

# Research Brief

## Patterns of risk and protective factors among Alaska children: Association with maternal and child well-being

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### Background

Early childhood is an important period for establishing a strong foundation for adolescent and adult health and development. Understanding how experiences of factors that undermine healthy outcomes (i.e. risk factors) and factors that promote healthy outcomes (i.e. protective factors) are associated with maternal and child well-being can help to inform early intervention efforts.

We linked 2009–2011 Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) data with administrative data from the Office of Children’s Services (OCS) and 2012–2014 Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey (CUBS) data. Using these data, we identified groups of AN/AI and non-AN/AI children with similar experiences or “clusters” of seven risk factors and four protective factors prior to age three. We then examined maternal and child outcomes associated with membership into groups where factors that cluster together.

### Key findings from this study

#### Non Alaska Native / American Indian children

Compared to the **low risk, high protections cluster** the children in **moderate risk, moderate protections cluster** were more likely to have developmental risk, and their mothers were less likely to feel comfortable asking for help.

- 22% of children have **developmental risk** in the high risk group compared to 9% in the low risk group
- 89% of mothers **have steps to manage stress** in the high risk group compared to 96% in the low risk group
- 83% of mothers **feel comfortable asking for help when needed** in the high risk group compared to 95% in the low risk group
- 96% of mothers **know where to go for parenting information** in the high risk group vs 98% in the low

#### Implications and recommendations

These results underscore the role of both risk and protective factors in contributing to maternal and child well-being. Reducing the stigma associated with experiencing risk factors, such as poverty and maternal depressive symptoms, among Alaska families may help mothers feel comfortable asking for help when needed and increase behaviors for managing stress, potentially leading to improvements in child development.

#### Alaska Native / American Indian children

Compared to the **low SES, moderate protections clusters**, the children in the **high risk, moderate protections cluster** were more likely to have developmental risk and their mothers were less likely to feel comfortable asking for help or to know where to go for parenting information.

- 24% of children have **developmental risk** in the high risk group compared to 8% in the low risk group
- 78% of mothers **have steps to manage stress** in both groups
- 71% of mothers **feel comfortable asking for help when needed** in the high risk group compared to 87% in the low risk group
- 88% of mothers **know where to go for parenting**



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