

NAVIGATING PATHS TO ADOPTION THROUGH THE ALASKA FOSTER CARE SYSTEM:

A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR POTENTIAL ADOPTIVE PARENTS

By

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A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Project Management

University of Alaska Anchorage

December 2016

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## **Abstract**

Alaska has a higher than national average rate of adoption from foster care. While just over 20% of children in foster care nationally are discharged from state custody through adoption Alaska has nearly 30% of foster children discharged from state custody through adoption. There are a number of programs and resources available for foster parents and families interested in adopting through foster care in Alaska. However, there lacks a comprehensive single-point reference guide to explore the various paths.

This research was conducted to identify resources available for families interested in learning about paths to adopt from foster care in Alaska as well as what gaps are perceived by families who have begun the process of adopting through foster care.

A literature review was conducted and specific adoption program information was reduced to a synopsis or flowchart to generally outline each path to adoption through foster care. The final outcome of the project was a resource guide that outlines basic requirements to adopt through foster care and a number of programs to do so. The paths covered by this guide are the ACRF Adoption Learning Path, Legal-Risk Adoptions, OCS Recruitment of Legally Free Children, Wendy's Wonderful Kids, ACRF PARKA Program, Alaska Adoption Exchange, and Tribal and ICWA Adoption.

*Key Words:* Alaska, adoption, foster care

# **Navigating Paths to Adoption Through the Alaska Foster Care System: A Resource Guide For Potential Adoptive Parents**

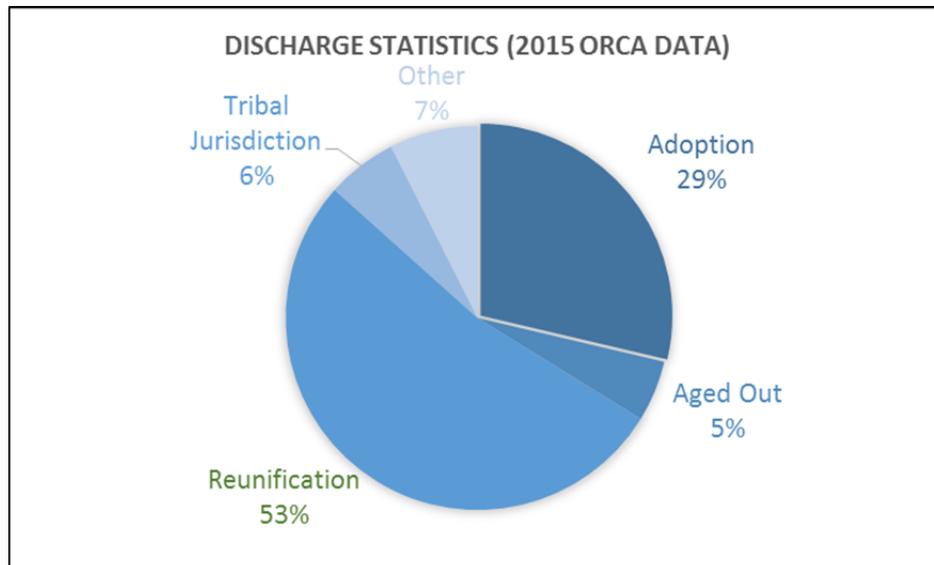
## **Introduction**

The product of this project is a resource guide for families and individuals to use as they explore options to adopt through Alaska foster care. The guide was created using project management principles to plan, execute, control, and close a project. The project planning phase was conducted during the Spring 2016 semester in conjunction with the capstone class PM686A, the first in a two part series as a graduate requirement for the Masters of Science in Project Management at UAA.

This purpose of the research was to identify resources available for families interested in learning about paths to adopt from foster care in Alaska. Additionally, what gaps are perceived by families who have begun the process of adopting through foster care? Information was collected through a literature review and a survey sent to families that had begun the process of adopting through foster care in Alaska. The product of the project was a comprehensive guide for potential adoptive families to understand the various paths available for adopting through foster care in the state of Alaska and to provide related resources. The final resource guide is located in the appendices. The project background, research methods, project management tools, literature review results, and conclusions of the project are contained herein.

## **Background**

Each year, hundreds of Alaska's children are placed in foster family care due to the risk of maltreatment in their family home. Based on 2016 averages, there are approximately 3,000 children in foster care throughout Alaska (Alaska Office of Children's Services, 2016). Reunification with family is always the goal for children who have been placed in foster care; however, only 53% of discharged foster children are reunified with their family. An estimated 29% to 36% of Alaska's children in State custody will discharge the foster care system through means of adoption (Alaska Office of Children's Services, 2016).



**Exhibit 1: State of Alaska, 2015 OCS Discharge Statistics** (Alaska Office of Children's Services, 2016)

The State of Alaska Office of Children’s Services primary goal is to protect children and investigate reports of abuse or neglect. Once a child is removed from their family due to a substantiated report the goal is almost always to work with parents to address the concerns with the goal of reunifying the child with their family. In Alaska, a majority of children in foster care are reunited with their families.

However, when reunification is no longer an option, adoption is a path for a child to become a part of a forever family. Adoption is a lifelong commitment under a legally binding relationship. An approved home study must be completed on the adoptive family and filed with the court prior to finalization of an adoption. If OCS has permanent custody of the child then they must consent to the adoption. When an adoption of a previous foster child is finalized, OCS oversight and supervision ends, foster payments cease; however, in some cases adoption subsidies may continue (Alaska Office of Children's Services, 2013).

OOH Placement Setting on Last Day of Year	
Foster Family Non-Relative Home	1,085
Foster Family Relative Home	1,042
Group Home	82
Institution	89
Other	17
Pending Discharge	33
Pre-Adoptive	49
Runaway	13
Supervised Independent Living	1
Trial Home Visit	363

Reason for all Discharges during the Year	
Adoption	285
Child Aged Out	51
Custody Released to Relative	25
Death Of Child	3
Guardianship	33
Reunification	525
Runaway - Custody Released	10
Transfer To Another Agency	1
Transfer to DJJ	2
Tribe Assumed Jurisdiction	59

**Exhibit 2: Out of Home Statistics** (Alaska Office of Children's Services, 2015)

Adopting from foster care may be right for families that are interested in providing a stable home for children that have experienced trauma or neglect, have limited financial resources for private adoption, are willing to accept the legal risk of younger children, may be interested in the adoption of older children and sibling groups, and are open to the likelihood of post-adoption family contact.

Adoption from foster care can be a lengthy process. This is an important consideration for a family choosing a method of adoption from foster care. Based on a 2006 study of children adopted from foster care in Alaska 76.1% of the cases took longer than 24 months in state custody before they were adopted.

Percent of Children Adopted From Foster Care in Alaska	
Within 0-11 months	6.8%
Within 12-23 months	17.0%
After 24 Months	76.1%

**Exhibit 3 Foster-to-Adoption Timelines** (The Center for Law and Social Policy, 2006)

### Research Question

This research was conducted to identify resources available for families interested in learning about paths to adopt from foster care in Alaska as well as what gaps are perceived by families who have begun the process of adopting through foster care. The intended result of this research was to produce a comprehensive resource guide to be used by individuals and families interested in exploring paths to adoption from Alaska foster care. The main objective of the project was to understand what resources were available through a survey of existing information available and through surveys. This goal was realized by conducting a thorough literature review. The surveys used for research illuminated perceived

knowledge or information gaps related to adopting from foster care in Alaska for individuals with firsthand experience adopting through foster care in the state of Alaska.

### **Project Objective**

The project included capstone class deliverables to plan, execute, monitor, control, and close the project. The project goal was to provide a resource guide that would clearly describe paths to adoption through foster care in the State of Alaska with inclusion of administrative requirements, licensing, procedures, timelines, and relative agency contact information, and to understand perceived gaps in currently available information. The format of the final product is a PDF guide that can be shared in digital format.

### **Project Scope:**

The scope of the project included the creation of a project management plan, stakeholder approval of project management plan, a literature review, a survey disbursement and collection identifying knowledge gaps, the creation of the resource guide, and execution, monitoring, and controlling project using the project management plan.

### **Exclusions**

The project excluded a plan for updates to the resource guide, and plan for ongoing support for maintaining an accurate resource guide, and additional project schedules other than the one associated with the overall project.

### **Project Constraints**

Project constraints included specific project deadlines for both 686A and 686B deliverables, the fact that all PPM's had to be delivered on specified due dates, communication with the Faculty Advisory Committee were largely limited to email due to busy schedules, research data was limited to amount that stakeholders allowed information to be shared and number of participating interviewees, and the project manager's commitment to this project was constrained by limited schedule availability.

