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## Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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### **State Department of Health and Social Services continues examining archives for foster home files**

*Records show Tony home foster care license closed in 1998*

ANCHORAGE — The Department of Health and Social Services and the Office of Children's Services continue to examine state archives for files related to former foster parent Peter Tony. The state is searching for any record of prior allegations in an effort to identify any specific children who may have been victims and the action taken.

The Tonys were licensed to provide foster care from 1984 until their license ended, effective May 1998. Details as to what led to the closure are still being reviewed.

In 1988–90 implementation of the first standardized electronic database was underway. The database was designed to capture historical information on key elements, such as reports and alleged perpetrators. Prior to that point, all records were in paper form.

Requirements on how long paper files needed to be archived before being destroyed were significantly shorter before electronic databases were employed. Therefore, it will be impossible to recreate some of the history of this case or to determine exactly what was reported. Law enforcement has said they have no record of a report which could have come from then-named Division of Family and Youth Services (DFYS) staff or individuals who often make reports directly to them. Therefore, it is not possible to definitely confirm if the recent information stemming from 1982 was officially documented or if the allegations were shared with law enforcement for investigation.

The span of time under review is over the course of three decades. During that time the practice, policy, and statutory requirements of Child Protective Services had almost entirely changed. That era in child welfare in Alaska and around the nation lacked standardization, operated under far fewer mandated federal requirements and policies than at present, and did not include the level of oversight or standardization that it does today.

The statutes in effect in the early 1980s were less comprehensive and well-defined than today's standards. In addition, the framework for how child welfare and law enforcement should interface to respond has largely been revolutionized. Today, state statutes require that all reports

alleging sexual abuse must be referred to law enforcement and all interviews coordinated via a multidisciplinary team at a Child Advocacy Center.

Child maltreatment is unfortunately a pervasive problem in Alaska. In 2012 alone, OCS initiated investigations to assess child safety on more than 18,000 reported allegations for maltreatment. Maltreatment devastates victims due to the trauma experienced, which has been proven to impact brain development. The trauma also increases the risk of other health, emotional, or economical consequences that carry into adulthood.

OCS will continue to review this matter, assist law enforcement wherever possible, and encourage anyone who may have information about abuse stemming from this former foster home to contact the Bethel Police Department.

If you believe a child is being abused or neglected, please call and make a report. The numbers for reporting can be found here: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/ocs/Pages/offices/map.aspx>. If a child is in immediate danger, call 911.

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The State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services promotes and protects the health and well-being of Alaskans. We help individuals and families create safe and healthy communities. For more information, visit <http://dhss.alaska.gov>.