ALASKA ADOPTION, RECRUITMENT, PRIVATIZATION, AND PERMANENCY OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

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Abstract

This paper explores the answers to two questions. The first question is, How and in what ways is Alaska providing adoption recruitment and matching services for children in foster care? The second is, Should Alaska pursue privatization of adoption recruitment and matching services as a means for increasing permanency outcomes for children in foster care? The qualitative study was conducted using both primary and secondary research. I accessed existing privatization studies in other states, Alaska child welfare records and research, and interviewed child welfare professionals. The findings showed that Alaska currently has some private adoption recruitment efforts but there are currently no private adoption matching efforts. The findings also showed that many states have privatized adoption recruitment and matching efforts, and that Alaska should pursue privatization as a means to achieve better permanency outcomes for children waiting in foster care.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview of National Child Welfare and Adoption

For over 400,000 children in America today, the government is their legal custodian. These foster children, ranging from birth to age 21, are wards of their individual states because of abuse or neglect by their biological parents or legal guardians (AdoptUSKids, 2017). Over 119,000 of these children will not return to their biological parents and will need adoptive families (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017). More than 20,000 will age-out of foster care each year without finding a forever family (AdoptUSKids, 2017).

For children that grow up in foster care and never find a forever family, the statistics are bleak: 50% of them will not graduate high school, 40% will experience homelessness, over 30% will be incarcerated at some point in their lives and 25% will report substance abuse issues (Stott, 2012). For the future of these children and our communities, it is imperative that we prioritize adoption recruitment and matching efforts.

The federal government has established guidelines for adoption timelines and process through the Adoption Assistance Child Welfare Act of 1980 (AACWA) and the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA). These laws were established to set standards for state child welfare programs (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017a; PBS, 2017).

Child welfare is changing. Most state governments currently bear the responsibility of operating all elements of their foster care system; however, there is a recent trend to privatize foster care (Snell, 2013). For the past ten years, many states have begun this process of privatizing foster care. I will be discussing the differences between public and private adoption

systems, the advantages of both public and private approaches, and a basic conceptual structure for privatization. For the purposes of this research, adoption includes legal guardianship.

There has been much research done on the costs, benefits, and pitfalls of privatization (Snell, 2013). I've researched some of those existing programs to determine if it would be advantageous for Alaska to follow suit as it specifically relates to adoption recruitment and matching.

Statement of Alaska's Problems

The child welfare system in the State of Alaska is challenged by the number of children in the system, the length of time children are in care, and poor reunification rates. As of the end of 2015, there were 2,845 children in the state's custody, which was a 25% increase over the prior three years (Alaska Office of Children's Services Statistical Information - Protective Service Reports, 2017d). There are a large number of reasons for the notable increase in the number of children in out-of-home care.

Child safety has become the primary driver of the Office of Children's Services (OCS) department's decisions. OCS is responding sooner to allegations, and because the in-home services are lacking, the path of intervention and assistance for a family is largely coming in the form of removal of a child (State of Alaska, 2017a). There have also been many lawsuits based on abuse and deaths of children in the state's custody (Demer, 2014). These tragedies have added to OCS's fear of harm befalling a child due to lack of intervention and removal. All of these things result in more children entering the system.

Children are also staying in the system longer. Too many of Alaska's children were placed in foster care, returned to their parents and then taken back into care (Dobbyn, 2015). This caused further trauma and long-term negative effects on the parents, children, and OCS staff. Concern over returning children to their parents before the parents are fully ready has caused an increase in the amount of time children spend in care.

Lack of family contact while a child is in the state's custody is also playing a role in decreasing reunification with parents (Family Reunification: What the Evidence Shows, 2011). Due to staffing issues, families are not provided adequate time to see each other, causing relationship deterioration, hopelessness, and detachment. Davis (1996) concluded that children who saw their parents as recommended in their case plan were ten times more likely to be reunified than those who did not.

Of the 957 Alaska children that left the foster care system in 2015, only 54% of them returned to their parents. Twenty-nine percent were adopted by non-family members, and 5% aged out of the foster care system (Alaska Office of Children's Services Statistical Information - Protective Service Reports, 2017).

Poor case management is another large problem within Alaska's child welfare system. The caseworker pay is low and turnover is high. A protective services specialist with a bachelor's degree in social work earns approximately $46,000 per year. (Workplace Alaska, 2017). Each caseworker has to maneuver the effects of primary or secondary trauma on a daily basis. The average caseworker has to manage 25-40 families at any given time (The Alaska State Legislature, 2017). High stress causes high turnover, and lack of expertise from job longevity may yield inadequate case management.

All of these issues contribute to the number of children that stay in foster care for extended periods, are more likely to have their parent's rights terminated, and may find themselves in need of a permanent home. Adoption recruitment is a difficult task and requires a lot of research and legwork to make a good match for each child. Due to the expertise required and lack of time and resources currently available within the state's system, many children will age out of foster care without ever finding a forever family.

Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this qualitative research was to help the State of Alaska identify what adoption recruitment and matching services are currently available in the state, and determine if Alaska should pursue privatization of adoption recruitment and matching services as a means to strengthen child welfare permanency outcomes as other states have done. The research questions guiding this study are as follows: How and in what ways is Alaska providing adoption recruitment and matching services for children in foster care? Should Alaska pursue privatization of adoption recruitment and matching services as a means for increasing permanency outcomes for children in foster care?

Potential Significance of Research

There have never been more children in OCS custody in Alaska than there are now. The number of lawsuits against OCS as well as the grand jury investigation into its practices (Chandler, 2015) emphasize the importance of research into current practices for identifying areas of possible improvement. Research into the cause and effects of the system's failures leads to a deeper understanding of what is wrong and, potentially, how it may be fixed. There may be

certain elements in the system that are working well. We would not know how successful each element of the current system could be until it is studied and compared to other systems. This research explored the adoption recruitment and matching services within the program.

Alaska's economy is in crisis (Waldholz, 2016). The Department of Health and Human Services represents much of our state's spending. We must look for more efficient ways of delivering services. Several states have privatized their child welfare services. This research is to determine if these same strategies and programs could be used by our existing Alaska-based agencies, as well as to begin discussion about a possible expansion of agencies and services that do not yet exist in Alaska.

It is my hope that foster children awaiting adoptive homes will more quickly and successfully find forever families from the increased awareness this research provides. Adoptive families and adoption partners will gain knowledge about best practices as a result of this information. This research will benefit my foster care and adoption agency, Beacon Hill, as well as other child placement agencies or advocates by highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of our current system and revealing what other states and agencies have done to improve permanency outcomes. The Alaska Office of Children's Services and state legislators will have access to my research. It is my desire that this research will be used to focus energy and resources on what is currently working in adoption services, identify gaps that need to be addressed in the current system, and begin a conversation about an alternative private system of delivering adoption recruitment and matching services.

Conceptual Framework

In order to answer the two questions this research seeks to address, I am going to use the conceptual framework from a roadmap designed by the American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees that helps analyze when privatization is appropriate (American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees, 2017). The questions this research seeks to answer are 1) How and in what ways is Alaska providing adoption recruitment and matching services for children in foster care? and 2) Should Alaska pursue privatization of adoption recruitment and matching services as a means for increasing permanency outcomes for children in foster care?

The roadmap is as follows: 1) Clarification of why the public desires privatization and the written articulation of these reasons is vital to establishing desired outcomes 2) Contract negotiations must be based on prior and current performance 3) Private agencies are held accountable through measurable outcome standards for performance 4) Define the relationship between the private and public entities and how they interface 5) Address any and all safety issues 6) Consider the impact of the redefined role of the public entity and train for that redefined role 7) Buy-in and morale of existing public child welfare staff should inform privatization decisions (American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees, 2017, p. 1).

Definitions

AACWA. Adoption Assistance Child Welfare Act of 1980

ASFA. Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997

Public. Maintained at the public expense and under public control

(Dictionary.com, 2018)

Private/Privatization. To transfer from public or government control or ownership to private enterprise (Dictionary.com, 2018)

OCS. Office of Children's Services

ORCA. The Online Resource for Children of Alaska

TDM. Team Decision Meeting

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research was to help the State of Alaska identify what adoption recruitment and matching services are currently available in the state, and determine if Alaska should pursue privatization of adoption recruitment and matching services as a means to strengthen child welfare permanency outcomes as other states have done. Although there are suggested topics for discussion on how to privatize, this research did not include all states' experiences nor does it give a specific outline for a path to privatization in Alaska.

To present a history of the problem, the literature reviewed summarizes the public policies that created the standards for permanency planning and explains the need for these standards so that children do not languish in foster care. The Public vs. Private section takes a look at what privatization of these social services means, the advantages and disadvantages of privatization, and provides examples of other states' experiences.

History of Federal Adoption Policies and Process

Children remaining in foster care too long and aging out of foster care have been long standing problems in the United States. The federal government issues policies that govern public child welfare. Each state, district, tribe, or community operate their individual child welfare system within their own guidelines but must adhere to all federal policies. These federal policies outline the child welfare outcomes each local government must meet in order to receive matching funds to be used in operations. Title IV-E of the Social Security Act provides each

state, tribe, and community with matching funds to operate all aspects of child welfare (Children's Bureau, 2017b).