## **Planning, Executing, and Controlling**

The project planning phase required close communications management with stakeholders including research area experts and faculty committee members. Thus, during the planning phase which coincided with the PM686 course a project management plan was created and the focus of this plan was communications management, stakeholder management, and time management. Some synopses of sections from the project management plan are described below in relevance to the project of creating the resource guide.

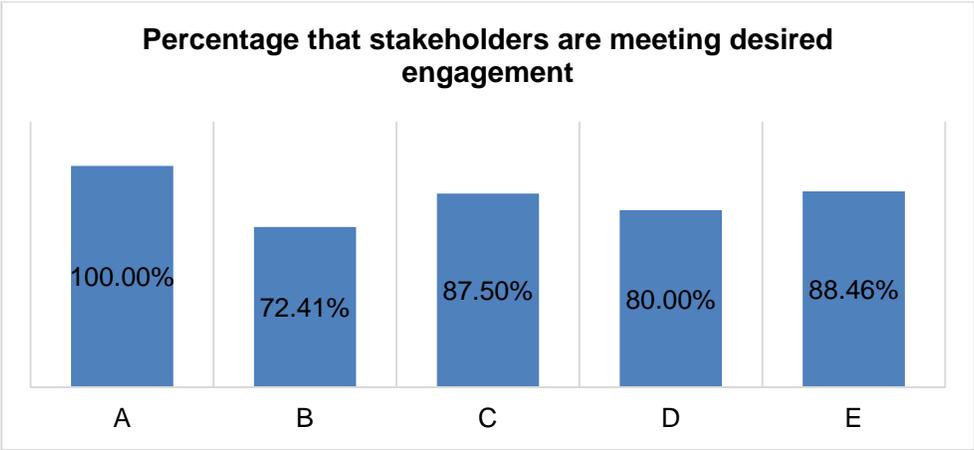
The project manager researcher worked closely with stakeholders, often posing time sensitive questions for which responses from stakeholders were of critical importance to the success of the project. Due to the need to closely monitor and control the outgoing requests to stakeholders and incoming responses, a tool was created to track progress in the three emphasis areas. The tool was an Excel spreadsheet with one tab for communications, one tab for stakeholder management, and one tab for time management.

**Communications Management**

Project related communications were tracked in the Excel tool. Each planned meeting was logged and updated with actual results of each planned meeting by measuring planned and actual occurrence of planned events. All project communications including verbal and phone conversations were recapped in an email as a way of tracking all communications. These emails were converted to PDFs and saved in the project archive. Additionally, the project communications were tracked in the spreadsheet and data was recorded pertaining to responsiveness of stakeholders and outstanding requirements detailed in the correspondence that had or had not been addressed. This allowed the project manager to easily track what outstanding follow up work was required for each stakeholder.

**Stakeholder Management**

The spreadsheet tool was used to track stakeholder engagement. Some stakeholders responded better to emails while some preferred in-person or over-the-phone communication. The number of correspondence emails sent and received and the actual engagement and desired engagement of each stakeholder was recorded. This mechanism of tracking desired engagement and current/actual engagement of each stakeholder allowed the project manager to develop specially tailored strategies to increase engagement of stakeholders that were performing below the desired engagement level.



**Exhibit 4: Percentage that stakeholders A,B,C,D,E met desired engagement levels**

## Time Management

Microsoft Project was used to track the project schedule. Time estimates were set for each task and a baseline was set. Time planned to complete tasks was compared to actual time expended to complete tasks. Time measurements were recorded in Microsoft Project and reported on throughout the project. Below is an example of the reporting format which was extracted from Microsoft Project.

Task Name	Work	Baseline	Variance
<b>Initiating and Planning</b>	<b>98 hrs</b>	<b>110 hrs</b>	<b>-12 hrs</b>
Start Project	0 hrs	0 hrs	0 hrs
<b>PPM1 (Due 1/29)</b>	<b>18.5 hrs</b>	<b>22 hrs</b>	<b>-3.5 hrs</b>
Stakeholder Identification and Analysis	1 hr	3 hrs	-2 hrs
Project Charter	6 hrs	5 hrs	1 hr
Preliminary Project Schedule	7 hrs	6 hrs	1 hr
Preliminary WBS	0.5 hrs	3 hrs	-2.5 hrs
200 Word Project Abstract	1.5 hrs	2 hrs	-0.5 hrs
Letter of Support from Project Sponsor	0.5 hrs	1 hr	-0.5 hrs

**Exhibit 5: Time management tracking in Microsoft Project (example)**

## Change Management

As the project evolved, the plan changed. The Change Management Plan was created as a subsidiary of the Project Management Plan which directed the project manager in the procedural requirements of documenting and tracking the necessary information required to effectively manage project change from project inception to delivery. Two major changes occurred due to realized risks. The change requests for this project that followed the Change Management Process as detailed in the Change Management Plan are detailed below.

### Change Request #1:

Narrative: Request for surveys were sent out and requests made via Facebook. Many had a hard time with the requirement to sign and send back agreements. This decreased response by individuals. Instead of receiving up to 20 surveys, only 3 were returned. Some people shared related information without first submitting signed consents. Thus, the surveys and information gained will be used qualitatively to understand where gaps in available foster-to-adopt information exists. Generally, formal and informal respondents noted gaps in training and available timelines to understand the foster-to-adoption process. Additionally, gaps were identified in available written resources such as ease of finding information.

Request: Eliminate requirement for 20 surveys.

Impact: General qualitative information will be used to understand gaps in current available resources and these gaps will be filled to some extent in the guide provided by this project.

Change Request #2:

Narrative: The project manager engaged with the following agencies regarding input (Adopt Us Kids, Office of Children's Services, Fairbanks Counseling and Adoption, and Northwest Adoption Exchange). Each of these agencies independently asked that the Project Manager work with the local Alaska Center for Resource Families as each of the agencies feeds specific program information to this one agency. After meeting with ACRF, existing resources for each of the aforementioned groups were provided in print. These will be incorporated into the resource guide provided by this project without further communication with agencies.

Request: Eliminate stakeholder engagement with many of the independent organizations, limiting input to the local agency Alaska Center for Resource Families.

Impact: limiting engagement with multiple entities will ease stakeholder management activities.

## **Research Methods**

The researcher reviewed current literature and existing publically available content relating to adoption from foster care in the state of Alaska from sources such as the State of Alaska Office of Children Services (OCS), Fairbanks Counseling and Adoption, Catholic Social Services, Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF), Adopt Us Kids, and Northwest Adoption Exchange. This literature review was used to build the content of the resource guide. The researcher conducted interview questionnaires with previous and current foster parents with two goals; first, to understand adopters perceived gaps in information pertaining to the foster-to-adopt process; secondly, to gain insights into what resources or guides the participants used and found helpful.

### **Description of Procedures**

1. The researcher advertised the solicitation for participation in the research study on a closed Facebook group for Alaska adoptive and foster parents. The target population was foster parents in the process of adopting through foster care and adoptive parents that had adopted through foster care. The researcher had a minimum threshold of 10 respondents to justify use in a representative analysis. There were only 4 respondents. Thus, the information gathered from these questionnaires led to a qualitative analysis of the information gathered and does not represent a statistically relevant sample of the population targeted.
2. The researcher collected information related to the foster-to-adopt process in Alaska by conducting a literature review of currently available resources available publicly online.
3. The researcher created a new resource guide taking from existing literature and online sources. Collected information was disseminated into generalized program and process flows to help guide families as they decide which program best suits their adoption goals; also, general administrative licensing and home study information was included along with a section for defined terms. Statewide adoption and foster resource agency contacts were aggregated into one list.

## Literature Review

### Literature Review Abstract

Many publications are publicly available as resources for individuals interested in adopting through foster care. Many of the existing resources are specific in content and do not comprehensively cover alternative paths, administrative procedures, placement decision preferences, and a list of available resources for more information. The product of this project is intended to bring many of these programmatic and informative documents into one comprehensive and easy to follow guide to help inform potential adoptive parents. Existing literature was disseminated into generalized program and process flows to help guide families as they decide which program best suits their adoption goals. Statewide adoption and foster resource agency contacts were aggregated into one list.

The Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK), 5<sup>th</sup> Edition is a publication widely accepted as the industry standard collection of processes, best practices, terminologies, and guidelines in the area of project management. The PMBOK is published by the Project Management Institute (PMI), a nonprofit professional organization for project management. The book includes the five process groups of initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing. The book also includes the ten project management knowledge areas including integration, scope, time, cost, quality, human resources, communication, risk, procurement and stakeholder. The PMBOK is the foundation for the guiding processes followed by the project manager in the initiation, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling this project.

During project planning and execution stakeholder engagement issues arose when stakeholders were non responsive in issues that directly affected the success of the project. Stakeholder engagement was undertaken as a mechanical task as planned for the project. Mark Aakhus and Michael Bzdak (2015) suggest that the issue here may have been a lack of communication design to invent forms of engagement with stakeholders prior to initiating engagement.

Stakeholder engagement requires informing stakeholders and making it clear what action items are required. Often, stakeholder engagement occurs at meetings. Successful meetings require pre-planning. Meetings require clear agendas distributed prior to the meeting being held, a clear purpose, and action item follow up (Aakhus & Bzdak, 2015). It is important to circulate an agenda prior to the meeting so participants have enough time to adequately prepare. It is helpful to have a clear vision or purpose for the meeting to help keep participants focused on an end goal (Schmidt, 2000).

Communication and information sharing of a print document with stakeholders that are not united by a single agency makes contribution, editing, and draft management a challenge. A multi-faceted approach to stakeholder engagement and communication strategies incorporating the use of web based applications and technologies allows for more effective communication and results in better social performance (Adams & Frost, 2006). Web based applications such as Sharepoint for GoogleDocs are effective tools for editing and sharing a document with local access for stakeholders across agency boundaries.

The adoption paths that were discovered in the literature review and covered in the resource guide include:

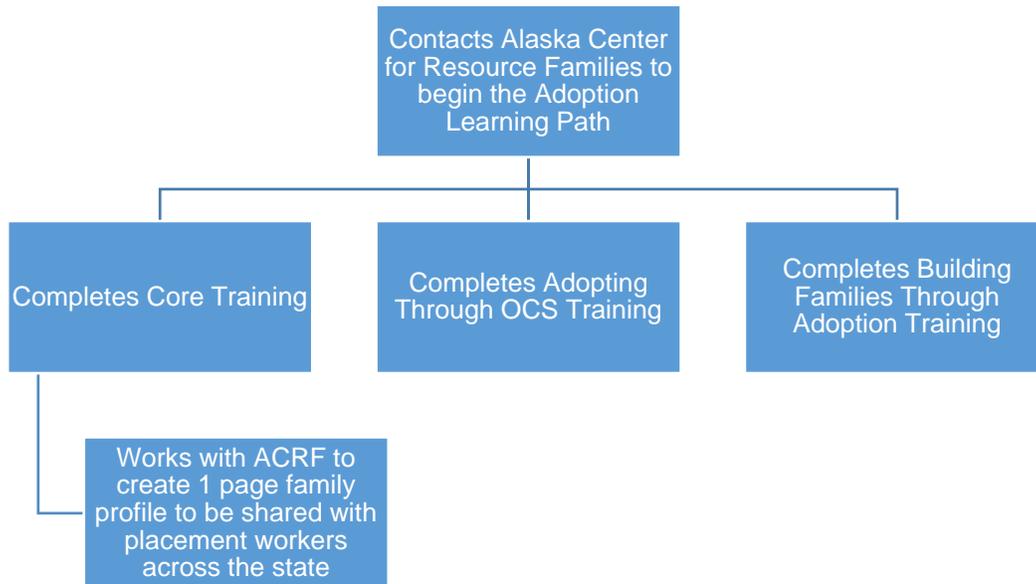
- Path 1. ACRF Adoption Learning Path
- Path 2: Foster/Adoption (Legal-Risk)
- Path 3. OCS Recruitment for Adoption of Legally Free Children
- Path 4. Wendy’s Wonderful Kids (Legally Free Children)
- Path 5. ACRF PARKA Program
- Path 6. Alaska Adoption Exchange
- Path 7. Tribal and ICWA Adoption

These 7 paths were discovered through the literature review. These sources included the Alaska Center for Resource Families: Paths to Adoption, Steps to Adopting from Foster Care, Adoption Learning Path, webpages under the parent site [www.acrf.org](http://www.acrf.org); the Alaska Division of Health and Human Services: OCS webpage, Alaska Statutes & Administrative Codes, ORCA Data, the Alaska Office of Children’s Services: webpage, Foster Care Overview, Foster Care Requirements, Foster Care Handbook. The 7 paths that were discovered during the research and that were included in the final resource guide are detailed below. A copy of the final resource guide is located in the appendices and includes agency contact information for each adoption path.

### **Path 1. ACRF Adoption Learning Path**

This is a recommended learning opportunity for all families interested in adopting from foster care in the State of Alaska and is open to all licensed foster homes. All training is free and can be coordinated through the Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF), a foster and adoption service agency. In-person classes are available in some communities; the courses also have distance delivery methods. This method of adoption is open to any licensed foster whom who attends the required trainings including Core Training for Alaska Resource Families, Adopting Through the Office of Children’s Services, and Building Families Through Adoption (Alaska Center for Resource Families, 2015).

The combined required training series provides detailed information regarding the mechanics of adopting through foster care in Alaska along with emotional, cultural and attachment considerations relevant to adoption. Once the training sequence is complete, ACRF will assist families in creating a profile that is shared with the State of Alaska Office of Children’s Services. The profile will help state placement workers match children with pre-adoptive families.



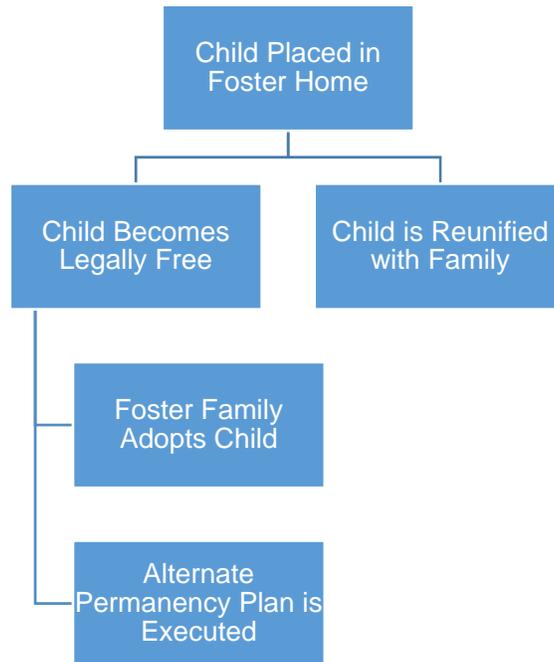
**Exhibit 6: ACRF's Adoption Learning Path Flow Chart**

**Path 2: Foster/Adoption (Legal-Risk)**

A licensed foster home can take placement of a child or sibling set that are likely to be adopted but are not yet legally free. This is where the term “legal risk” comes from; there is a legal risk that either the parental rights will not be terminated or that another person that exceeds the foster placement in the adoption order of preference comes forward and adopts. Many of the children adopted from foster care start as children that were simply non-adoptive placement where reunification with the biological parents were not an option. Often foster parents with long term placements that become legally free then adopt their foster child. This allows children consistency in placements and keeps a child that becomes legally free for adoption from being placed in another home.

OCS will make efforts to locate and contact all living family members of the child before adoption proceedings. Family members will receive written notice of their rights to family preference placement and of the procedures to pursue custody of the child (Alaska Office of Children's Services, 2013).

Adopting through this method has many benefits including having time to get to know a child and ensure that they will be a good fit for your family before adoption becomes a reality. As stated previously, nearly 30% of children that come into foster care in the state of Alaska will be adopted and children between birth through eighteen years of age are available as foster children. Thus, children of all ages are available through this method.



**Exhibit 7: Legal-Risk Adoption Flow Chart**

It is important for families considering adopting through legal-risk placements to understand that there is a high risk of the placement not ending in adoption. Reunification with family or relatives or tribal members are the first priority placements, if such a placement expressed interest and is approved for placement. There is no guarantee that legal-risk placements will end in adoption of the child and families must be prepared for that outcome. Foster parents should understand that they are expected to support the case plan even if they disagree.

Another consideration for legal-risk placements is that the child may be participating in ongoing contact with their biological family and an ongoing relationship with biological family members may be required, even after adoption is finalized. Adopting a foster child that is not legally free often results in a lengthy process and families should work with caseworkers to understand what the timeline if they have constraints such as needing to move out of state, being relocated for work.

