



# BEST BEGINNINGS

## Alaska's Early Childhood Investment

### Early Childhood Partnerships

#### Request

- \$1 million FY11 to support early childhood partnerships
- Funds would pay for grants to partnerships established in FY10, enabling them to begin work on locally identified priorities and their two-year strategic plans. Funding would also support technical assistance and start up of three to four new partnerships.

#### Rationale

- Current services and programs are like a jigsaw puzzle with mismatched pieces. There are gaps, overlap, and lack of coordination. People at the local level are in the best position to identify problems, design solutions, and improve coordination to meet local needs.
- Effective local organizations have been recognized in state and national studies as essential to building effective statewide systems.

#### Accomplished to date

- In July 2009, Best Beginnings awarded one-year grants to nine communities to form early childhood partnerships or support partnerships already established.
- Communities represented in the partnerships are home to 39,000 children under age 5. That's about 78% of all children birth to age 5 in Alaska.
- Partnerships create opportunities for local people from varied interests and backgrounds to improve services and resources for young children.
- Core funding from the state and private sector has been leveraged in local communities, resulting in \$133,000 in cash and in-kind contributions.
- Partnerships are assessing needs and assets in their communities, developing priorities, and building strategic plans. The results will be improved coordination of services, better access for families, and communities that are very engaged in meeting the needs of young children.

#### Longer term goals

- Organize and mobilize early childhood partnerships all over Alaska.
- Develop a coordinated system of early childhood programs and services.
- "Delegate" to people in communities responsibility for identifying programs and systems that work well, where gaps exist, and how best to respond to local needs.
- Form a network of effective community and regional organizations that support comprehensive early childhood services. Such networks and a comprehensive systems-wide approach have been strongly recommended by state and national studies as key to meeting the needs of babies and young children.
- Children begin school prepared to succeed.