The Adoption Assistance Child Welfare Act of 1980 (AACWA) was a major law passed regarding foster care and adoption. The act requires states to make adoption subsidies available to parents who adopt a child who is a dependent of the state. AACWA also set forth a required semiannual review of the status of every child not in a permanent home, determining next steps toward permanency. Because of AACWA, a permanent plan for reunification, adoption, or continued foster care had to be determined within 18 months of a child entering foster care (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017a). AACWA did not result in enough accountability for permanency planning at the state level, and so the federal government addressed the issue again in the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997s (ASFA).

Through the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA), states were given further incentive to achieve permanency for every child in care. The Safe Families Act passed in 1997 made adoption the primary goal for children that had been in foster longer than 15 months (Barth, 2006). ASFA also provided an additional $4,000 to the state beyond the baseline federal payment for each foster child adopted, and $6,000 additional for each special needs child adopted (PBS, 2017).

An estimated 119,814 children in the U.S. need an adoptive home each year (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017). Adoption recruitment and matching services are the beginning of the process for finding foster children a forever family.

Public vs. Private

Privatization involves the transfer of control from public or government to private enterprise. Many states have begun to contract with private child welfare agencies as a reform strategy. These contracts with private entities could include managing all or any of that state's child welfare system. The contracts are typically paid based on a measurable outcome of contracted services. Many states use federal Title IV-E waivers combined with federal and state foster care funds to pay the contracted agencies for the development of new programs and innovation (American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees, 2017).

The impact privatization has had on public child welfare is difficult to assess. Effectiveness, cost savings, and efficiency are some of the main standards for judging the success of privatization, however, these things are complex, and the measurement of them is even more complex. The fact remains that all children in foster care are in the custody of the government, and all private entities that contract to serve these children and families are still working with the government to administer these services on multiple levels. According to Tami Watson, the Catholic Social Services adoption services program director, although a private adoption agency may handle the recruitment, matching, case management, home study, legal services, and after-adoption supports, they will still always need to work with the state, tribe, or community on placement agreement, legal transition of custody, and any adoption stipend (personal communication, October 26, 2017).

According to van Slyke (2003), successful privatization depends on the presence of market competition and government capacity. Market competition would require multiple private agencies have contracts with the state to insure excellent service delivery as well as

competitive pricing. The government would also have to be a conscientious and savvy consumer of these services in order to insure successful partnerships with private entities (van Slyke, 2003).

Cost savings is often one of the criteria used in assessing the success of privatization. "Privatizing Adoption and Foster Care: Applying Auction and Market Solutions" looks at the administration costs of public and private providers of adoption and foster care in the states of Kansas, Michigan, and Illinois (Blackstone, 2004). All three of these states have privatized elements of their adoption services with varying success. The studies on these states' successes have indicated that private agencies operate more efficiently and are able to find adoptive homes for children better than state agencies. In these states, public versus private success was measured by an increase of children being adopted out of foster care, the amount of time it took to recruit adoptive families, and a reduction in foster care caseloads (Blackstone, 2004).

Michigan gave approved adoption providers exclusive rights to manage the placement of the child in their care for adoption. The state paid each provider a fixed rate for different types of adoption cases. If the child was not placed within that six-month window, the child was then listed on an adoption site, and any of the 53 adoption agencies could take on that case. If the provider initially owning that child's case did not list the child on an adoption exchange site at the six-month mark, they were fined a 20% penalty on their administrative rate. With this approach, there were several notable changes. Only 3.5% of the adoptions failed compared to the national 12%, and 50% of the children adopted were adopted within the six-month window the agency had exclusive rights for adoption placement (Blackstone, 2004).

Kansas privatized all elements of their foster care system in 1997 after being sued by the American Civil Liberties Union for keeping children in foster care too long (Blackstone, 2004). The state paid the agencies contracted a set dollar amount per child for all foster and adoption services. Due to the number of contractors involved, rigorous performance measures were implemented. The number of children adopted out of foster care in Kansas increased by 62% (Blackstone, 2004), but there were financial problems for many of the agencies. Overall, the outcomes of privatization have been an improvement for Kansas, but the cost of these improved outcomes has raised the child welfare budget by 178% (Blackstone, 2004).

Illinois had one of the highest rates in the nation for children in foster care prior to privatization. "As a result of the privatization effort with performance contracting, the foster care caseload diminished from 51,000 in 1997 to 22,000 in 2002, a decline of 57%" (Blackstone, 2004, p. 8). Due to a competitive market for agencies coupled with payments based on performance, the rate for permanency increased between 200-300% in the first three years of privatization (Blackstone, 2004).

Blackstone (2004) proposed an auction model for adoption placements. This auction model is based on standard rules of supply and demand both on the part of the adoptive parents and on the part of the children. This approach may be considered controversial but does address one of the necessary elements van Slyke (2003) mentions as essential for success: provider market competition.

Advantages of public. The federal government creates the laws that govern child welfare in the US. Through the Adoption Assistance Child Welfare Act of 1980 (AACWA) and the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) standards for child welfare and adoption

outcomes were established for local governments to meet (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017a; PBS, 2017). Although services may be provided by private entities, each state must answer to the federal government for their outcomes. The lack of multiple vendors and service providers may be more efficient for administration and reporting. Each state, tribe, or community having total control over its services would be considered an advantage by public advocates.

Cost of service is one of the major criteria used to measure success in child welfare systems. Although privatization is often done in order to bring cost-savings, this is rarely the case. Kansas had improved outcomes, but the cost increased by 178% (Blackstone, 2004). Casey Family Programs is a private foster care provider that operates in Washington and Oregon. There is a report analyzing the cost-benefit of foster care services comparing public and private providers (Zerbe, 2009). The research was done on outcomes of youth who received enhanced foster care services from private and public entities that are now adults. This is the first research of its kind to take this approach. The findings of the study indicate increased long-term success of the children served by Casey Family Programs, a private provider. Unfortunately, the cost of the intensive services to bring about these successful programs was more expensive than what was offered in the public child welfare system. These intensive services cost 63% more than the public model (Zerbe, 2009).

Advantages of private. Proponents of privatization are often motivated by the lure of transforming a dysfunctional system. The success of a social system like child welfare must then be measured by an alternative system. Specifically related to the privatization of adoption services, Illinois' permanency outcomes increased by 200-300% after privatization (Blackstone,

2004). Instead of the national 12% failed adoption rate, Michigan had only 3.5% fail, and 50% of the children were adopted within 6 months (Blackstone, 2004).

Market competition is another major advantage in privatization efforts. If a market has enough adoption service providers to ensure adequate delivery of services, competition will naturally increase the outcomes of those services. Borcherding (1978), a public choice advocate, argues that a private market produces goods and services efficiently while a public market or monopoly breeds inefficiencies.

How to privatize. Privatizing adoption recruitment and matching services is complicated. Although the issues of children's lives and welfare are deeply personal, performance criteria and program structures are necessary for achieving and quantifying successful outcomes. The American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees (2017, p. 1) lays out a roadmap for considerations when analyzing if privatization is appropriate: 1) Clarification of why the public desires privatization and the written articulation of these reasons is vital to establishing desired outcomes 2) Contract negotiations must be based on prior and current performance 3) Private agencies are held accountable through measurable outcome standards for performance 4) Define the relationship between the private and public entities and how they interface 5) Address any and all safety issues 6) Consider the impact of the redefined role of the public entity and train for that redefined role 7) Buy-in and morale of existing public child welfare staff should inform privatization decisions.

Overview of Alaska's Child Welfare System and Adoption Process

The State of Alaska operates its child protective services under the direction of the OCS. This state agency is a division of the Department of Health and Social Services and has an

annual budget of $140,518,000 to provide child protection services and resources. This department represents 497 employees (State of Alaska, 2017a, p 115). . Federal and state law requires OCS to care for the safety, adoption, and well-being of Alaska's children and families (Services, 2015, p. 112).

OCS seeks to accomplish this through its practice model where child safety is the primary objective. They outline six elements of this model: prevention, intake, initial assessment, family services, resource families, and service array (Services, 2015). Prevention is designed to keep children from going into the care of OCS. Intake is the process of determining the severity of a report of harm against a child and referring it on for an initial assessment (formal investigation and intervention by OCS) or dismissing the allegation. These reports of harm are called protective service reports. In December of 2016, there were 1,584 protective service reports filed statewide, and 861 of these protective service reports were referred for initial assessment (Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Office of Children's Services, 2017). The fact that roughly half of the reports are pursued further is a result of a number of factors. There may have been multiple reports on the same child, not enough information to pursue the allegation or the allegation itself was not serious enough to warrant further action. Initial assessments are the investigation and information gathering tool to determine if an allegation is substantiated. This investigation determines if the child is safe or unsafe, who the alleged perpetrator is, and if the child should be taken into the protective custody of the state. In December of 2016, there were 610 initial assessments performed statewide, and of those, 148 were substantiated and referred on to the family services unit (Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Office of Children's Services, 2017). The family services unit is responsible for the family's case

management and helps families create an on-going plan to ensure the safety of the child. This may be accomplished through in-home services or referrals to services like counseling, education assistance, mental health assistance, parenting classes, or housing and food assistance. If the caseworker determines that the family is not able to keep the child safe at this point, the child is removed from their family and placed in the care of a resource family. The resource family is a foster family. Not every child taken into the state's custody is placed with a resource family. There are currently 3,006 children in a facility outside of their home (Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Office of Children's Services, 2017). These facilities include assisted living facilities, therapeutic child placement agencies, foster group homes, foster homes, maternity homes, residential child care facilities, and residential psychological treatment facilities. Some of these facilities are outside of Alaska.