### Path 3. OCS Recruitment for Adoption of Legally Free Children

Parent’s rights must be terminated in order for a child to be considered “legally free.” The Alaska OCS offices across the state have child specific recruiters to connect legally free children to adoptive placements. Legally free children have likely been in foster care for some amount of time prior to becoming legally free. In these cases, there is no plan to reunify the child with the biological family. Recruiters in these cases are able to provide perspective families with detailed child specific information before placement would occur, allowing careful consideration by the potential adoptive family to occur.

Based on the fact that children may have been in previous foster placements in addition to having been removed from their biological family it is possible that the child may have bonding and attachment issues. Additionally, while the recruiter and caseworker will help to identify and special needs it’s possible that the child may have documented and undocumented special needs. As is the case with many foster children, there may be a history of trauma and adverse childhood experiences.

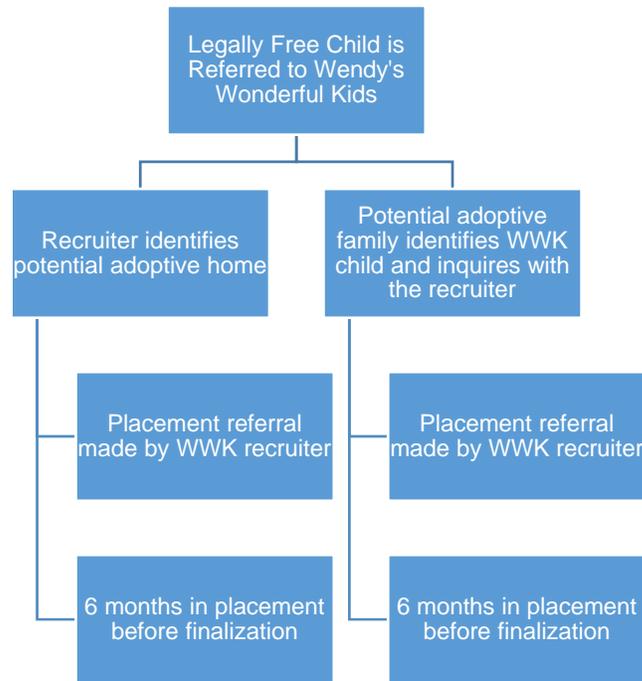
This timeline can be much more quickly executed from placement to finalization of adoption than legal risk placements. However, the child must be in the adoptive home for six months before the finalization of the adoption can occur. Again, ongoing interaction with the biological family may be required even after adoption is final, depending on the case (Alaska Center for Resource Families, 2015).



**Exhibit 8: OCS Recruitment for Adoption of Legally Free Children Flowchart**

#### Path 4. Wendy's Wonderful Kids (Legally Free Children)

Wendy's Wonderful Kids is a program that serves legally free children. So there is overlap between the Wendy's Wonderful Kids path and the path that was previously covered pertaining to legally free children. The children served by the Wendy's Wonderful Kids program tend to be those who have been in State custody for a long period and efforts to find a forever home have not come easily. Most children are over age 8 and have often had multiple placements. 53% of the children served by this program have been in foster care for more than four years (Alaska Center for Resource Families, 2015) (Dave Thomas Foundation, 2016). A Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiter in Anchorage is available to help to recruit adoptive families for specific children. This recruiter works through Catholic Social Services in Anchorage.



**Exhibit 9: Wendy's Wonderful Kids Adoption Flowchart**

#### Path 5. ACRF PARKA Program

The PARKA adoption program stands for Preparation for Adoption Readiness for Kids in Alaska. It's a small program that assists families in preparing to adopt and parent legally free children in foster care in Alaska. The children represented in this program are legally free. The program is no cost to families and is intended to prepare families for adoption (Alaska Center for Resource Families, 2015).

### **Path 6. Northwest Adoption Exchange**

The Northwest Adoption Exchange maintains photos and profiles of children waiting for adoptive homes. This can be filtered to include children in Alaska only. The purpose of the exchange is to facilitate communication between family adoption workers, recruiters, and families with the goal of finding adoptive families for legally free children. Families can explore profiled of waiting children online and inquire about specific children for more information.

The families interested must complete a positive private or public agency home study before placement can occur. If a family is interested in children in-state only they can contact the Alaska Office of Children's Services or Alaska Center for Resource Families to get started on the home study process.

### **Path 7. Tribal and ICWA Adoption**

Alaska Native children account for 55 percent of the state's foster children. Newly adopted regulations will replace guidelines for meeting Indian Child Welfare Act; these are now legally binding regulations. This means there will likely be increased efforts by state foster care workers to provide family and tribal placement preferences (Martinson, 2016). Tribal members seeking to adopt may find that their tribe or an agency in their region is looking for placement options for children actively. Information is provided on the State of Alaska DHSS website in regards to OCS ICWA staff and Lists of Tribes by OCS Region (Alaska Department of Health and Human Services, 2016).

### **Conclusions**

There are a number of programs and resources available for foster parents and families interested in adopting through foster care in Alaska. However, there lacks a comprehensive single-point reference guide to explore the various paths. This research was conducted to identify resources available for families interested in learning about paths to adopt from foster care in Alaska as well as what gaps are perceived by families who have begun the process of adopting through foster care.

While the research and resulting adoption resource guide did meet the project objectives there are a number of areas that are opportunities for future research. Specifically, the surveys used in this research yielded few responders. These surveys could be reworked to include more detailed information. Responses from more families and individuals would be much more revealing and statistically significant in to represent the targeted population. More responses are needed to truly understand what resources others have used and where there were identified information gaps.

## **Lessons Learned**

The level of engagement among various stakeholder groups varied. Once the issue of low engagement was realized, the project manager found it difficult to increase participatory interactions with that stakeholder.

Stakeholder engagement should have been predicated upon a designed communication plan tailored to individual stakeholders. For future projects similar to this one it would be advantageous for a communication and engagement plan to be developed with stakeholders as they are introduced to the project and the researcher or project manager. This could easily be done through a survey or questionnaire to help define stakeholder motivations to engage in the project, preferred methods of communication and constraints to responding to communication requests. By understanding motivations of each stakeholder and preferred communication methods and timing the project manager can increase their competency for inventing forms of dialogue with each stakeholder engagement activity to increase stakeholder perceived value and illicit a higher desire for stakeholders to respond (Aakhus & Bzdak, 2015).

During the planning and execution of the project there were several stakeholder meetings. Upon reviewing the value and efficacy of this activity, the project manager realized that there lacked a clarity of accomplishments gained at each meeting. It was realized that this was largely due to a lack of meeting planning and poorly communicated objectives in each meeting.

According to Michael Doyle and David Strauss (1976) meetings should have clear agendas distributed prior to the meeting being held, the purpose should be clear, and the participants should have time to prepare, action items should be clear at the end of the meeting and a recap should be shared among participants at the end. It is recommended that the project manager include this meeting planning activity prior to any meetings for future projects to increase meeting value and improve the efficacy of project related meetings.

Communication response time varied among project stakeholders. This was not well accounted for in the project schedule or project management plan. Editing and draft sharing became a complicated task. As the product of this project was a text document, it may be appropriate for similar projects in the future to be located on web based application that can provide easy access of a living document for review, editing, and commenting by multiple stakeholders. Some examples of an appropriate application may be a Sharepoint site or Google Docs where a document or spreadsheet could be created, edited, and stored online. Carol Adams and Geoffrey Frost validate the point that the web is a valid means of stakeholder engagement and it is often an appropriate mechanism for communicating to stakeholders (Adams & Frost, 2006)

## **Further Research**

Expanding on the current questionnaire

This research intended to use interview questionnaire results to identify resources that adoptive families used to understand the foster-to-adoption process and to identify any perceived information gaps.

Interview requests were advertised using a private, closed group on Facebook called *Alaska Adoptive and Foster Parents*. Few responses to the request yielded even fewer returned interviews. Generally, the strongest information gleaned from the interviews was that families are confused by the timelines for the legal-risk foster-to-adoption process. There are State established timelines; however, based on the responses these timelines do not seem to be adhered to. Another comment element that came out of the returned interview questionnaires was the gap in non-formal support groups for foster parents that are going through the process of adopting.

