for investigation of child abuse and neglect in Alaska, a rate of 52.7 per 1,000 children.<sup>7</sup>
- In 2002, 7,950 children were substantiated or indicated as abused or neglected in Alaska, a rate of 41.3 per 1,000 children, representing a 50% decrease from 2000. Of these children, 62.3% were neglected, 21.1% were physically abused, and 7.9% were sexually abused.<sup>8</sup>
- In 2002, one child died as a result of abuse or neglect in Alaska.<sup>9</sup>
- On September 30, 2002, 2,072 children in Alaska lived apart from their families in out-of-home care, compared with 1,993 children on September 30, 2001. In 2002, 33.6% of the children living apart from their families were age 5 or younger, and 10.0% were 16 or older.<sup>10</sup>
- On September 30, 2002, 26.6% white children, 9.5% black children, 1.7% Hispanic children, 60.2% American Indian/Alaskan Native children, and 2.0% children of other races and ethnicities were living in out-of-home care in Alaska.<sup>11</sup>

## PERMANENT FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN

- Of the 844 children exiting out-of-home care in 2002, 62.9% were reunited with their birthfamilies.<sup>12</sup>
- In 2002, 224 children were legally adopted through the public child welfare agency in Alaska, a 19.4% decrease from 278 in 2001.<sup>13</sup>
- Of the 2,072 children in out-of-home care in 2002, 667 or 32.2% were waiting to be adopted.<sup>14</sup>

## KINSHIP SUPPORT

- In 2003, more than 4,643 Alaska grandparents had primary responsibility for caring for their grandchildren.<sup>15</sup>
- Of the 2,072 children in out-of-home care on September 30, 2002, 28.2% were living with relatives while in care.<sup>16</sup>
- Of all Alaska children in kinship care on September 30, 2002, 24.5% were white, 8.9% were black, 0.9% were Hispanic, 63.9% were American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 1.9% were other races.<sup>17</sup>

## CHILD POVERTY AND INCOME SUPPORT

- The total number of *individuals* receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in Alaska declined from 19,008 in March 2002 to 15,927 in March 2003, a decrease of 16.0%. The number of *families* receiving TANF in March 2003 was 5,548, a 14% decrease from March 2002.<sup>18</sup>
- In 2001, a family of three receiving only TANF and food stamps in Alaska was 17% below the federal poverty guideline.<sup>19</sup>
- In 2003, Alaska spent \$88,140,094 in TANF funds, including 56.9% on cash assistance, 8.4% on child care, 1.3% on transportation and support activities, and 33.3% on nonassistance.<sup>20</sup>
- In 2002, Alaska collected and distributed \$81,297,436 in child support funds, an increase of 4.4% from 2001.<sup>21</sup>

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- In 2003, the fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Alaska was \$871 per month, or 76% of the average monthly income for a worker earning the state minimum wage of \$7.15 per hour.<sup>22</sup>

#### C H I L D C A R E A N D H E A D S T A R T

- In 2001, Alaska served an estimated monthly average of 6,300 children with subsidized child care, an increase from 2000, when 6,200 children were served, and in 1999, when 6,300 children were served.<sup>23</sup>
- In 2003, a family of three could make no more than 77% of Alaska's median income, or \$38,928, to be eligible for subsidized child care.<sup>24</sup>
- In 2001, Alaska had no children on the waiting list for subsidized child care.<sup>25</sup>
- In 2003, 1,817 Alaska children were served by Head Start, a 1.2% decrease from 2002.<sup>26</sup>

#### H E A L T H A N D S U B S T A N C E A B U S E

- In 2001, 63,422 Alaska children under age 19 were enrolled in Medicaid, representing 60.1% of the total number of enrollees.<sup>27</sup>
- In 2003, Alaska had 22,934 children enrolled in its State Children's Health Insurance Program, a 2.9% increase from 2002, when 22,291 children were enrolled.<sup>28</sup>
- In 2002, 743 babies were born to girls younger than 15 in Alaska. In 2002, the number of babies born to teens ages 15–19 was 1,068, reflecting a rate of 39.5 births per 1,000 girls.<sup>29</sup>
- As of December 2002, 525 adults and adolescents, as well as 5 children under age 13, had been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS in Alaska.<sup>30</sup>
- In 2001, 20 children under age 20 committed suicide, a rate of 9.46 per 100,000 children in the population.<sup>31</sup>
- In 2002, an estimated 6,000 children ages 12–17, and 47,000 adults 18 and older, were dependent on or abusing illicit drugs or alcohol.<sup>32</sup>

#### V U L N E R A B L E Y O U T H

- In 2003, 10% of teens ages 16–19 were high school dropouts, a 2% increase from 2000.<sup>33</sup>
- In 2002, 19% of young adults ages 18–24 were not enrolled in school, were not working, and had no degree beyond high school.<sup>34</sup>

#### J U V E N I L E J U S T I C E A N D D E L I N Q U E N C Y P R E V E N T I O N

- In 2001, five children under age 18 were killed in firearm homicides in Alaska, compared with none in 2000.<sup>35</sup>
- In 2003, 5,521 children under age 18 were arrested in Alaska, an 8% increase from 5,102 arrests in 2002. Of the 2003 arrests, 215 were for violent crimes and 75 were for possession of weapons.<sup>36</sup>
- A 2001 census of juvenile offenders showed 349 children in juvenile correction facilities in Alaska.<sup>37</sup>

#### F U N D I N G C H I L D W E L F A R E S E R V I C E S F O R A L A S K A ' S C H I L D R E N

- In 2002, Alaska spent \$82,246,655 for child welfare services. Child welfare services refer to all direct and administrative services the state agency provides to children and families.<sup>38</sup> Of this amount, 38% was from federal funds and 62% was from state funds.<sup>39</sup>

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- In 2002, of the \$82,246,655 spent for child welfare, 18% was from Title IV-E Foster Care and Adoption Assistance, 1% was from Title IV-B Child Welfare Services and Promoting Safe and Stable Families, 7% came from Medicaid, 10% came from the Social Services Block Grant, 1% was from Supplemental Security Income, and 1% was from other federal sources. The remaining funds (62%) came from state and local sources.<sup>40</sup>

## A L A S K A ' S C H I L D W E L F A R E W O R K F O R C E

- A 2003 General Accounting Office (GAO) report documented that staff shortages, high caseloads, high worker turnover and low salaries impinge on delivering services to achieve safety, permanence, and well being for children.<sup>41</sup>
- The federal Child and Family Service Reviews have clearly demonstrated that the more time a caseworker spends with a child and family, the better the outcomes for those children and families.<sup>42</sup>
- According to the 2003 GAO report, the average caseload for child welfare/foster care caseworkers is 24–31 children and that these high caseloads contribute to high worker turnover and insufficient services being provided to children and families. CWLA recommends that foster care caseworkers have caseloads of 12–15 children.<sup>43</sup>
- In 2002, the minimum annual salary for a caseworker responsible for investigating reports of abuse and neglect in Alaska was \$34,836 ; the median income for a family of four in Alaska was \$69,868.<sup>44</sup>

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