If a child is not going to be reunified with their biological family, OCS files the legal paperwork to terminate parental rights. Once termination of rights happens, the state is responsible for the recruitment and placement of that child into a permanent home via adoption or guardianship.

Finding adoptive families is challenging and requires a significant amount of legwork, communication, and follow-through. In order to promote the effort of connecting children in foster care with families, the U.S. Children's Bureau partnered with the Adoption Exchange Association to form AdoptUSKids (AdoptUSKids, 2017). AdoptUSKids helps get the word out about kids in foster care waiting for forever families by showcasing children needing adoption, and working with other adoption exchanges like the Heart Gallery of America and specific state Heart Galleries to link children with interested potential families. Many states operate adoption

exchanges where the community can see and read about children waiting for families. Alaska used to have the Alaska Adoption Exchange, but as of 2017, the State of Alaska refers all formal recruitment efforts to Wendy's Wonderful Kids, the Heart Gallery of Alaska, Northwest Adoption Exchange, and AdoptUSKids (State of Alaska, 2017b).

In 2015, 357 Alaskan children were adopted from foster care. Their average length of stay in foster care prior to their adoption being finalized was 32 months (Child Trends, 2017). Many of the children still awaiting permanent homes have been in and out of foster care for a large part of their lives.

The State of Alaska currently has no private adoption placement providers. There are many multistate private providers in the U.S. The state could begin a search for potential private providers to bring services to Alaska and could also encourage current child welfare agencies that do not provide full adoption services to expand their services to include recruitment and matching and contract with them accordingly.

Summary of the Literature Review

As a result of children languishing in foster care, the federal government established laws that enforced parental termination when appropriate, mandated adoption recruitment, and provided support for adoptive families. Although these laws are in place, state child welfare systems still struggle to meet these federal guidelines and find adoptive homes for the children needing them. These struggles have led to the pursuit of privatization by many states for these services.

There are advantages to both public and private child welfare adoption systems. Although private agencies often yield better results, their sustainability and increased cost can be prohibitive compared to their public counterparts. Because public state systems bear the final responsibility and accountability to the federal government for their outcomes, outsourcing is not always appropriate or effective.

The State of Alaska does not outsource any of its adoption matching responsibilities, although they do partner with volunteer agencies to assist with adoptive recruitment efforts. There are no private adoption agencies in Alaska that process adoptions for waiting foster children.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research was to help the State of Alaska identify what adoption recruitment and matching services are currently available in the state and determine if Alaska should pursue privatization of adoption recruitment and matching services as a means to strengthen child welfare permanency outcomes as other states have done. The research questions guiding this study are as follows: How and in what ways is Alaska providing adoption recruitment and matching services for children in foster care? Should Alaska pursue privatization of adoption recruitment and matching services as a means for increasing permanency outcomes for children in foster care?

This chapter presents the research method, approach and design as well as the procedures for data collection and analysis that were most suitable for the research. I will discuss the practical and theoretical reasoning behind my approach.

Research Method

I used a qualitative research design method as I interpreted the data to identify themes from the open-ended interviews and documents coupled with my personal experience (Laerd dissertation, 2017).

> Rather than determining cause and effect, predicting, or describing the distribution of some attribute among a population, we might be interested in uncovering the meaning of a phenomenon for those involved. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding

> how people interpret their experiences how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam, 2009, p. 5).

There are several types of qualitative research methods. I chose a constructionism qualitative research method because I was interested in describing, understanding, and interpreting the data (Merriam, 2009, p. 11). Understanding how other researchers, as well as my own participants, constructed their realities and interpreted the issues of adoption and permanency was of utmost importance to me (Merriam, 2009, pp. 22-23).

Research approach. This research is designed as an exploratory single case study analyzing issues within child welfare in Alaska, exploring what other states are doing regarding privatization, and analyzing how other state's experiences can inform Alaska's consideration of the privatization process (Research Methodology, 2017). "A case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). A bounded system means that I have put boundaries around the area I wish to study (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). I studied the case of child welfare adoption and permanency by gathering documents and conducting interviews.

Ethical Considerations

The stakeholders involved in this research are the Office of Children's Services, Beacon Hill, Catholic Social Services, Alaska Center for Resource Families, Facing Foster Care in Alaska, legislators, foster parents, adoptive parents, biological parents, foster children, and community members. Broad understanding of current adoption recruitment and matching efforts locally and nationally affect all of these stakeholders. A new system of adoption recruitment,

training, and process would potentially influence certain employees' positions at OCS, Beacon Hill, Catholic Social Services, and Alaska Center for Resource Families.

Currently, OCS gathers all data for any child in the custody of the state. These data are tracked by their own statewide ORCA (The Online Resource for Children of Alaska) database system (Alaska Department of Health and Human Services, 2016). Employees of OCS do all data input. Each biological parent, foster parent, and foster child has a file within the system where case plan notes are kept. If a case is very old (meaning the child has been in the state's custody longer than 10 years), some of the information may not be available on the system. Even if all of these data are available, it takes a lot of time for each OCS employee handling the file to read through and understand all that has happened on a case. This lack of thorough research into the data will sometimes lead to errors in decisions regarding the child. An example of this would be when a child enters into foster care more than once in their lifetime. If the new caseworker does not educate themselves with all involved parties and prior history, uneducated decisions can be made. Specifically related to adoption, I know of several cases where an adoption decision has been made and the child is scheduled to be adopted by a non-relative and then a family member is found that is willing to adopt at the last minute. This causes extreme trauma and difficulty for everyone involved and is only avoidable when thorough documentation and research is completed for each child (Chandler, 2015).

The child welfare system aims to find a permanent home for each child. The first choice is with the biological family, but that is not always possible. Federal law mandates that OCS must begin the parental rights termination processes for any child that has been in custody for 15 of the last 22 months (National Association of Social Workers, 2016). When this process begins,

OCS should also begin the process of looking for a permanent home for the child. Once termination occurs, if there is not an adoptive home or guardianship agreement in place, and the caseworker does not have an adoption plan in place, the child's information should be forwarded to an OCS adoption specialist for recruitment of a permanent home. One of the gaps in the current system is that caseworkers are not required and held accountable to forward this information on a child in a timely manner, and, if the child is in a safe home, that child's adoption plan and adoption recruitment becomes a low priority for them. When a caseworker does forward the data to a supervisor, the child is referred on the Heart Gallery of Alaska, The Northwest Adoption Exchange, and AdoptUSKids (State of Alaska, 2017b). Unfortunately, the data needed to represent a child on the some of these sites are often incomplete. This causes these sites and their adoptive home recruitment efforts to be stifled.

The data I used representing Alaska's children come directly from the Office of Children's Services' website (Alaska Department of Health and Human Services, 2016). Due to the statistical nature of the data, numbers of children in custody and reasons for leaving custody are unbiased.

Many states are attempting varying levels of child welfare privatization (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017). Several states are achieving success in privatizing adoption services, however, it comes with an increased cost (Blackstone, 2004; Hubel, 2013; Zerbe, 2009). Participant interviews also found recurring themes validating the need for more effective services related to caseworker support, adoption recruitment, and matching. This research will be given to organizational stakeholders and may be available to the public.

Researcher statement. As the executive director of a foster care agency, Beacon Hill, I come with my own set of biases. My many years as a foster parent and child advocate have formed my view of the current system in Alaska. I have been a foster parent to nine children. I personally had four teenage foster children age out of foster care in my home without being adopted because parental rights were never terminated with their biological parents. In all those cases, we would have happily become legal guardians had the option been given to us.

Over the past three years, my network and influence in this arena have grown to national levels, and the conversations and experiences I've had with professionals in other states have caused me to ask more pointed questions about what we can do better. I entered into this research because I believe that there are privatization models that could benefit Alaska if adopted.

This research was not ordered by any agency and there is no external pressure to deliver a certain opinion or outcome except seeking to find the viability of privatizing the Office of Children's Services adoption services.

Research Design

Child welfare issues affect every state and each state handles the issues differently. It is critical that Alaska learns from others as we endeavor to improve our child welfare system. There are states that have privatized some or all of their child welfare system. I researched some existing programs in order to determine if it would be advantageous for Alaska to follow suit as it specifically relates to adoption recruitment and matching.

Data collection.

Participants. In order to understand what adoption recruitment and matching services were currently being offered in Alaska, I sought out interview participants with current knowledge of those services. I specifically looked for managers or front-line workers in child welfare agencies that possessed a broad awareness of their agency and services in relation to others in the state. I also wanted to hear from at least one foster and adoptive parent about their experience in working with these existing services. One participant was chosen because of her understanding of an existing privatized state system so that her experience could be used to contrast the other participants' experiences. Interview participants' knowledge of other states' experience or systems was also desired, however, this knowledge was secondary to their understanding of Alaska's child welfare system.

This convenient sample of participants were chosen because of their accessibility, their varied involvement and expertise in child welfare, and their association with that local network (BusinessDictionary, 2017). "Convenience sampling is just what is implied by the term – you select a sample based on time, money, location, availability of sites or respondents, and so on" (Merriam, 2009, p. 79). Each participant was personally approached with a request for the interview, and this was possible because of my relationship and the availability of each participant.

Instruments. Each participant signed a consent form and completed a demographic form (see Appendix A for consent form and Appendix B for demographic form). The demographic form was used to create a profile of the interview participants and to help establish context for their comments.

