

# DRAFT GOVERNANCE MODEL FOR IMPROVING ALASKA'S EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM



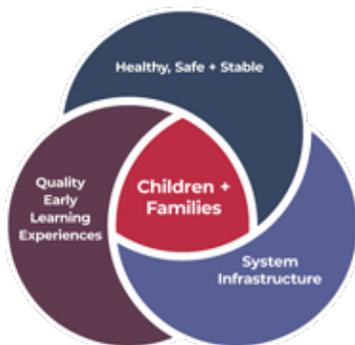
## BACKGROUND

Early Childhood Governance refers to a state's organizational structures and its placement of authority and accountability for making program policy, financing, and implementation decisions for publicly funded programs for young children. Governance is how authority and accountability for certain functions is allocated.<sup>1</sup>

A significant purpose of governance is to advance a state's core mission and goals.<sup>2</sup> Additional key elements of effective early childhood governance should:

- ◆ Ensure the early childhood system is equitable.
- ◆ Assure an efficient and accountable public structure, and advance critical policy goals.
- ◆ Address dispersed authority and accountability for key early childhood services.

Ultimately, for state governance to be successful and fulfill its important role in the early childhood system it needs (1) adequate resources, authority and accountability; (2) legitimacy in the eyes of stakeholders; (3) sufficient capacity, expertise, and capability to do the work; and (4) progress on the outcomes expected for children, families, early childhood providers and the system as a whole.



## DRAFT GOVERNANCE MODEL FOR ALASKA

**Key Challenges:** Alaska's early childhood system is fragmented, creating a scattershot of separate systems, funding streams, and decision-making authority. There is no coordinated leadership to ensure decision-making authority across the continuum of programs and funding streams that make up the breadth of the early childhood system. Additionally, Alaska lacks a comprehensive infrastructure for building intentional and coordinated relationships with local agencies, rural and remote communities, school districts, Tribal organizations, and early childhood coalitions.

The proposed model would place authority and accountability for early childhood programming in a new public division under one of Alaska's current state departments. This is a reputable governance model that exists in states across the nation that can be replicated in Alaska. The division of early childhood would merge programs to advance Alaska's core mission and goals, ensuring there is a system of accessible, high-quality early childhood services and the supports.

This system will increase and monitor access and quality of services that meet the developmental and learning needs of children and are responsive to family and community values and conditions. In addition to consolidating public early childhood programs, the governance model would create a structure outside government to develop and monitor a statewide strategic plan and evaluate the effectiveness of programs within the division of early childhood. The following table outlines the proposed governance model.

1. Dichter, H., Connors-Tadros, L., & Horen, N. (2021). Early Childhood Governance: A Toolkit of Curated Resources to Assist State Leaders. SRI International. (p.1)

2. See footnote 1, page 2.

Inside Government:  
The Division of Early Childhood

Outside Government: Board

**AUTHORITY**

- Division will be written in statute.
- The Division executive will have a seat at the department decision-making table around budgets and policy.
- The Division has the authority to administer early childhood programs, including setting policy and making funding decisions.
- Authority to receive federal and state public funding.
- Authority to grant and contract for services.
- Authority to design protocols, processes, and guidance for service delivery, and how programs are administered.
- Make decisions around what is a regulatory change or policy change

- Board will be authorized by law.
- Voting approval for the statewide strategic plan.
- Voting approval for implementation plans.
- Voting review of division budget and how they relate/align with the strategic and implementation plans, and those budgets then go to commissioner for final approval.
- The Board would be involved as is possible in activities of recruiting and identifying candidates to run the Division. The department commissioner would have authority to hire and terminate the division director.
- The Board would do annual performance review and share with agency director. Board could initiate recommendation to terminate, but that is decision of Agency director. Assumes the division director will be an appointed position, not civil service position.
- Board issues reports to legislature and periodically updates legislature on plan, activities, recommendations.
- Advise the legislature and the Governor on the plan, priorities.
- Authority to champion and advocate for the needs of children and their families.
- Have budgetary authority to accept and administer funds to support Board core functions.

# FUNCTIONS

- Manage and administer early childhood programs.
- Develop and support implementation of programs so that they align with the Comprehensive Plan for Early Childhood.
- Develop division-level budgets.  
Grant and contract for services.
- Develop and set policies for all programs being administered so that they align with comprehensive plan.
- Design protocols and develop guidance for processes about how programs are administered and delivered.
- Engage, consult and coordinate with Tribes to increase and strengthen government-to-government relationships.
- Serve as key contact for legislative inquiries.

- Develop, adopt, and monitor the statewide comprehensive Strategic Plan for Early Childhood.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of programs and how the Division is supporting the implementation of the strategic plan.
- Report annually to public on the “state of the state” of early childhood and equity within the system.
- Actively engage in identification of public and private sector investment in the early childhood field.
- Be the convener for the public-private financing conversation to increase investment in early childhood focused on leveraging dollars and marshalling both sector resources in a set strategic direction.
- Expand the network of stakeholders engaged to improve public policy. Ensure external to state government points of view are reflected in policy and funding decisions.
- Engage parents and families by the board.  
Gather feedback from stakeholders on how early childhood programs are administered and develop public report.

# PROGRAMS ADMINISTERED BY THE DIVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

- Child Care, Early Childhood Comprehensive Services, Head Start State Collaboration Office, state-funded Head Start, state PreK, Early childhood mental health consultation, early literacy, Food programs (e.g., CACFP, WIC), MIECHV, PAT, Infant Early Learning program, Strengthening Families

## PROGRAMS COORDINATED WITH THE DIVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

- Title V, Federal Pre-K (619 & Title 1A) and Head Start (federal), behavioral health, OCS.

## STAFFING

- Sufficient FTE capacity and expertise capability to administer early childhood programs relocated to the Division, as well as new functions assigned under statute.
- Tribal Liaison staff

- 5-7 staff to include: Executive Director; Data analysis / research analyst capacity; Planning & Convening; Communications; Administrative.
- The Governor and Tribal Leadership will appoint specific members as recommended by the Nominations Committee of the board; terms are staggered across terms of governors. A total of up to 15 board members. There will be an odd number of members.
- The board is a statewide structure with regional or local bodies (by public health regions or school district regions or tribal regions or other geographic areas).
- The Executive Director and other staff of the board will not be members of the board.
- Public officials/state employees can be on the Board with limitation as outlined below.
- Allow a modest number of executive branch officials to be on the board.
- They will be ex-officio members. They will not vote.
- The public officials will not be in leadership roles, including the chair position.
- All board members, except public officials, will be able to vote.
- Board chair is a critical position and is elected by the board as are the other officers.
- Categories of representation are crucial and need to be well balanced.

- Board has a nominating committee to identify candidates for consideration by the governor. The nominations who are from tribal nations and communities would be vetted by those communities to be included. Tribal should be part of nominating committee.
- *Tenure:*
  - ◆ Ensure consistency and stability on the board so that there are staggered terms and that the board is not only appointed by one administration.
  - ◆ Board member tenure and participation—Board members would agree to uphold charter and mission; termination of a board member could occur beyond non-participation.
  - ◆ Board members cannot be continuously reappointed- it keeps it healthier and allows others to participate. Two consecutive terms and then a break before being reappointed. Three-year terms and 2 consecutive terms with a break.

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