

Alaska Post-Permanency Profile

Updated: September 2024

State Population (2023 Census estimate)

under 1 million

Adoption/Guardianship Assistance Caseload (July 2023)

3,000 – 5,999

- Adoption assistance caseload — 3,741
- Guardianship assistance caseload — 441
- Total — 4,182

State Administration Type

State administered

Pre-Service Training

Foster and adoptive families must complete the Core Training for Resource Families, which is offered by the Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF) and is available in a live virtual format (10.5 hours), by online self-paced learning, and through a self-paced workbook. Licensed relative caregivers go through a specialized version of the training, which is eight hours, in the same formats. Relatives who do not want to become licensed do not have attend training, but are subject to safety requirements.

Families moving toward adoption are strongly encouraged to complete the Adoption Learning Path through ACRF which includes Core Training for Resource Families, plus the two-hour virtual Adopting through the Alaska Office of Children’s Services (OCS) and the 10-hour virtual Building Families through Adoption. This Adoption Learning Path is required for those pursuing adoption from the state of Alaska, but may be waived for those who are adopting a child they are fostering. Adopting through OCS covers home studies, adoption/guardianship subsidies, disclosure meetings, working with an attorney to finalize, and preparing your family and the child for adoption. Building Families though Adoption covers adoption expectations, birth parents, talking to children about adoption, understanding grief and loss, attachment, trauma informed parenting, and identity.

Each training has a strong cultural component.





Services Offered Through the State's Post-Permanency Support Program

State staff in the Adoption Unit provide subsidy-related information and support. The Alaska Office of Children's Services (OCS) contracts with Northwest Resource Associates (NwRA) to offer post-permanency services through the Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF). Services provided vary depending on families' needs and may include the following:

- **Pre-permanency supports** — In addition to the Path to Adoption training outlined above, ACRF can help other families transitioning to permanency by providing support and advocacy during the transition.

For some families matched with children who are legally free in foster care, ACRF offers Preparation and Adoption Readiness for Kids in Alaska (PARKA) Path. PARKA Path offers more intensive training and support to help adoptive families through the process of matching and licensing, placement, finalization, and beyond. Parents receive Trust-Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI®) caregiver training, parent coaching, training, and family support groups. The services also include monthly professional consultation groups on the issues of disclosure and transitions.

- **Navigation and parent coaching** — Family support specialists, typically with master's degrees and TBRI® expertise, in three regional offices are available by phone and email to provide one-on-one support to adoptive and guardianship families. They offer parent coaching based on TBRI®, help parents find the right training and other supports, provide emotional support, and connect parents with one another for peer support or mentoring.
- **Case management** — The family support specialists offer limited case management for families. Services are typically provided for two or three months with a goal of connecting families to community-based services.
- **Crisis intervention** — Family support specialists can help families who are struggling with significant challenges. They help parents de-escalate crises and decide when and if they need to call 911 or engage other crisis intervention services that can support families more intensively or after hours. In addition, ACRF has developed training and written resources to help families plan for and respond to crises.
- **Support groups** — ACRF offers ongoing parent support groups focusing on attachment, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), and adolescents. Groups are in person or virtual. Staff handle logistics, while experienced parents lead the group discussions. ACRF also offers shorter-term intensive support groups—called Post Adoption Skills and Support (PASS)—focused on a particular challenge. The five-week PASS groups are led by therapists and include both psychoeducation and discussion.





- **Educational advocacy** — ACRF specialists can help families address school and educational issues and identify other people who can be their resource to attend meetings at school. Their goal is to equip families to be their own educational advocate.
- **Information** — ACRF hosts a free lending library with resources about helping families adjust to adoption, interracial adoption, talking to youth about adoption, parenting children who have special needs, parenting traumatized children, and more. The ACRF website has many resources, including a mental health tool kit, lists of summer and other activities for respite and fun for children who have higher needs, training opportunities, and more.
- **Training** — ACRF offers many in-person, virtual, and teleconference trainings for adoptive parents and guardianship. Trainings are held at least once a quarter with TBRI® trainings offered two or three times per year. In addition, ACRF offers a training institute series for mental health professionals to promote adoption competency in therapeutic services.
- **Events** — At least three times a year in each of the three regions, ACRF hosts a family community event such as a bowling party or ice-skating event.
- **Community partnerships** — ACRF builds strong relationships with community partners to ensure the effectiveness of referrals for families.

For more information, visit <https://www.acrf.org/supports/post-adoption-supports>

The program typically serves 400 or 500 adoptive and guardianship families per year.

Youth who were adopted or placed in guardianship from foster care at age 16 or older also have access to state-funded independent living services, including employment support, material supports, and housing support.

Geographic Area Covered

OCS's grant contract for ACRF requires the provider to offer services statewide, including ensuring access in rural areas. ACRF has three regional offices (in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Mat-Su) and offers many services virtually or through teleconference. In-person events are more clustered in the urban areas near one of the three offices.