I used open-ended questions when interviewing research participants (see Appendix C for participant interview questions). The interview questions were given to the participants via email prior to their interview. These questions were designed to gather data regarding each agency's role within the system, provide opportunity for participants' opinion and suggestion as well as induce discussion about privatization possibilities.

Setting of the interviews. Because a convenience sample was used for choosing interview participants, I had existing relationships with all participants. I contacted each participant by email requesting a phone interview. This interview request email contained the purpose of the research, the consent form (Appendix A), the interview questions (Appendix C), and the demographic questionnaire (Appendix B). Upon acceptance of my interview request, I requested that the participant complete the demographic questionnaire (Appendix B) and the consent form (Appendix A), and return them to me via email. The interview questions (Appendix C) were theirs to reference in preparation for the interview. All participants agreed to have their name, job title, thoughts, and experiences published. Participants were aware that they could withdraw from participation at any time.

Each participant was interviewed telephonically for approximately forty minutes. The telephonic interviews were recorded by myself and transcribed by a transcription company. All written communication with the participants and transcriptions are held privately.

Documents. As my research was to study what adoption recruitment and matching services are currently available in the state, and determine if Alaska should pursue privatization of adoption recruitment and matching services as a means to strengthen child welfare permanency outcomes as other states have done, I used many different forms of data and

information. All data reported regarding number of children in foster care, reunification rates, child maltreatment reports, and statewide child placement figures come from the monthly statistical reports generated by the State of Alaska. The State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services maintains public monthly statistical reports (State of Alaska, 2017d) and annual reports (State of Alaska, 2017e) for the Office of Children's Services. These can be accessed on the State of Alaska Office of Children's Services website. News from a local news television station, KTUU (Chandler, KTUU, 2015); the Alaska Dispatch News, a local paper (Demer, 2014); and from Alaska Public Media, a radio station (Waldholz, 2016), were used to contextualize the data obtained from the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Office of Children's Services website (State of Alaska, 2017d).

The Office of the Administration for Children and Families operates the Children's Bureau, which provides federal reports about child welfare in the United States as a whole and individual state data (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2017). The Children's Bureau website provided national and some specific state data for this research. Information retrieved from The Children's Bureau provided federal statistics, information on policies and laws, and trends related to child welfare and national research findings. I used this statistical, trend and research data to identify national trends for foster care, adoption, and privatization efforts in other states.

The Children & Youth Services Review, Chicago Journals, Contemporary Economic Policy, and Future of Children all published research that was done regarding privatization efforts (Blackstone, 2004; Testa, 2004; Zerbe, 2009; van Slyke, 2003). I used this research to

compare different states' experiences in privatization, and I considered and analyzed recommendations done by the researchers.

Data analysis. Interview data was collected and recorded telephonically and transcribed by a transcription company. I coded the data for emerging patterns and highlight recurring themes using the Merriam (2009) data analysis model (p. 199-221). Themes emerged by 1) reviewing transcripts for common words or phrases that were mentioned by participants, 2) naming common themes, 3) differentiating the most common themes by color within the transcripts, 4) grouping like answers, 5) comparing participants answers regarding each theme, and 6) including participant comments under each theme. These themes were then compiled to give reference to the research of what is working in child welfare in Alaska, what areas of the current system need reform, and perceived feasibility of privatization.

Data retrieved from documents by other researchers regarding privatization was used for qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis reviews the documents for common themes and frequent messages (Merriam, 2009, p. 205). In these documents, I was looking for common themes regarding motivation for privatization, structure of privatized efforts, and successes and failures of privatization. Compiled research from other states' historical experience and lessons learned was used to form recommendations for Alaska.

Validity and Reliability in Research

Triangulation was used to ensure validity of this research by converging information from different sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of the issue (Carter, 2014). "Triangulation using multiple sources of data means comparing and cross-checking data collected through observations at different times or in different places, or interview data

collected from people with different follow-up interviews with the same people (Merriam, 2009, p. 216). This research was triangulated by revealing my biases as a researcher, using both interviews and documents as forms of data collection, and comparing my findings to the prevailing literature. The constructionism qualitative research method I used to describe, understand, and interpret the data could be replicated easily (Merriam, 2009, p. 11).

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This qualitative research explores the answers to two questions. The first question was: How and in what ways is Alaska providing adoption recruitment and matching services for children in foster care? The second was: Should Alaska pursue privatization of adoption recruitment and matching services as a means for increasing permanency outcomes for children in foster care?

In the findings, I will present interview participant demographic information and profiles, and discuss themes derived from the interviews. I will also discuss themes that emerged from the documents analyzed. The themes from the document analysis and the interview analysis will be compared in the discussion section.

Demographic Information

Participant profiles. Of the seven individuals interviewed, six were child welfare professionals and one was a stay-at-home foster and adoptive mother. Four of the seven participants have adopted at least one child, and all participants have adoption or foster care as part of their personal journey.

Table 1a

Interview Demographic Information in Alphabetical Order

Questions	**Dawn Adams**	**Dr. Karen Bergstrom**	**Travis Erickson**	**Christina Marchetti**
Age	42	60	47	36
Ethnic Origin	Asian/Korean	Caucasian	White/Alaskan-American/Scandinavian	Caucasian
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Female
Employer/ Title	Office of Children's Services/Regional Permanency Specialist	Safe Families for Children/ Executive Director	Office of Children's Services/Division Operations Manager	Homemaker
Years in Field	18	40	19	N/A
	Recruit adoptive homes, match children, serve as permanency expert for staff and legal partners, approve home studies, recommend adoption finalization, and get children listed on exchanges	Leadership of over 20 Safe Families for Children agencies providing prevention services across the Western states	Management of State child protection program	Homemaking and raising children

Note: Retrieved from Demographic questionnaire in January 2018

Dawn Adams has been with the Office of Children's Services in Alaska for nine years. She began as an adoption worker and is now the South-Central Regional Permanency Specialist.

The Office of Children's Services has four regional permanency specialists to cover the five OCS regions. Dawn is responsible for the South-Central region and has two dedicated child protection adoption workers and one assistant under her supervision. Her office is in Wasilla, Alaska. Social services in some form or another has been Dawn's career for the past 18 years. Her role as a Regional Permanency Specialist is to recruit adoptive homes, match children with families, serve as a permanency expert for staff and legal partners, approve home studies of adoptive families, refer children for listing on the adoption exchanges, and recommend adoption finalization on cases in her region. She oversees and recommends all adoptions and guardianships that come out of her region. Dawn was adopted from an orphanage in Korea by an Alaskan family at the age of three. She is also a mother.

Dr. Karen Bergstrom is the Western States Director for Safe Families for Children and has been a child welfare leader for over 40 years. Safe Families for Children is an international movement of volunteers that willingly host children in their homes while families in their community are in crisis. The movement is meant to prevent child abuse, keep families together, and reduce the number of children unnecessarily going into foster care by supporting families in crisis. Dr. Bergstrom used to be the Chief Programs Operator for Olive Crest, which provides homes, supports, adoption, education, mentoring, and family crisis intervention for California, Las Vegas, and Washington (Olive Crest, 2017). Dr. Bergstrom was able to provide valuable insight into the inner workings of how a private foster care and adoption agency functions in other states. She is a mother of three grown children.

Travis Erickson began as a volunteer for the Office of Children's Services in Alaska 19 years ago. As a child, he spent years in and out of the foster care system in Alaska. This

experience compelled him to work to make the child welfare system in Alaska better. He has been a foster parent and has adopted a child. Travis worked his way up within OCS from being as a front-line investigator to his current position as the Division Operations Manager. Although his job is to manage all operations of OCS in Alaska, his job pertaining to adoption recruitment and matching is to provide systems level leadership and management to ensure children have homes to exit from state care. This would include such things as human resource assignment and development and collaboration with community partners (Erickson, 2018).

Christina Marchetti is a foster and adoptive parent. She was raised in Anchorage, Alaska and has adopted six children from foster care. She and her husband, pastor of Radiant Church, have eight children in total, two biological and six adopted. They have fostered 17 children and closed their foster care license after the adoption of their last child. The Marchettis have adopted a child from California, and although they are not a native family and therefore not an ICWA preferred home, they have adopted several native children. They also adopted Christina's biological niece through an adult adoption when she turned 18 and aged out of foster care. Christina helps promote adoption through community activism and actively volunteers for the Heart Gallery of Alaska. Christina was able to offer the perspective of an adoptive parent, grass-roots adoption recruiter, and community activist.

Table 1b

Interview Demographic Information in Alphabetical Order continued

Questions	**Amanda Metivier**	**Brenda Ursel**	**Tami Watson**
Age	33	51	34
Ethnic Origin	Caucasian	Caucasian	Caucasian
Gender	Female	Female	Female
Employer/ Title	Child Welfare Academy and Facing Foster Care in Alaska/Youth Education Coordinator	Alaska Center for Resource Families/Adoption Support Specialist and PARKA Program Coordinator	Catholic Social Services/Program Director of Pregnancy Support and Adoption Services
Years in Field	15	16	11
Job Duties	Advocacy and education of foster youth/alumni about their rights and resources. Training child welfare staff and caregivers. Preparing youth for post-secondary education and training.	Coordinating PARKA program. Pre and post adoption preparation, training and support for families. Training and collaborating with community based partners. Plan and orchestrate community awareness activities.	Supervise and support adoption coordinators and pregnancy support advocates. Provide clinical reviews for State adoption and guardianship home studies. Provides supervision and oversight to the Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiter and assists in finding adoptive homes for those children.

