

General Themes from Public Comment Activities

The following goals from the OCS strategic plan 'Where we want to be in 2007,' 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 of the 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.