The issue of confidentiality

It's relevant to note here that legal-risk adoptions have a moving target for timelines. It is likely that the most relevant information pertaining to timelines would come from other families that have gone through the process of legal-risk adoptions. Additionally, the particulars of each case provide for different timelines. While it is relevant to have group interactions to discuss some of these issues, the desire for which was apparent in the interviews, foster parents are required to not discuss the particulars of a child's case with others. This may be a barrier for families that want to get others' perspectives but are unable to share case details with others. Adoptive parents however may share information about their child, post adoption. Thus, this information may be best gleaned from adoptive families and shared with others that are currently foster parents as a tool to evaluate their own legal-risk adoption process through the lens of other families experiences without having to share the details of their foster child's case with others.

Further research opportunities for others include elaboration on the survey used for this research and a larger number of responses. Very few surveys were received back for this research project and the questions asked in the interview yielded little information. The questionnaires could benefit from having more specific information included that help to describe real adoption story timelines. Such as how long the child was in foster care before the adoption was finalized. More granular information would also be relevant; such as how long the child was in foster care before the termination of parental rights was finalized. More granular than that might include questions about how many foster families the child had been placed in before being placed in the home that adopted. Below is a table of future questions that may be used to broaden the depth of responses in further research and is open for elaboration and tailoring by future researchers.

Potential future questionnaire focus areas:

<b>Area of focus:</b>	<b>More Granular Focus:</b>
<p>How long was the child that you adopted in foster care before being adopted?</p>	<p>Was your adoption of an already legally free child when they were placed with you or was the child placed as a foster child and ended with you adopting? How long was the child in foster care before the parents' rights were terminated? After termination how long did it take for the State to rule out other permanent placement options such as family and tribal members? How long after the goal was changed to adoption, did the State file the petition to terminate parental rights? From the time the child was first placed in foster care, how long until the State filed the petition to terminate parental rights? How long from the time that the TPR petition was filed, did the termination actually occur? After termination did occur, how long until the adoption was finalized? How long did the adoption home study take? What other remarks do you have to add as to the timeline of this case?</p>
<p>How old was the child that you adopted?</p>	<p>How old was the child when they entered foster care? How old were they when the adoption was finalized?</p>
<p>Did you adopt a child that was determined to be an ICWA case?</p>	<p>Is the child you adopted Native American or Alaska Native? What tribe are they from? Was the tribe actively involved in the case? If so, to what degree? Are you a member of that tribe? Did the tribe actively search for tribal members for permanent placement of the child? If they did identify a tribal member interested in adopting, what were the results of that effort? Did the tribe support you adopting the child? How long did it</p>

	take for the tribe to search for other placements or until they accepted your family as the permanent placement of the child?
Did you adopt siblings?	Did the child have siblings in foster care? Were you asked to consider adopting the siblings of this child? If the child had more siblings enter foster care, would you consider adopting them? If the child has siblings not in your home, do you make an effort to allow for visits with these siblings? Were you required under the adoption requirements to provide visits with siblings?
Does the child maintain contact with their biological family?	Were you initially supportive of the child retaining biological family contact? Are you still supportive? Were you required to maintain contact with biological family following the adoption being finalized? Does the biological family try to connect with the child through other mechanisms such as social media? How does this make you feel? Do you monitor the contact that your child has with biological family, including on social media?

#### Foster-To-Adopt From Other States

Further research is recommended to determine if other less widely available programs may exist that should be included in this guide. Omissions from this guide included foster-to-adopt possibilities from other states including children whose profiles are available on adoption exchange websites. It may be advantageous to add a section to the resource guide in the future regarding adopting from foster care in other states while living in Alaska.

#### Average Timelines

The research for this project did not include average wait times by particular adoption path; this was identified as one of the perceived gaps and of interest for adopting families. Further research would need to be conducted to quantify the length of time from placement to adoption for each of the paths presented in the guide.

### Demographics for Each Path

More research into demographics would make the current resource guide more robust and allow users to hone in on paths that fit within their own adoption preferences. Users may benefit from knowing how many adoptions occur in each path on an annual basis along with ages of children adopted from each path. Often families are targeting adoption within a specific age range; further research is suggested to quantify the number of adoptions within age ranges for each path allowing families to choose a path with a higher likelihood of targeting their preferred age range.

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**Appendix A**

**Interview Protocol Form**

**Interview Protocol Form**

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*Navigating paths to adoption through the Alaska foster care system: A resource guide for potential adoptive parents*

Date of Interview:

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Organization:

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Participant:

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Type of Survey (Question Set to be used):

- A. Foster or adoptive parent
- B. State of Alaska Office of Children Services Employee
- C. Other Relevant Foster-to-Adopt Program

Other Discussion:

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References Discussed:

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Additional Comments:

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## Appendix B

### Research Subject Consent Form

“Navigating Paths to Adoption Through the Alaska Foster Care System: A Resource Guide for Potential Adoptive Parents”

#### Consent Form

**Researchers:**

Tashina Duttie,  
Engineering Science and Project  
Management Department(ESPM)  
University of Alaska Anchorage

(907) 744-3173

LuAnn Piccard, Advisor  
Assistant Professor  
Department Chair  
Engineering Science and Project  
Management Department (ESPM)  
University of Alaska Anchorage  
(907) 786-1917

**Description:**

You are being asked to participate in an interview regarding your experiences utilizing existing processes available to foster and adoptive parents in Alaska. You may be specifically asked to share examples of which resources you used and processes followed. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to respond to interview questions by phone or through electronic media. The estimated time of research participation is anticipated to be 20 minutes. The researcher, Tashina Duttie, is creating a resource guide for people interested in adopting from foster care as a final capstone project at UAA. The goal of the research is to create a simple, easy to use, and comprehensive guide of existing resources and programs. This guide may be provided to agencies, programs and individuals.

**Voluntary Nature of Participation:**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may stop at any time and you do not have to answer any questions you don't want to. Nothing will happen to you if you choose not to answer any questions or if you decide not to participate.

**Confidentiality:**

Your responses will be confidential, real names will not be used; information you provide about the existing resources, processes, and programs may be used to develop the final resource guide. Only the researchers who conduct the interviews will have access to the completed interview write-ups and notes. This information will be kept in a secure, password protected computer to which only the researchers will have access. Data will be compiled in such a way that you cannot be identified. We will not attach your name, address, or any other personally identifiable information about you to any of your responses, or to any reports or publications describing the results of this study.

**Potential Benefits and Risks:**

Your participation in this study requires a commitment of time on your part. However, if you decide to participate, your willingness to share your experiences and knowledge may provide valuable insights for making information about existing processes, programs and resources more easily available in order to better navigate the options available to foster parents seeking adoption through foster care. There are no foreseeable risks or benefits to you personally with respect to your personal or professional status from participation in this study.

**Compensation:**

There is no compensation associated with this study.

**Contact People**

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Tashina Duttie, researcher, at (907) 744-3173 or LuAnn Piccard, Faculty Advisor and ESPM Department Chair (907)786-1917. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Sharilyn Mumaw, Research Compliance Officer, at (907) 786-1099.

Your signature below means that you have read the information above and agree to participate in this study. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask them now or at any time during the study.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Raw Data Compiled From Interview Questionnaires

#### **Disclaimer from the researcher:**

The researcher was only able to get 4 survey responses. These do a poor job of providing statistically relevant sample size of the population (the population considered was foster-to-adoptive families across the state of Alaska). It is recommended that further research be conducted to understand other resources that families have used and perceived knowledge and information gaps pertaining to adoption from foster care.

#### **Discussion notes taken from interviews, coming from research subjects:**

It's hard to know what to expect when going through the adoption process (from foster care) and every situation seems to be different. The best resources have been other foster parents, and the guardian ad litem and caseworkers (when) they stop to explain timelines and processes. There seems to be a lack of training available on timelines and processes of legal-risk adoptions... or what a foster parent can do when these timelines are not adhered to. I have concerns of (foster) placements idling in the system well past the mandated time before the termination of parental rights begins... How is it that when the mandated time is a year and a half in custody that a child can be in foster care for well over two years before the process of termination begins? ICWA scares non-native families, we are afraid that if we are placed with a native child that they'll be taken away.

#### **References available for families that are going through this process:**

TCC Tribal Licensing, ICWA worker statewide list, OCS contacts, Alaska Center for Resource Families, Catholic Social Services, PARKA contact, WWK contact, Facebook groups, Guardian Ad Litem, Caseworkers, private legal counsel, ACRF Training, OCS Training, the foster children's biological families and parents.