Note: Retrieved from Demographic questionnaire in January 2018

Amanda Metivier is the Executive Director of Facing Foster Care in Alaska, an organization seeking to "improve the foster care system through sharing our experiences,

supporting and education youth and social services, and implementing positive change in society as a whole" (Facebook Facing Foster Care in Alaska, 2017). Amanda aged out of the foster care system in Alaska after being a foster child for three years. She is also the Youth Education Coordinator for the Child Welfare Academy where she helps children in foster care seek and procure training and secondary education, plans annual education conferences, and supports these students with housing, medical, social and emotional support (University of Alaska Child Welfare Academy, 2017). Amanda and her husband are foster parents to teens, and her husband was adopted at the age of 27 after aging out of foster care. Amanda is well known in the community for her legal and social advocacy for children in state care.

Brenda Ursel works for Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF). She manages the Preparation of Adoption Readiness for Kids in Alaska (PARKA) adoption program and actively recruits and trains pre-adoptive and adoptive families. Brenda has previous experience working as a therapeutic foster care professional, which is where she met her children. Brenda has adopted three children as a single parent. She believes that a lot of what she has learned and practiced and the insight that she brings to her job are because of the experience she had as a parent needing adoption competent services, understanding the impact of trauma, experiencing multiple transitions on kids, and witnessing the effective ways and services that need to happen to help them heal. She would be considered by many in the state to be an adoption training expert and activist.

Tami Watson is the Program Director for Pregnancy Support & Adoption Services of Catholic Social Services in Alaska. Tami manages the Waiting Child program, Infant Adoption program, Wendy's Wonderful Kids, the Pregnancy Support program, and the Home Study

Writing program that the State of Alaska contracts with to provide home studies for potential adoptive families of children in foster care. Tammy has adopted two older children from foster care and has one biological child. Tammy and her husband met their adopted children through their child welfare work and responded to the need.

Themes from Interviews

There were several common themes that emerged from the interviews: 1) OCS caseworker overload negatively affects permanency planning for waiting children, 2) placement decisions need to be more thorough and thoughtful, 3) permanency goals can be sabotaged by stakeholders in the current system, and 4) private agency recruitment efforts outside of OCS are critical in placing waiting children.

OCS caseworker overload negatively affects permanency planning. OCS caseworkers in Alaska have too big of caseloads to manage well. "In Wasilla, protective workers juggled an average of 43 cases at a time, according to OCS. Federal standards recommend a maximum of 12" (Boots, 2017). Because OCS caseworkers are managing at least twice the recommended average, they are only able to respond to crisis, and permanency planning for children that need permanent homes is put on the back burner.

Travis Erickson said, "In general, the child protection system is in a constant state of crisis, and we're chasing what's in front of us that's screaming the loudest. And so, if you look back over the course of history, one of the things that's not screaming the loudest and has created booms and busts in the child protection system is kids who are waiting permanency. People don't scream for permanency the way that they scream for a safety plan, right? If you are in danger now, something has to be done, so when you've got a system that's already strapped and

pulled at the edge, it's in a constant state of crisis. That also means it's in a constant state of active prioritization. So, you're constantly prioritizing what I have to do now with my limited resources based upon all of these things that are screaming for attention in front of me. And more often than not, that attention is going to go to the safety, the kids that are not safe. Or there's some other really high-level attention drawer and one of those. . . which sort of creates a constant drag on non-crisis but very important things like establishing permanency. So that's where I think like contracting out, select services that could allow for focus to occur in a more methodical way, it would be an absolute winner I would imagine. But you got to be able to keep the workload down, you got to keep the expectations high. You know what I mean, all these different things. But when you water it down in the child protection system, you're just going to constantly be challenged by all the competing priorities."

Christina Marchetti described it much the same way saying, "We don't have enough foster families, but then their caseloads are what, I mean two, three times more than what they should be having easy. Then we have caseworkers that have too much on their plate, so they're basically running towards. . . You see fire run to that, everybody else can wait, they're safe at the moment. Other things are getting left not taken care of, because we don't have enough people doing that work either."

Brenda Ursel had the following to say about OCS caseworker overloading: "If you have a manageable caseload, if you have an exceptional social worker who is there to meet the needs of that foster family, and you expect that foster family to provide exceptional care, and you give them the resources to do that, using all of our community partners, then I think that is how we best service children. Give them incredible foster parents who are attentive to their needs, we

support the foster parents across the board from the very part of the process, which is hard, to the end. But you have to do that from a multifaceted approach, it's not just one easy answer. . . Bigger goals would be to have stability in staffing that you have a low turnover rate; that you have manageable caseloads, and I know that's an ongoing budget issue that's very complex. But people can't do the work if they are constantly in crisis mode."

According to Amanda Metivier, "Last year there was a pretty big chunk of money that got into the budget to increase the number of workers and training, we have more trainers at the academy, so there's efforts to beef up things within the system to try to reduce caseloads, but I think even then the systems always going to be bogged down."

Tami Watson says, "It would be awesome to have just caseload workers of legally free kids, that their focus is to find permanency versus ongoing caseloads that have a little bit of everything. . . just to be a little bit more focused on the permanency piece."

Having dedicated adoption specialists is oneway OCS has tried to increase permanency. Two years ago, OCS made some changes in their staffing to allow for more permanency planning specialists. According to Travis Erickson, these specialists "provide more focused interventions when we've got kids that seem to be stuck in the system. . . We've had a few months now, which is kind of a big accomplishment, where our exits have exceeded our entries."

Of the 24 staffed OCS field offices statewide and 497 employees (Services, 2015), there are four offices that have a regional office permanency specialist. These regional office permanency specialists are responsible for supervising the six to eight OCS adoption workers state wide, working with community partners to recruit for permanent homes, creating

awareness, and assisting the family services caseworker in the matching process once a potential forever family has been identified.

When asked what could be done to increase efficiency in the process, Dawn Adams cited overloaded OCS caseworkers not having the time or knowledge of the child's case to refer children to the adoption recruitment sites. OCS does not use a social history approach in case files, which timelines a child's history and services, so in order for a caseworker to refer a child for recruitment, they need to do a lot of research in the case files to fit together a history in order to present accurate information. This is a cumbersome process and the current caseloads do not allow for this time. Dawn Adams said, "This is the only social work job I've ever had where we don't have running social histories on kids. . . it's descriptive information, it's about who their parents are, where they came from, their education history, medical histories, their medication history, relatives, contact that is important to them, the whole shebang. . . we don't do child specific files, we do family files until the child becomes legally free, and then they get their own child file."

Because caseworkers are over-capacity, pre-adoptive parents bear the weight of following up with the caseworkers to ensure the process of adoption continues. Christina Marchetti, a foster and adoptive mother of eight children (two biological and six adopted), has had different experiences with each adoption. She explained that the timeliness and ease of the process was affected greatly by her tenacity to follow up with all parties involved. "I feel like just getting paperwork filed myself sometimes. . . I'm like. . . just hand it to me. I'll take it where it needs to go. But they can't give it to the foster parent. Sometimes paperwork literally sits for weeks or months and they're making a million calls, and it's just been sitting on

somebody's desk. It's heartbreaking for a foster parent, but I get it that they're doing a million other things that seem more important to them, because they are. My kids are all safe in my home. We don't get to go to the top of the stack. Kids will sit longer in foster care, because they're safe."

Dr. Karen Bergstrom described her experience with a private adoption agency's case handling saying, "My experience was the relief for the families of the personal adoption worker that came to your house, that we were able to provide a much more personalized service. The safety net and the closeness of a privatized program, the family felt less anxiety. There's somebody deeply involved in the process with them. Then I know for sure the time from start to finish of adoption was much, much quicker, significantly quicker, for a privatized agency. You take the bureaucracy away; a private agency can move it through quicker."

The experience and capacity of the caseworker played a large role in timeliness. Christina Marchetti said, "I feel like within OCS there are the people that I've gotten to know and work with over the years through the many adoptions, that I know are wonderful people. They're working very hard, and they are honestly caring and concerned about the kids and making active efforts to get adoptions through and everything, but they are understaffed and overworked. I think that there are a handful of people within probably what they may refer to as their adoption unit that I really admire and care for. I think that they have done a good job with working with me and with people that I know."

Once a family inquires on a waiting child through an exchange, the PARKA program, or Wendy's Wonderful Kids, the state is responsible for determining if that family is a good match for that child. Although the caseworkers for these other agencies, the court-appointed child

advocate and the guardian ad litem may provide input about the child or family, they do not make the final decision about the appropriateness of the placement. This decision is left up to the caseworker, adoption worker, and permanency specialists at OCS.

Holding caseworkers accountable for their job duties may increase permanency outcomes. Amanda Metivier knows of some court justices that are holding caseworkers and agencies accountable for permanency planning. "I'm on the Court Improvement Project, and I think that judges here have started to get fed up. We had a judge recently fine the caseworker $100 for showing up without a permanency report."

Because the state is relying on individual, overloaded, OCS caseworkers to provide all referrals to the different adoption recruitment sites as its only avenue for adoption recruitment efforts, the feasibility of outsourcing these services should be investigated.

