

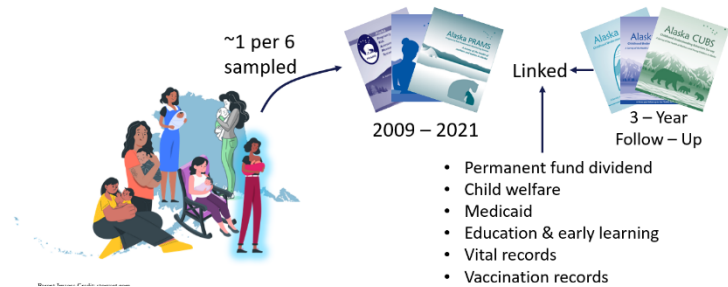
Analysis Brief

Early Childhood Experiences

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Background

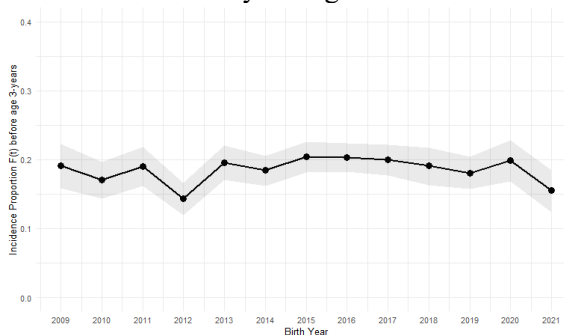
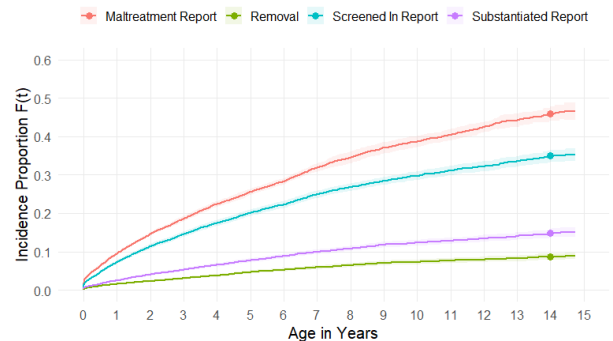
The Alaska Longitudinal Child Abuse and Neglect Linkage project (ALCANLink) follows a group of Alaskan children whose mothers responded to the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) survey following a birth in 2009 – 2021. During this period, nearly 14,500 mothers responded to PRAMS, representing just over 136,000 Alaskan births. Every year, project analysts check to see whether any of these children have been reported to child welfare or received services from other public programs. As the children get older, it is possible to calculate the risk (Incidence Proportion) of a maltreatment report and measure associations with child education readiness and other outcomes over time. Using these data, we can explore pre-birth and early childhood factors that increase or decrease the chance a child becomes involved with the child welfare system, demonstrates school readiness, completes recommended vaccine series, and many other outcomes.



This handout outlines some of the key findings from this novel Alaska-specific data resource.

Incidence of child maltreatment

- Approximately **46%** of children born in Alaska experience an allegation of harm for any maltreatment type before their 14th birthday.
 - 38% experience allegations involving neglect, 27% mental injury, 21% physical abuse, and 18% sexual abuse.
 - 35% experience a screened in report.
 - 15% experience a substantiated report.
 - 9% experience a removal.
- Children born in recent years have similar risk of being reported to OCS by age 3 compared to those born about 10 years ago.

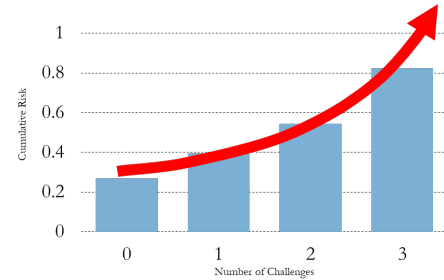


Some populations experience higher incidence of an allegation of harm before their 14th birthday compared to the statewide average (46%):

- ~73% of children in the Northern and 70% in Southwest Public Health Regions of Alaska.
- ~73% of children born to mothers <20 years old; 61% among children born to mothers 20–24 years old.

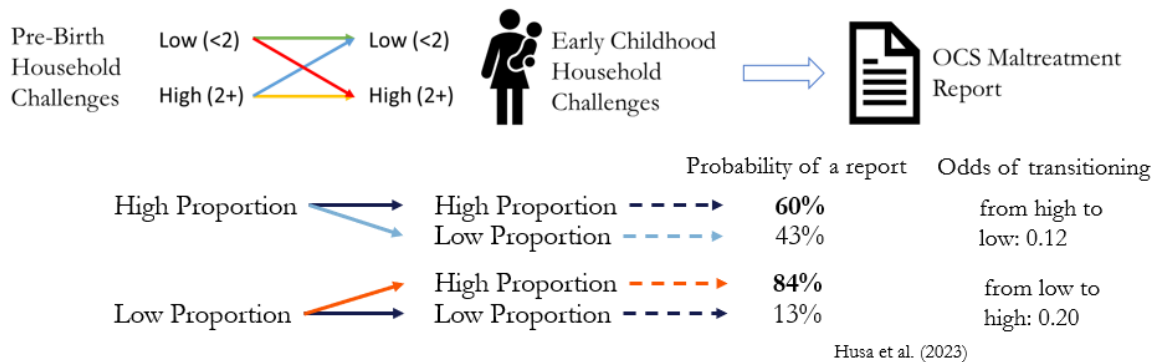
Child maltreatment and ACEs scores can be predicted by pre-birth familial factors

- The accumulation of pre-birth household challenges (e.g., divorce, financial struggles or homelessness, mental illness of a family member, incarceration of a family member, inter-partner violence) during the 12 months before birth of a new child often cluster together and have an additive effect on negative child outcomes:
 - Relative to children born to households reporting zero challenges:
 - The risk of being reported to child welfare increases systematically for each additional pre-birth household challenge experienced.
 - For each additional pre-birth challenge reported, a systematic relative increase in average childhood ACE score at age three was detected.



Families are dynamic and risk can be modified

- Two primary groups describe pre-birth household risk: those with 0-1 challenge reported (low adversity group) and those with 2+ challenges reported (high adversity group).



- Transitioning from **high to low** during early childhood results in a reduced risk of a maltreatment report by age three. While transitioning from **low to high** during early childhood results in an increased risk of a maltreatment report by age three.

Accumulation of household challenges predict school readiness and early reading

- Many children struggle to meet early reading score benchmarks and milestones. For each additional pre-birth challenge reported, the probability of having adequate or passing 3rd grade reading scores systematically decreases. Substantial and significant impacts to reading, developmental assessment scores, and school attendance are observed among those reporting 4+ pre-birth challenges.

A strong start is critical to child development

Alaska data indicate that the risk of experiencing a report of harm have not changed in Alaska over the past decade. To “move the needle,” our Alaska research suggests that helping families address challenges early (before birth) and throughout childhood will result in reduced reports to child welfare, fewer removals, and improved educational performance. Every family is different and may need different supports at different times. The complexities of childhood adversities that result in trauma require interventions from a range of physical, mental, and emotional health programs. Alaska data document that the single best way to prevent ACEs and reduce the impact after they occur is to support families by linking parents to tailored financial, behavioral and community supports. Connecting with, and navigating these systems is a huge challenge for many Alaskan families. Resources like the 907 Navigation App, Help Me Grow Alaska, and home visiting are available to Alaskan families to help them navigate needed services, all of which center on providing tailored caregiver supports.