

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE LES GARA

You Can Make a Difference in a Child's Life

There is nothing better for a child's life, and to improve their chances to succeed in this world, than a loving home. The number of children in foster care, often with no responsible adult in their lives, has *increased dramatically over the last few years*. Today more than 2,800 Alaskan children are currently waiting for permanent, loving homes when just a few years ago that number was less than 1,800.

Without enough foster and adoptive parents youth bounce between homes rather than living in a stable, loving home, which is the goal of foster care - to stop the instability and get youth into a permanent loving home with strong parents. There are many ways you can help, with small or larger amounts of effort that will improve the lives of neglected children the state has removed from their parents.

Adopt a Foster Child - The Main Goal in Foster Care is to Get Youth into a Permanent, Loving Home.

If you are interested in adopting, contact Alaska Center for Resource Families at 279-1799.

Foster a Child - and Provide a Needed Loving, Stable Home

Alaska has a major shortage of licensed foster care parents, which results in youth bouncing between homes. You can make a big difference. **Contact:** Alaska Center for Resource Families

Mentor a Foster Youth through Big Brothers/Sisters

Mentors help guide and support foster older youth so they have a responsible adult to help them into successful adulthood. The Sync Program helps match foster youth with adults who care. Male mentors are in high demand. **Contact:** Sharon Pruszko, Sync Program Coordinator, Big Brothers, Big Sisters Sharon.pruszko@bbbsak.org or 433-4691.

Donate a Laptop - Laptops for Foster Youth

Have a GOOD spare laptop lying around? New laptops and donations to buy laptops are also welcome. Having a laptop allows a child to do homework, stay in touch with friends, and store family photos. This small gesture helps provide continuity for a youth as they move through homes. Laptops should be in good working shape (not slow!), with word processing capabilities and Wi-Fi connectivity. Although you should remove all sensitive documents, volunteers are available to clear the laptops prior to being matched with a youth.

Contact: Rep. Les Gara's Office at 269-0106 or molly.carver@akleg.gov; or Amanda Metivier at Facing Foster Care in Alaska, facing_fostercare@yahoo.com or 230-8237.

Foster Wear

If you are a business owner, consider participating in the Foster Wear program. Foster Wear provides discounts on quality, new clothing for foster youth (participants include REI, Army Navy, AC Stores, among others). **Contact:** Yuri Miller, Office of Children's Services, 451-5075.