Placement decisions need to be more thorough and thoughtful. Children being adopted out of foster care are primarily being adopted by their current foster family. This current foster family is not necessarily their first foster family but rather their last foster family prior to adoption. In order to avoid the trauma of moving from home to home, and for adoption placements to succeed, it is crucial to make a thorough and thoughtful decision on the very first out-of-home placement for a child, as well as a cautious and appropriate placement if a child must be moved.

When looking for a potential home for a child in need of foster care or potential adoption, the state starts by using a Team Decision Making (TDM) approach. TDM meetings are facilitated by designated OCS staff, and everyone involved in the child's case is welcome to attend. Travis Erickson states, "The spirit of them is that we try to get as many people there as

we can that are directly related to the child and the family who are involved in the case. So if we're thinking about moving a child away from a parent, we would have the parent there. If the child is of reasonable age to participate, that child would be there. Seeing as both parents, the child, if age appropriate, if you've already got a legal case, you will people like the guardian ad litem there, and if there's some other significant people. If the family wants to bring support, you could bring them, or if you've got other placement providers that are either being considered or maybe are doing a change of placement from one foster parent to another potentially, those people would be involved. . . So, the idea is that we're always starting from "a stitch in time saves nine"—that kind of mentality or whatever, where you're being thoughtful from the beginning. So that would be applicable to the removal TDM. But anytime you move a child, you should be thinking about the next placement, unless it's a medical or treatment placement that's designed to be short term or non-permanent, you really should be thinking, Is this next placement potentially permanent? because we want to prevent unnecessary moves for kids. So anytime a child moves, really that TDM is helping that be a thoughtful process and avoiding getting caught too much in the crisis and the rush."

Tami Watson explained that if an immediate and known family member or friend is not able to be identified in that TDM meeting, the caseworker or in some cases, contractor, starts searching databases and genealogy sites to form a family tree of sorts, and they begin to contact potential family members by mail or phone. If those contacts do not yield a potential permanent home, they begin to talk to adults currently in the child's life that may be interested in adoption or guardianship. "You'd be surprised what you get. I tell them I know it's going to be a lot but I want to ask and you'd be surprised, people are saying yes. Some people don't even know they need a family. They thought that they already were in their pre-adoptive home or they thought

they were already adopted." Interview participants Brenda Ursel and Tami Watson both adopted children that were in their life outside of being a foster parent.

Amanda Metivier also stressed the need to recruit foster and adoptive families from the biological family's network. When Amanda was removed from her parents, she was placed with some family friends that had relationship with her parents that became emergency foster care licensed just for her. It made the experience less traumatic for her, and she has a conviction that "if foster parents would really try to cultivate that relationship with the biological parents, everything would go better."

Christina Marchetti believes having a larger pool of foster and potential adoptive families would result in better placement decisions. "We don't have enough homes, so we don't have a pool to determine if this home would be the best fit. We are basically saying, okay, this person said yes, so put him there. It might be a horrible fit, which is what leads to kids being bounced around."

Dr. Karen Bergstrom mentioned that her California private foster care agency "was one of the leaders in adopting the foster-adopt model. Which is in the foster homes that we were licensing, we also asked them to be a foster-adopt home so that a child could stay where they were at if in fact adoption became an option for them."

Another example of placement decisions being more thoughtful would be an emphasis on possible guardianship placements. Guardianship is legal custody of a child without the rights of the biological parent being terminated. Adoption only occurs when the legal rights of a parent have been terminated. Both are legal statuses and give legal responsibility to the adoptive parent or guardian. According to Amanda Metivier, "There's been a lot of talk about it, like within

OCS over the last two years. It's not being reflected in the numbers. They're trying to push, and a lot's been going out to educate workers about guardianship, but it's still just not happening in practice."

Permanency goals can be sabotaged by stakeholders. Several participants discussed the fact that often times adoption efforts are halted or delayed because of certain providers in the current service array that may not sense the urgency for permanency. Examples of this would be that a therapist does not feel a child is emotionally ready for placement or adoption, bureaucracy, a child being institutionalized out of state, or a provider not wanting to lose revenue.

Placing children in group homes or institutions has decreased over the years, and now 4% of children entering foster care under 12 years old are placed in these institutional settings (The Children's Bureau, 2017). Dawn Adams said, "Our kids get stuck in out-of-state treatment, and the longer you're in out-of-state treatment, then you develop more and more institutionalized behaviors, and so. . . part of our problem with our therapeutic agencies holding onto kids for so long is then they therefore don't have more openings to accept new kids into their therapeutic services."

Regarding older youth, Amanda Metivier said, "Youth right now just keep bouncing around and are in crisis constantly. They just put them wherever there's an open bed or there are those children who have been in residential for a long time or therapeutic care for a long time. I think that delays the efforts to try to find a long-term home."

Brenda Ursel believes "kids being in therapeutic foster care should be time-limited, they should not be in therapeutic foster care working on goals for six years, because a whole other set of dynamics comes into play."

Outside of a group home or institutional setting, therapeutic foster homes are used in Alaska, and these are the only private foster care providers in the state. Denali Family Services is one of the therapeutic foster care providers in Alaska. Each of their therapeutic foster family is paid anywhere from $1,050 to $2,550 per month for provider reimbursement (Denali Family Services, 2017). In addition to the foster families; therapists, doctors, schools, and day care providers are all affected when a child is removed from their therapeutic status. In order to receive therapeutic services, a child must be diagnosed with a behavioral, medical, or emotional issue. This allows each eligible provider to bill Medicaid for related services (Denali Family Services, 2017). There is potential to abuse the use of diagnosis in order to obtain services.

According to Travis Erickson, "This has been forever a problem where you get kids that go into a therapeutic foster home and an unfortunate reality is that some of those therapeutic foster homes, it's very much a job to them and you start to intermingle jobs and relationship. So you've incentivized through money, exchanging hands, a relationship between a foster parent and a child. Well, when you think about what drives people's behavior, an incentive is money being an incentive. What incentive does this now therapeutic foster parent have for the child to get better? I hear all the time that therapeutic providers, one, you have this built-in disincentive for wellness for one. So that's just another, that's a hard thing to deal with. And then two, if your therapeutic payment is going to decrease or stop if you adopt that child and that becomes a permanent parent child relationship or you lose any kind of benefits that come with that package, well then you're disincentivizing permanence, and I hear that's regularly a thing that we are confronted with by a child by child basis".

Presbyterian Hospitality House is one of the therapeutic foster care providers in Alaska. According to their website, they accomplish their mission by "helping youth achieve their goal of reunification with family members, whenever possible, transition to foster care, or emancipation" (2017, p. 1). Adoption or guardianship are not a common goal for permanency of the youth in Alaska served by Presbyterian Hospitality House. By personal experience operating the Heart Gallery of Alaska, I know that therapeutic foster families contracted with this organization are not encouraged to adopt or discuss adoption with the children in their homes. The organization also does not refer children they serve to the Heart Gallery of Alaska for recruitment.

Private agency recruitment efforts outside of OCS. The Office of Children's Services in Alaska provides grants to many different service providers for foster children in Alaska. These providers handle a myriad of services related to adoption, like training and support or home studies prior to a child being placed in a pre-adoptive home. There are, however, no grants for adoption recruitment efforts (State of Alaska, 2017c). Current recruitment efforts are being done through a collaboration of OCS adoption workers, Alaska Center for Resource Family employees, the Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiter, churches, community members, and privately funded agencies like the Heart Gallery of Alaska.

When Alaskan participants were asked about current recruitment services in Alaska, all participants were aware of existing programs. This is proof that there is good networking among entities according to Brenda Ursel. "What Alaska's doing is really based on relationships and trust and collaborative partnerships that are very hard to replicate because they're based on the trust that is developed over years, over having very highly educated, very skilled people in

positions that are very passionate about what they do and their gift. And so, there's a lot of cooperation between programs."

The Heart Gallery of Alaska being launched in October of 2016 created a large increase in adoption awareness and inquiries. Brenda Ursel describes one of the new accomplishments this way: "The other thing the state is doing right, and that has to do with both our work with Beacon Hill, and The Heart Gallery of Alaska, and ACRF, is the state is doing an exceptional job of using and trusting the skills of their community partners. So, we have seen the collaboration. I really think that it's unprecedented, that it would be very hard to replicate in other states. And what that has meant is the Heart Gallery, and the kids that are legally free, we have developed the process that not only we have a state-of-the-art looking website, but we have put the processes in place through the collaboration of ACRF, OCS, and The Heart Gallery to get a disclosure piece in place, which has been long overdue. So now we have a universal discloser process that benefits the children, that benefits all of our programs. Wendy's Wonderful Kids is part of Catholic Social Services and asked to work together to say. . . 'This is who these kids are,' and we can be a lot more effective in our recruitment. So that has been huge in what the state is doing."

Travis Erickson also spoke about these partnerships saying, "The Heart Gallery, which you take a look at the quality of the work and everything that's being done through that compared to what OCS did on our own, and it's not event comparable, so the quality is much better. So those kinds of partnerships, people are more apt to link and come forward when they've got more personalized connections and non-bureaucratic connections, so I think that has been great."

Wendy's Wonderful Kids is a program of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption that funds "adoption professionals who implement proactive, child-focused recruitment programs targeted exclusively on moving America's longest-waiting children from foster care into adoptive families" (Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, 2017). In Alaska, there is one Wendy's Wonderful Kid recruiter paid by the foundation through Catholic Social Services. According to Tami Watson, the local worker "recruits for up to 26 kids currently, but a good portion of them have been placed in pre-adoptive or adoptive homes and are monitored rather than being recruited for."