#### **Perceived gaps in information available for foster-to-adoptive families:**

1. Process for advocating for kids where TPR should apply based on mandated timelines.
2. Recourse when caseworkers are not adhering to mandated TPR and permanence timelines.
3. Training for legal-risk timelines and processes. Or instead of training, simple flowcharts/timelines.
4. Support for legal-risk adoptions – like groups (non-OCS).
5. There really lacks coordination and communication. For example, I never get contacted when there are court hearings.
6. Families want to be able to have more group coordinated contact with biological families as they move to terminate rights. This is a missed opportunity... if foster families and biological families could discuss permanence when TPR is imminent it could save the State from having to go through the forced termination if parents were willing to relinquish.

## **Appendix D**

### **Foster-to-Adoption Resource Guide**

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# **Adopting from Foster Care in Alaska**

A Resource Guide for Potential Adoptive Families

**December 2016**

This resource guide was derived from existing resources largely provided by the Alaska Center for Resource Families. The guide is intended to assist families in selecting paths to adoption from foster care in Alaska.

**Appendix D (cont)**

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## Appendix D (cont)

### Introduction

This resource guide is intended for families and individuals exploring foster-to-adoption paths in Alaska. The following guide explores the need for foster and adoptive families, typical paths to adopt from foster care in Alaska, and includes agency and resource contact information.

### Background

Each year, hundreds of Alaska's children are placed in foster family care due to the risk of maltreatment in their family home. Based on 2016 averages, there are approximately 3,000 children in foster care throughout Alaska. Reunification with family is always the goal for children who have been placed in foster care; however, only 51% of discharged foster children are reunified with their family. A staggering 36% of Alaska's children in State custody will discharge the foster care system through means of adoption.

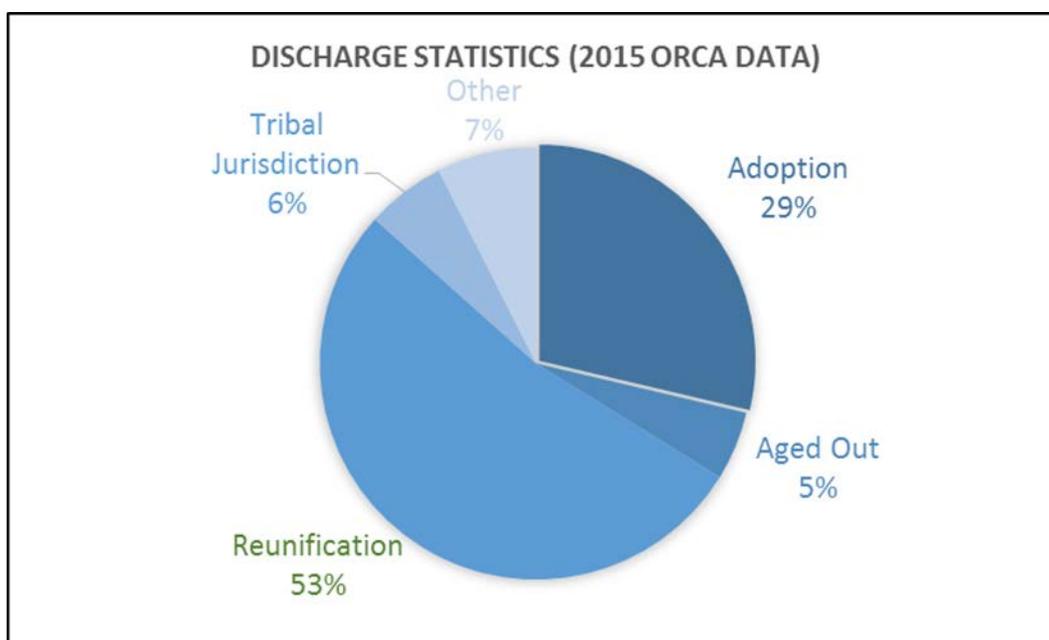


Figure 1: State of Alaska, 2015 OCS Discharge Statistics (Alaska Office of Children's Services, 2016)

The State of Alaska Office of Children's Services primary goal is to protect children and investigate reports of abuse or neglect. Once a child is removed from their family due to a substantiated report the goal is almost always to work with parents to address the concerns with the goal of reunifying the child with their family. In Alaska, a majority of children in foster care are reunited with their families. However, when reunification is no longer an option, adoption is a path for a child to become a part of a forever family. Adoption is a lifelong commitment under a legally binding relationship. An approved home study must be completed on the adoptive family and filed with the court prior to finalization of an adoption. If OCS has permanent custody of the child then they must consent to the adoption. When an adoption of a previous foster child is finalized, OCS oversight and supervision ends, foster payments cease; however, in some cases adoption subsidies may continue.

## Appendix D (cont)

### Exploring Adoption

Adopting from foster care may be right for families that are interested in older children or sibling groups, have limited financial resources for private adoption, are willing to accept the legal risk of younger children, and are willing to participate in the potential of post-adoption family contact.

Most often, children adopted from foster care are adopted by their current foster parents or relatives. Generally, the order of preference for adoptive placements of children in foster care are as follows (Alaska Office of Children's Services, 2013):

1. Adult family member
  - a. 18 years of age or older and who is related to the child.
  - b. If an adult family member who has had physical custody of a child for at least 12 consecutive months before the parental rights to the child have been terminated, petitions to adopt the child, the court must grant the petition (with some exceptions)
2. Family friend who meets foster licensing requirements.
3. A licensed foster home.

Indian Child Welfare Act specifies order of preference for placement of Indian Children. For Indian children placed in pre-adoptive and adoptive placements, preference must be given in the following order:

1. Family/Extended family member. This extends to the entire tribe.
2. A licensed foster home approved or specified by the tribe.
3. An Indian foster home licensed by the state.

## Appendix D (cont)

### Path 1. ACRF Adoption Learning Path

This is a recommended learning opportunity for all families interested in adopting from foster care in the State of Alaska. All training can be coordinated through the Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF), a foster and adoption service agency. In-person classes are available in some communities; the courses also have distance delivery methods.

The training sequence includes three main components:

1. **Core Training for Alaska Resource Families** – this is the initial foster care licensing training required for all foster families in Alaska.
2. **Adopting Through the Office of Children’s Services** – this training provides mechanics of adopting from the foster care system.
3. **Building Families Through Adoption** – this training provides information on emotional, cultural, and attachment considerations that are relevant to adoption.

Once the training sequence is complete, ACRF will assist families in creating a profile that is shared with the State of Alaska Office of Children’s Services. The profile will help state placement workers match children with pre-adoptive families.

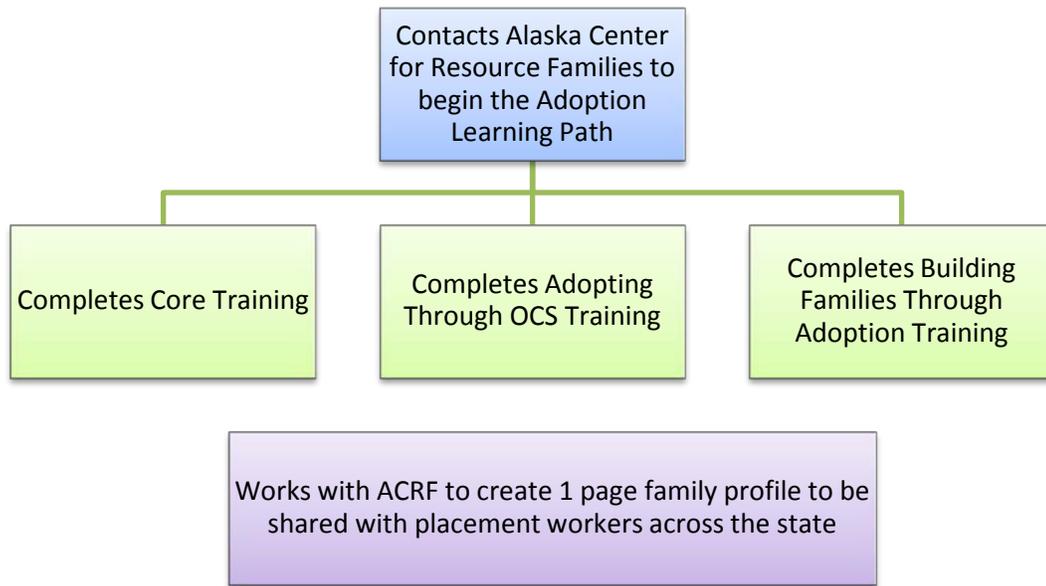


Figure 2: ACRF Adoption Learning Path Flow Chart

#### Benefits of This Path:

- All trainings and profile posting services are free.
- The family profile will be available to placement workers across the state, not just in the area where the family lives.
- It is possible that infants and younger children may be available through this option.