The program also coordinates with tribal nations across the state so that families who need access to services have any support they need to participate.





Eligible Population for the Overall Post-Permanency Program

- All families who adopted from the state's foster care system
- All families who adopted from foster care in other states, territories, or tribes
- All families who adopted through intercountry adoption
- All families who adopted through private adoption
- All families who have guardianship of a child from foster care
- All families who have guardianship of child not through foster care
- Kinship families who are not adoptive/guardianship parents

Variations in Eligibility for the Post-Permanency Program

The PARKA Path is for families who are adopting from foster care in Alaska.

Cultural Responsiveness

Cultural responsiveness is a key value of the state; it has a commitment to serving diverse populations of all types, including through the post-permanency program. Alaska has a robust Tribal Child Welfare compact that ensures tribal members have access to culturally responsive services. The Adoption Unit partners with tribal nations so they can provide access to subsidies to children in tribal foster care.

NWRA is committed to equity and inclusion, and staff receive training on providing culturally responsive services. ACRF has developed relationships with many tribal nations across the state, and offers training on cultural approaches to permanency that addresses the specific issues affecting Alaska Native children and families. Other training topics include the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and interracial parenting and the spirit of ICWA. NWRA and ACRF are certified through the All Children-All Families program as providing LGBTQ2S+ inclusive and affirming practices.

To ensure effective support of relative adoptive and guardianship families, ACRF works closely with the Volunteers of America kinship programs.

Outreach and Engagement

At finalization, OCS shares information with families about ACRF's services. In addition, when youth are three months from turning 18 and their subsidy is going to end, the Subsidized Adoption and Guardianship Unit sends a letter to the family letting them know about other potential supports that may be available to them.





ACRF staff co-lead orientation for prospective adoptive parents and offer the Path to Adoption Learning series, so they are able to connect with families early in their journey. In addition, there are three specific points where ACRF connects with prospective and current families:

- The contractor doing home studies always invites ACRF staff when they do the home study visit so they can share information about available supports.
- The state notifies ACRF when adoptions and guardianships are finalized and the family is receiving a subsidy. Then ACRF sends a welcome packet with information about available post-permanency services. The families are also added to the program's mailing list so they receive updates about events and supports over time.
- Every year, ACRF mails a letter and magnet with their contact information to families. The state provides an updated list of adoptive and guardianship families each month.

In addition, ACRF has launched an eight-part email series to support families in their journey, as part of the State of Alaska's post-permanency services. The email series is designed to make adoptive parents and guardians aware of essential services and support, while highlighting real family stories to reassure families that they are not alone.

ACRF also attends community events to recruit prospective foster and adoptive parents, where they share information about post-permanency services. They work closely with state permanency specialists and Heart Gallery staff to make sure those professionals know they can refer families for support before finalization.

ACRF reports on its outreach efforts in grant reports to OCS.

How the Post-Permanency Program Is Operated

- Through a contract or grant with one private agency
- By specialized state post-permanency support workers

Notes About Who Provides Which Service(s)

Adoption Unit staff provide subsidy support and information. They make referrals to ACRF when families need additional support.

OCS currently contracts with Northwest Resource Associates, a private nonprofit agency, to operate the Alaska Center for Resource Families.



Adoption/Guardianship Assistance/Subsidy Review and Changes

Alaska monitors existing adoption and guardianship subsidies through monthly reports to ensure that appropriate maintenance is made. Otherwise, families are obligated to comply with reporting requirements such as notifications of address changes or if the child is no longer residing in the home, which could affect the subsidy payment. Guardianships in Alaska require an annual report to the court. If families do not comply with that requirement, the guardianships are dissolved and subsidy is discontinued.

Alaska permits changes to the adoption and guardianship assistance agreement when the change will best meet the child's special needs. Parents must make a request in writing and must include documents demonstrating the need for the change. Alaska will evaluate any documentation that supports the family's request, including medical, mental health, or school reports and other documentation from the family, current service providers, and other resources. Final changes are negotiated between OCS and the family and require the family's concurrence.

Tracking Adoption/Guardianship Discontinuity

The Subsidized Adoption and Guardianship Unit receives automated notifications, based on the youth's social security number, when a family or youth involved in an adoption or guardianship subsidy enters into an out-of-home placement. The centralized intake unit also has a process in place to notify permanency staff when a youth in adoption or guardianship comes into custody. OCS is able to pull reports on children entered as "previously adopted" in the state's data system. Staff often receive notice about other changes, such as hospitalizations or residential care. Staff review all of these cases individually as they occur and run quarterly reports.

With these notifications and reports, OCS evaluates trends and reasons for re-entry. Staff in the Subsidized Adoption and Guardianship Unit strategize about if additional supports could be provided or if the subsidy may change. The Adoption Unit also collaborates with child protection services to ensure that investigators understand adoption and guardianship and the child's history.

Post-Permanency Program Spending (FY 2023)

Information not available

Funding Sources for the Post-Permanency Program (FY 2023)

Information not available