Catholic Social Services Waiting Child Program (Catholic Social Services, 2017) and Alaska Center for Resource's PARKA Adoption Program (Alaska Center for Resource Families, 2017) equip a finite number of families per year for adopting a child waiting in foster care. They do this through training, coordination, and support. Both entities play a significant role in finding families through community outreach and partnerships. Brenda Ursel states that "PARKA serves 10 families per year. They recruit using internet ads, referrals from agencies, flyers, classes, and community outreach." Catholic Social Services Waiting Child Program is the adoption liaison for kids that live out of state but are being pursued by Alaskan families. Tami Watson said that "of the 10-11 families that use the Waiting Child Program, only one a year typically ends up adopting an out of state child because they usually find an Alaskan child to adopt." OCS funds both of these programs through grants (State of Alaska, 2017c). It is important to note that both PARKA and the Waiting Child Program serve the family wanting to find a child to adopt and not the child looking for a family.

The vast majority of recruitment efforts are left to the adoption exchange sites like the Heart Gallery of Alaska, AdoptUSKids, and the North West Adoption Exchange that list waiting children. These exchanges gather all data on children by referrals from OCS workers, which often does not happen in a timely manner if ever. Of all the children waiting in Alaska, the Heart Gallery of Alaska has 38 children currently listed (Beacon Hill, 2017). There is no legal requirement for OCS to refer a child to an adoption exchange.

Dawn Adams said, "Well, we have low success in most things, but something that I've also explained about what adoption recruitment does, is it gives our kids hope. Hope that they're not just going to be stuck in foster care forever, and regardless of how amazing a child's family might be, our kids really hope to not be a part of. . . Not to be in OCS custody. And so, I think you know, what I have always said is like, I don't want to be on watch the day that kid loses hope that we're going to be able to find them a family."

Themes from Documents

The published research done specifically on foster care or adoption privatization revealed that many states have or are pursuing privatization (Blackstone, 2004). Each state's implementation and experience has been different, although there are common themes. Some of these themes include 1) the higher cost of the private agencies given the services they provide, 2) the increased adoption rates of private adoption agencies compared to public, and 3) the need for administration change in the governing public structure to manage the private entities that have been contracted.

Higher cost of private agencies. The documents analyzed revealed that often the cost of privatized adoption services is more costly than the public option. Kansas experienced significant underfunding of their private adoption agencies until they revised their payment structure. Although quality of service improved and adoptions increased, the first four years of privatization, the budget for these services increased by 178% (Blackstone, 2004).

Nebraska created the Child Welfare Privatization Initiatives Project in 2007, and the cost of child welfare in that state increased by 27% as a result. Nebraska's privatization efforts are considered a failure due to their underfunding and unpreparedness to manage a private system (Hubel, 2013).

Casey Family Programs manages private foster care adoption agencies in Washington and Oregon. A study done by the Northwest Foster Care Alumni revealed that their longer term and more intensive services cost substantially more per child but produced lifetime outcomes for the child resulting in a benefit-cost ratio of 1.5, meaning that for every $1 spent in these intensive services, the benefit returned to these children and society as a whole is $1.50 (Zerbe, 2009).

Increased adoption rates due to privatization. One of the reasons states are seeking privatization is to see an increase in adoption rates (Snell, 2013). Illinois saw an adoption increase of 300% by their third year of contracting to private agencies using their performance-based model (Blackstone, 2004). Kansas experienced significant improvement in successful adoptions within the first four years of privatization as their number of adopted children increased by 78% (Blackstone, 2004). Michigan's adoptions increased 83% over an eight year period after privatization started there in 1991 (Blackstone, 2004).

Administration change in the public structure. Creating a public structure that can manage a competitive private social services market is key the success of that system. "To reap the benefits of competition, government must be a smart buyer, a skillful purchasing agent, and a sophisticated inspector of the goods and services it purchases from the private sector" (van Slyke, 2003, p. 1).

Nebraska did not have the infrastructure and market system management built to sustain privatization efforts and failed as a result (Zerbe, 2009). Illinois model of competitive bid and performance contracting achieved increased adoptions and eliminated inefficient providers (Blackstone, 2004). This system would require a broad base of adoption private service providers.

Discussion of the Findings

Individual Interviews. The first research question in this qualitative research was to help the State of Alaska identify what adoption recruitment and matching services are currently available in the state. The participants discussed in great detail the adoption recruitment efforts currently happening in Alaska. Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF) helps families locate waiting Alaskan children through their PARKA program. They train, prepare, and support the families in that program. Wendy's Wonderful Kids, funded by the Dave Thomas Foundation, operates under Catholic Social Services to recruit for adoptive homes for limited number of hard to place children in Alaska. Beacon Hill operates the Heart Gallery of Alaska and receives referrals from OCS, Wendy's Wonderful Kids and ACRF to list waiting children on the Heart Gallery of Alaska. The children's profiles on the Heart Gallery of Alaska are shared

with the Northwest Adoption Exchange and AdoptUsKids so that the children's profiles can be shared nationally.

These agencies have developed relationships and work diligently together to feature waiting children on the Heart Gallery of Alaska and recruit for their forever families. Although the private agencies outside of OCS provide input on matching decisions, they do not provide any matching services. OCS is responsible for all adoption matching.

Participant interviews focused on four prevailing themes that have significance to the research. Overloaded caseworkers not being able to prioritize permanency planning could potentially be addressed by privatizing permanency planning and outsourcing it to another agency. Participants discussed the need for placement decisions to be more thorough and thoughtful. This issue is one that could be mitigated with better staff training and more available foster homes to choose from. A privatized system may be able to recruit more foster homes and provide better placement decisions. Permanency goals can be sabotaged by stakeholders in the current system. A privatized market-based system that requires measurable outcomes would help reduce children staying in therapeutic placements or facilities unnecessarily and would call to account all vendors the state uses. It was clear from the participant comments that private agency recruitment efforts outside of OCS are currently happening and are necessary.

Documents Reviewed. The second question in this research was to determine if Alaska should pursue privatization of adoption recruitment and matching services as a means to strengthen child welfare permanency outcomes as other states have done. Several states' experiences were cited, and some of them experienced favorable permanency outcomes. Alaska should begin discussions about the pros and cons of privatization for our state.

The documents reviewed revealed a higher cost for private agencies than their public counterparts. Alaska is currently utilizing private therapeutic foster care providers and facilities for certain services and could expand this model to encompass adoption recruitment and matching although it would most likely increase the overall cost of child-welfare in Alaska based on other states' experiences. Adoption rates have a history of increasing after privatization. Alaska may experience the same result due to an increase in agencies and standardized outcomes being implemented and enforced. Privatization would require an administration change in the public structure. The Office of Children's Services has some structure built for outsourcing but does not yet have an infrastructure for a market based private model.

Privatization in Alaska. The purpose of this qualitative research was to help the State of Alaska identify what adoption recruitment and matching services are currently available in the state and determine if Alaska should pursue privatization of adoption recruitment and matching services as a means to strengthen child welfare permanency outcomes as other states have done.

Using the conceptual framework of the roadmap designed by the American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees (2017) helps analyze when privatization is appropriate. This roadmap was used to discuss the findings of this research using the information from the individual interviews and prevailing literature.

Clarification of why the public desires privatization, and why the written articulation of these reasons is vital to establishing desired outcomes. Each privatized state referenced in this research did so as a means to achieve better permanency outcomes. Certain states in the U.S. are seeing increased performance in these areas due to privatization (Blackstone, 2004). This research also shows that privatization of foster care is often a precursor to privatization of

adoption matching services due to the fact that a foster care agency recruits and matches the children they already serve through their foster care services (Blackstone, 2004).

It is inconclusive if the public desires privatization of adoption and recruitment services in Alaska. With over 29% of all OCS-involved children in Alaska being adopted by non-family members and 5% of children aging out of foster care without finding an adoptive or guardianship family, adoption recruitment and matching needs to be a focused priority in Alaska (Alaska Office of Children's Services Statistical Information - Protective Service Reports, 2017). The interview participants from Alaska did not articulate strong opinions about privatization as they did not have much personal experience within privatized systems.

Contract negotiations must be based on prior and current performance. There are no private contracts for adoption recruitment and matching efforts in the State of Alaska, but if there were, detailed outcomes and significant research of costs associated with the desired services and outcomes would be necessary.

Private agencies are held accountable through measurable outcome standards for performance. Testa (2004) discusses in detail the adoption recruitment approaches various states have used, how they have worked, and the social psychology behind the approaches. Illinois saw significant improvement in their permanency goals after privatization because of the performance contracting element of it. Each provider was expected to move 24% of the children it served into permanency (reunification, adoption, or guardianship) each year, and their payment was based on that measure. As a result of that performance standard, the rate for permanency increased by 200-300% for most agencies in Illinois (Blackstone, 2004). Along with the success

of the new performance measured private system, the number of providers declined from 40-33, essentially weeding out low performing agencies (Blackstone, 2004).

Participants mentioned certain providers in the current system have the potential to sabotage permanency goals. A privatized system with permanency goals and corresponding performance measures required of each contracted agency would bring consistency to the common goal of finding a forever family for every child in foster care that is waiting for adoption.