## Appendix D (cont)

- Adoption subsidies may be available to the adopting family.
- The trainings provide a foundation for any other foster-to-adopt path that the family may be considering.

### Considerations:

- Must have State of Alaska foster license.
- For pre-adoptive placements, it's possible that the result will not end in adoption.
- The process could be lengthy.
- Indian Child Welfare Act placement preferences could result in a placement change for Alaska Native Children.

For More Information Contact:  
Alaska Center for Resource Families  
(907) 279-1799

### Path 2: Foster/Adoption (Legal-Risk)

A licensed foster home can take placement of a child or sibling set that are likely to be adopted but are not yet legally free. This is where the term “legal risk” comes from; there is a legal risk that either the parental rights will not be terminated or that another person that exceeds the foster placement in the adoption order of preference comes forward and adopts.

OCS will make efforts to locate and contact all living family members of the child before adoption proceedings. Family members will receive written notice of their rights to family preference placement and of the procedures to pursue custody of the child (Alaska Office of Children's Services, 2013).

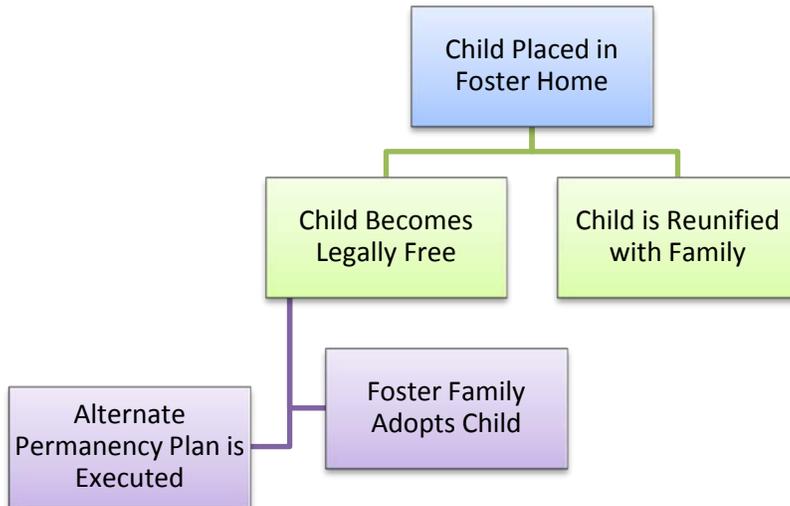


Figure 3: Legal-Risk Adoption Flow Chart

### Benefits of This Path:

- Children of all ages are available.

## Appendix D (cont)

- Since this is a non-permanent placement to start, the family has a chance to get to know the child/children to determine if it is the right fit.
- The state pays home study and adoption costs.
- The child will not have to go through the process of being placed in another home.
- Adoption subsidies are often available to the adopting family.

### Considerations:

- Reunification with family or relatives or tribal members (if applicable) are the first priorities.
- There is no guarantee that the placement will end in adoption of the child.
- Foster parents are expected to support the case plan even if they disagree.
- The family must be licensed as a foster family and follow all licensing requirements.
- Any child removed by OCS has been removed due to abuse or neglect.
- Indian Child Welfare Act placement preferences could result in a placement change for Alaska Native Children.
- An ongoing relationship with biological family members may be required, even after adoption is finalized.
- The process may be lengthy and may limit the foster family from being able to move out of the area with the foster child.
- Foster families must have a positive home study to be approved to adopt the foster child.

### Path 3. OCS Recruitment for Adoption of Legally Free Children

Parent's rights must be terminated in order for a child to be considered "legally free." The Anchorage OCS office has a Child Specific Recruiter for connection of legally free children to adoptive placements.

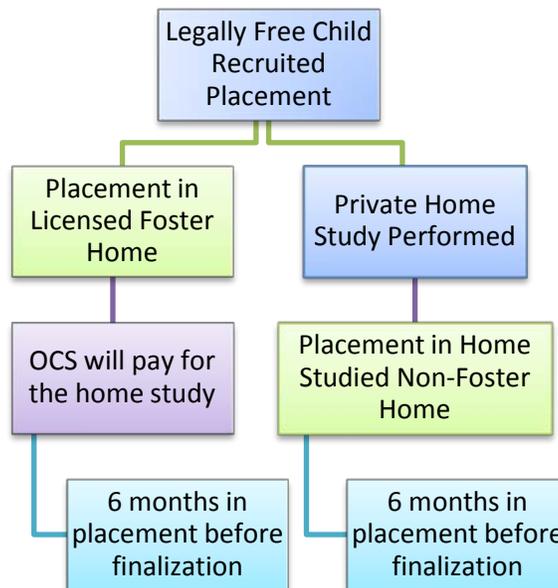


Figure 4: OCS Recruitment for Adoption of Legally Free Children Flowchart

### Benefits of This Path:

- Children are legally free for adoption.

## Appendix D (cont)

- There is no plan to reunify the child with the biological family.
- Adoption subsidies may be available to the adopting family.
- Provides a permanent placement for a child in need of a forever home.
- The state pays adoption related costs.
- Recruiters will be able to provide child specific information before placement.

### Considerations:

- Child may have documented and undocumented special needs.
- There may be a history of trauma and adverse childhood experiences.
- The child may have had many previous foster placements and subsequent bonding and attachment issues.
- There may be ongoing services and treatment plans for the child.
- The child must be in the adoptive home for six months before the finalization of the adoption.
- This process can be very long.
- Children may be strongly affected by realization that reunification with their parents is not an option any longer.
- Ongoing interaction with the biological family may be required, depending on the case.

For More Information Contact:  
State of Alaska, Office of Children's Services  
Child Specific Recruiter in Anchorage  
(907) 269-4000

## Appendix D (cont)

### Path 4. Wendy's Wonderful Kids (Legally Free Children)

A Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiter in Anchorage is available to help to recruit adoptive families for specific children. This recruiter works through Catholic Social Services in Anchorage. The children served by the Wendy's Wonderful Kids program tend to be those who have been in State custody for a long period and efforts to find a forever home have not come easily. Most children are over age 8 and have often had multiple placements. 53% of the children served by this program have been in foster care for more than four years (Alaska Center for Resource Families, 2015) (Dave Thomas Foundation, 2016).

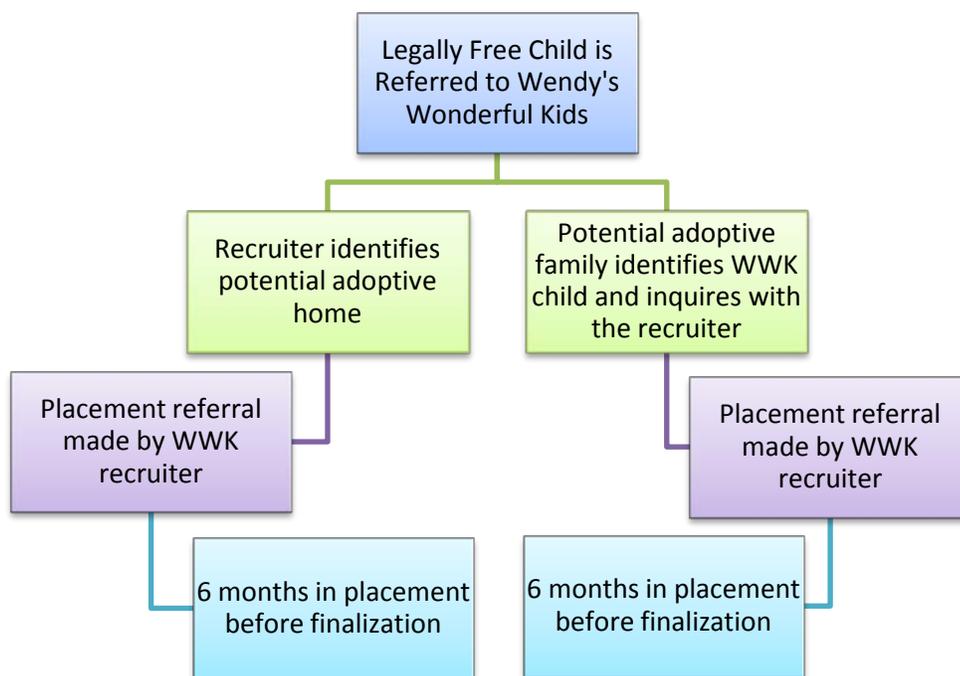


Figure 5: Wendy's Wonderful Kids Adoption Flowchart

#### Benefits of This Path:

- Children are legally free for adoption.
- There is no plan to reunify the child with the biological family.
- Adoption subsidies may be available to the adopting family.
- Provides a permanent placement for a child in need of a forever home.
- The state pays adoption related costs.
- Recruiters will be able to provide child specific information before placement.
- Recruiters offer extensive support to families to ensure a successful placement and ongoing guidance when needed.

#### Considerations:

- Child may have documented and undocumented special needs.
- There may be a history of trauma and adverse childhood experiences.
- The child may have had many previous foster placements and subsequent bonding and attachment issues.

## Appendix D (cont)

- There may be ongoing services and treatment plans for the child.
- The child must be in the adoptive home for six months before the finalization of the adoption.
- This process can be very long.
- May have either private home study or be licensed foster home prior to placement.

For More Information Contact:  
Catholic Social Services  
Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter  
(907) 222-7300  
cssalaska.org

### Path 5. ACRF PARKA Program

The PARKA adoption program stands for Preparation for Adoption Readiness for Kids in Alaska. It's a small program that assists families in preparing to adopt and parent legally free children in foster care in Alaska. The children represented in this program are legally free. The program is no cost to families and is intended to prepare families for adoption.

The program has five phases:

1. Contact ACRF and begin the ACRF Adoption Learning Path as described in Path 1.
2. The family begins the home study process and a family profile is created for statewide adoption staff to review for potential placement matching.
3. Families will be introduced to statewide adoption staff using their profile. Staff members will work to place legally free children with the families. The goal is to ensure the family is a right fit for a specific child.
4. Placement through adoption.
5. Ongoing support after finalization of the adoption.

For More Information Contact:  
Alaska Center for Resource Families  
PARKA Program  
(907) 279-1799

### Path 6. Northwest Adoption Exchange

The Northwest Adoption Exchange maintains photos and profiles of children waiting for adoptive homes. This can be filtered to include children in Alaska only. The purpose of the exchange is to facilitate communication between family adoption workers, recruiters, and families with the goal of finding adoptive families for legally free children. Families can explore profiled of waiting children online and inquire about specific children for more information.

The families interested must complete a positive private or public agency home study before placement can occur. If a family is interested in children in-state only they can contact the Alaska Office of Children's Services or Alaska Center for Resource Families to get started on the home study process.

## Appendix D (cont)

### Path 7. Tribal and ICWA Adoption

Alaska Native children account for 55 percent of the state's foster children. Newly adopted regulations will replace guidelines for meeting Indian Child Welfare Act; these are now legally binding regulations. This means there will likely be increased efforts by state foster care workers to provide family and tribal placement preferences (Martinson, 2016). If you are a tribal member seeking to adopt you may find that your tribe or an agency in your region is looking for placement options for children actively. Visit the State of Alaska DHSS website to find contact information for OCS ICWA staff and Lists of Tribes by OCS Region.

Contact your tribe or tribes in your region to let placement workers know you are interested in adopting. Let them know your preferences too; such as willingness to take on children with special needs, ages and number of children in case of a sibling group. Touch base with these placement workers frequently to remind them that you're interested.

#### Benefits of This Path:

- Keeps children connected to family, distant kinship, or tribal members.

#### Considerations:

- Will likely need either OCS Foster License or Tribal license.
- Placements may vary from foster only requests to legally free children for adoption.
- Often families can become emergency licensed to take specific children.
- Different Tribes may have different requirements for becoming a tribally licensed home.

For More Information Visit:

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services  
Office of Children's Services Website at

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/ocs/Pages/icwa/default.aspx>

Click on 'Contact OCS ICWA Staff' or 'List of Tribes by OCS Region'

All Tribal Designated Contacts for ICWA are listed on the Federal Register and can be accessed at:  
<https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2016-04619>

### Terminology

**Adoption** – the legal process of becoming a non-biological parent.

**Foster License** – Foster parents must receive a foster care license by the State of Alaska Office of Children's services before they can take foster and pre-adoptive children into their home. This requires meeting all application requirements and receiving a foster license by the State of Alaska.

**Resource family** – a licensed foster family.

**Home Study** – a home study is a third party assessment of an adoptive family. A home study is required for most adoptions and is very comprehensive; it assesses the capacity for a family to successfully adopt a child or children. Home studies can be general or child specific.

## Appendix D (cont)

**Legal Risk** – refers to the placement of foster children into a home with the potential of adoption before they are legally free. The “risk” refers to the possibility that other permanence plans may result in the child being moved to another home to be adopted.

**Legally Free** – refers to a child whose parents rights have been terminated and are legally free for adoption.

**ICWA** – Refers to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), a law that seeks to keep American Indian children with American Indian families.

**Adoptive Parent** – a permanent and legal role as a parent of an adopted child.

**Pre-Adoptive** – A home in which a child is placed with a family with the understanding that the family plans to adopt the child.

**Open Adoption** – refers to continued contact between adoptee and biological family after adoption is finalized. The level of involvement varies from case-to-case. Sometimes this will be informally agreed upon and other times it is legally recorded retained contact between the biological family and the adopted child.

**Caseworker** – refers to the Protective Services Specialist that is assigned to a case. Duties of the caseworker include tasks such as carrying and monitoring a caseload, assessments, implementing case plan activities, and accepting and investigating reports of harm or protective services reports.

**Guardian Ad Litem** – refers to the court appointed person that acts as a special representative for minors in state custody. They will generally be involved in protecting a child’s rights in court. Often GALs will also attend meetings pertaining to the case to represent the best interests of the child.

**Team Decision Making Meeting (TDM)** – refers to a meeting called by an OCS caseworker to discuss decisions concerning a child or case. The purpose is to bring together people involved in the case or supporters of the family to make the best possible decision. These meetings occur when there are concerns or to discuss any placement changes.

**Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)** – refers to the process which results in the legal severing of a parents rights to parent a child. This results in a legally free child that could be adopted by another party. The termination can be voluntary or involuntary.

**Relinquishment** – refers to the voluntary termination of parental rights.

**ICPC** – an acronym for Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children. If a child is from one state and is to be sent to another state to be adopted or placed out of state the ICPC must approve the move. It is illegal to move a child across state lines without meeting the requirements of the ICPC.

**ORCA** – Online Resources for the Children of Alaska, OCS's main database.

**Discharge** - The point in time when a child is no longer in Out of Home Care.

## Appendix D (cont)

### State of Alaska Foster Care Licensing Process

A licensed foster home is state approved to provide care for children and meet defined standards of safety. The goal of foster care is to provide a safe, stable, nurturing environment until the child is able to reunify with family or until a permanent home is found for the child. Licensed foster parents receive a monthly reimbursement stipend to help with the cost of caring for a foster child.

#### Basic requirements for Alaska Foster Homes include:

- Age 21 or older
- Positive character references
- Pass a criminal background check
- Ability to cooperate with OCS and carry out the foster care plan and case plan
- Meet home safety standards
- Have enough room and beds in your home for a foster child

#### The application and licensing process includes:

- Fill out and submit all forms
  - Forms can be found here <http://dhss.alaska.gov/ocs/Pages/fostercare/resources.aspx>
- Attend required orientation
  - Orientation Schedule can be found here: <http://www.acrf.org/training.php?tn=6>
- Background checks on all household members age 16 and older are required
- Fingerprinting will be required and initiated by the Licensing Agent

For more information on becoming a foster parent in Alaska, visit the State of Alaska website at <http://dhss.alaska.gov/ocs/>

### Links and Resources

Alaska Center for Resource Families	<a href="http://www.acrf.org">www.acrf.org</a>	(907) 479-7307
Catholic Social Services	<a href="http://www.cssalaska.org">www.cssalaska.org</a>	(907) 222-7300
Alaska Office of Children's Services	<a href="http://dhss.alaska.gov/ocs">http://dhss.alaska.gov/ocs</a>	Phone Varies by Region
Northwest Adoption Exchange	<a href="http://www.nwae.org/">http://www.nwae.org/</a>	(800) 927-9411
Heart Gallery of Alaska	<a href="http://www.heartgalleryak.com">www.heartgalleryak.com</a>	
Beacon Hill	<a href="http://www.beaconhillak.com">www.beaconhillak.com</a>	(907) 222-0925

\*\*See specific Paths 1 through 7 above for more resources and contact information\*\*

## Appendix D (cont)

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