Define the relationship between the private and public entities and how they interface. The Office of Children's Services would need to outsource the case management, recruitment efforts, and matching services of children in need of adoption to a licensed adoption agency. Participants cited that the recruitment efforts happening currently are being done as a result of agency partnerships and not a privately funded model of outsourcing. Several states are having success with private adoption agencies, however, the funding of these agencies is vital to the overall success (Blackstone, 2004; Hubel, 2013). The success of privatization in Alaska would require adequate funding of these agencies. Alaska's economy is suffering, and funds for child welfare are limited (Waldholz, 2016). The question to be considered is; How much will it cost the state in the long run if we do not adequately fund permanency efforts now? The cost of a successful privatized adoption program is a critical factor. The financial cost of privatization is not the only consideration. Roughly 23,000 children age out of the system without finding a forever family (Lockwood, 2015). These individuals are more likely to have a number of negative outcomes in their adulthood compared to their peers. According to a recent study done in San Francisco, the lifetime economic burden of each child in foster care is $400,533 when

factoring a reduction in lifetime productivity, education, child welfare services, criminal justice, and healthcare (San Francisco Child Abuse Prevention Center and BerkeleyHaas, 2017).

The funding of the agency's services is critically important, but the other element of funding relates to the adoption subsidies given to adoptive families until the adoptive child turns 18. More adoptions create an increase in adoption subsidies for families that adopt children out of foster care. In 2015 only 11% of adoptive families in Alaska did not receive the federal adoption assistance subsidy compared to 24% nationally (Child Trends, 2017). This is not a negative statistic. There are any number of things that can contribute like lack of available family placements, children needing special services, adoptive families needing financial assistance in order to adopt, and the state's OCS office desiring to make adoption possible for families.

Because more children are being adopted than ever before, the financial burden within the child welfare system is changing from the large majority of funds allocated to kids in foster care. Now that there are so many adoptions, adoption subsidies are on a dramatic rise, and this affects the fiscal climate in individual state's health and human services budgets. All of the studies in this research cite adequate funding as being imperative to the performance of privatization (Zerbe, 2009).

Address any and all safety issues. Although not discussed specifically, any child welfare agency operating in the United States should be operating according to federal standards (Children's Bureau, 2017b).

Consider the impact of the redefined role of the public entity and train for that redefined role. Privatization in Alaska of adoptive matching services would require that OCS have the personnel in place to create contracts, manage the market of providers, and oversee the performance criteria (van Slyke, 2003). This capacity is being built currently due to the new compact between the State of Alaska and Alaska Tribes and tribal organizations to begin to take over the management of certain elements of tribal child welfare (Klouda, 2017).

Buy-in and morale of existing public child welfare staff should inform privatization decisions. Decreased caseloads and adequate training for OCS caseworkers would assist in the increased success of permanency in the state. Foster care caseworkers understanding the essential need of permanency planning for every child, timely referral to an adoption recruitment site or agency, and appropriate preparation of children needing adoptive homes are critical in this endeavor for improved outcomes. This issue goes beyond funding, and any solution to this problem should encompass planning for turnover-rates, job satisfaction, and management (Chandler, KTUU, 2015).

Collaboration within the stakeholders in the Alaska child welfare system is imperative. The adoption or guardianship process goes much more smoothly when all parties are working toward the same goals and have a definitive timeline established. Each provider used within Alaska for services for foster children should only be resourced if that provider is working toward the long-term goal of permanency for the child.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Conclusion

Private adoption recruitment can be done and is currently being done through third-party agencies and adoption exchange sites in Alaska. The collaboration between the public and private agencies is robust and exciting. Progress is being made in the area of adoption recruitment however these efforts are not funded by the State. I would qualify these efforts as an outsourcing of adoption recruitment but not a true private system that requires measurable standards, payment and outcomes. According to the interview data, there is no strong cry for privatization in Alaska. I believe this is due to a lack of knowledge about privatization efforts in other states.

There is clear evidence from both interviews and literature that the current child welfare permanency efforts are falling short and are in need of change. The overloading of caseworkers is negatively affecting permanency planning and lack of foster families and inadequate case planning can lead to poor placement decisions. Privatizing adoption services could alleviate a burden on the existing workers and system that are currently prioritizing safety and bring greater focus and efforts to permanency planning for our waiting children.

Although the need for privatization in Alaska is inconclusive, the benefits of privatization is demonstrated in some other states. In the documents analyzed, there is strong evidence indicating the benefits of privatization.

A successful private matching system would require multiple private adoption agencies to contract with the State of Alaska so that there would be a competitive market system

(Borcherding, 1978). This matching component would most likely require privatized adoption services as a whole, because successful matching is a result of successful case management. This is not currently being discussed among political and industry leaders.

Recommendations

A convening of stakeholders and decision-makers should occur to begin discussions about the possibilities of privatization. Education of privatization efforts in other states is critical for this conversation and would affect the perceived need.

Based on other states' success in working with private adoption agencies for recruitment and matching services, the State of Alaska should consider allowing private adoption agencies to operate and receive funding from the state. This would require partnerships with existing Alaska agencies as well as the pursuit of outside existing private adoption agencies that desire to expand. The state would need to create infrastructure to handle and manage these private contracts. An in-depth analysis of the legal issues associated would need to be conducted, as well as a nation-wide search for appropriate agency partnerships. An outcome-driven payment approach like Michigan implemented would allow for assessment of the partial privatization process and create performance measurements to replace the current ambiguous or non-existent systems (Blackstone, 2004).

There should be a mandate that requires all legally free children without an identified potentially permanent home be placed on an adoption exchange site by their caseworker within a certain period of time as was required in Michigan (Blackstone, 2004). This would ensure that recruitment efforts would begin for a child waiting in foster care. Funding for additional

adoption workers in the state to work collaboratively with the private adoption agencies would be helpful.

Adoption training through Alaska Center for Resource families should be funded by the state and required for all adoptive families prior to adoption. Adoption training is not currently required by the state for all foster or adoptive parents. This would help reduce failed adoptions and better prepare families for a successful future.

Alaska should discontinue contracts with any facilities or therapeutic foster care providers that do not promote permanency and align with federal permanency guidelines.

As of September 30, 2015, the Children's Bureau estimated that there were 427,910 children in foster care in the US. 25% of those children had a case plan with adoption as the permanency goal and only 3% of those children had a goal of guardianship (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017). In Alaska, adoption is the goal of 35.4% of foster children's future and guardianship is 2.8% (The Children's Bureau, 2017). Many of the older children in foster care do not want to sever the relationship with their parents but have no plan of returning home. Guardianship provides a legal familial connection for the child and guardian and accomplishes a permanency goal for the state. A focus and promotion of guardianship as an alternative to adoption would boost permanency outcomes in the state.

Implications for Further Research

Alaska should conduct further research into adoption recruitment and matching efforts in other states and countries. This may promote best practices. Research should be conducted to determine if current stakeholders within the system promote permanency and are in alignment

with federal guidelines. Further research is also needed in analyzing the feasibility of privatizing adoption services and foster care in Alaska as a whole.

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Appendix A

LETTER OF CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Should Alaska pursue privatization of adoption services?

I am a student at Alaska Pacific University (APU) conducting research for my MBA thesis over the coming months. I am requesting your voluntary participation in my research. You may choose to stop your participation at any time without penalty. I expect that your participation will take approximately one hour to complete.

The purpose of this qualitative research was to help the State of Alaska identify what adoption recruitment and matching services are currently available in the state, and determine if Alaska should pursue privatization of adoption recruitment and matching services as a means to strengthen child welfare permanency outcomes as other states have done. The research questions guiding this study are as follows: How and in what ways is Alaska providing adoption recruitment and matching services for children in foster care? Should Alaska pursue privatization of adoption recruitment and matching services as a means for increasing permanency outcomes for children in foster care? To gather information on how the existing system is constructed, I will be doing personal interviews with child welfare workers and agencies on their process and perceptions. These interviews will last one hour and will be done in-person or telephonically.

All participants will be referred to by their given name. All data will be available for use in the thesis document unless explicitly requested to be removed. This research will be published and available to the public. All confidential data will be shredded once the research is complete.

This project has been reviewed and approved by APU's Institutional Review Board.

A copy of this letter is yours to keep. If you have any questions about how this investigation is to be conducted please contact me at: ccarmody@alaskapacific.edu. You may also contact my Faculty Advisor: Carole Lund clund@alaskapacific.edu or 907-564-8212, 4101 University Drive Anchorage, AK 99508.

_____ _____

Investigator (print and sign) Date

I agree to participate in the project as described above.

_____ _____

Participant (print and sign) Date

Appendix B

Demographic Interview Questions

1. Please state your name_____
2. Age_____
3. Ethnic Origin_____
4. Employer _____Your Title_____
5. What are your job duties? _____

   _____
6. What role does your agency play in adoption recruitment of foster children?

   _____

   _____
7. What role do you play in this adoption recruitment?

   _____
8. What role does your agency play in adoptive family matching of foster children?

   _____

   _____
9. What role do you play in this adoptive family matching of foster children?

   _____
10. Do you know of any organizations or states that are doing it differently than yours? If so, please explain. _____

    _____

Appendix C

Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about your experiences with adoption recruitment and matching services.
2. Please explain what you believe your state is doing right related to adoption and matching services?
3. Who do you believe are the key organizations and what are they doing to have a positive impact?
4. What do you believe your state should be doing differently related to adoption and matching services?
5. Please discuss and describe what your state is doing in regards to permanency outcomes. What do you believe your current system could do to increase permanency outcomes?
6. What else would you like to share about how your state could best serve children in foster care?