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MEMORANDUM

To: Joint Standing Committee on Government Oversight
From: Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Date: October 22, 2025
Subject: Information Regarding Alia Convening

In September 2025, OCFS partnered with the Maine Child Welfare Action Network (MCWAN) to convene a two day-long in-person learning and engagement sessions with Alia Innovations. Alia is a non-profit organization founded in research and based strongly around family voice. Alia's goal is to support child welfare organizations in system innovation and transformation. Alia's work is grounded in the themes of keeping families safely together and ensuring children experience an uninterrupted sense of belonging. This message is strongly aligned with the work being done within the Department of Health and Human Services through the Child Safety and Family Well-Being Plan and OCFS' Strategic Plan.

Below is information from Alia's website that helps to illustrate their mission and work:

Influence	Equip	Transform
Alia builds the case for change by creating opportunities for leaders and organizations to think differently about every facet of child welfare transformation.	Alia supports all areas of organizational wellbeing to ready the mindset, practice, structure, and cultural foundations needed for transformation.	Alia mobilizes leaders to codesign solutions with parents and communities to keep families safely together.

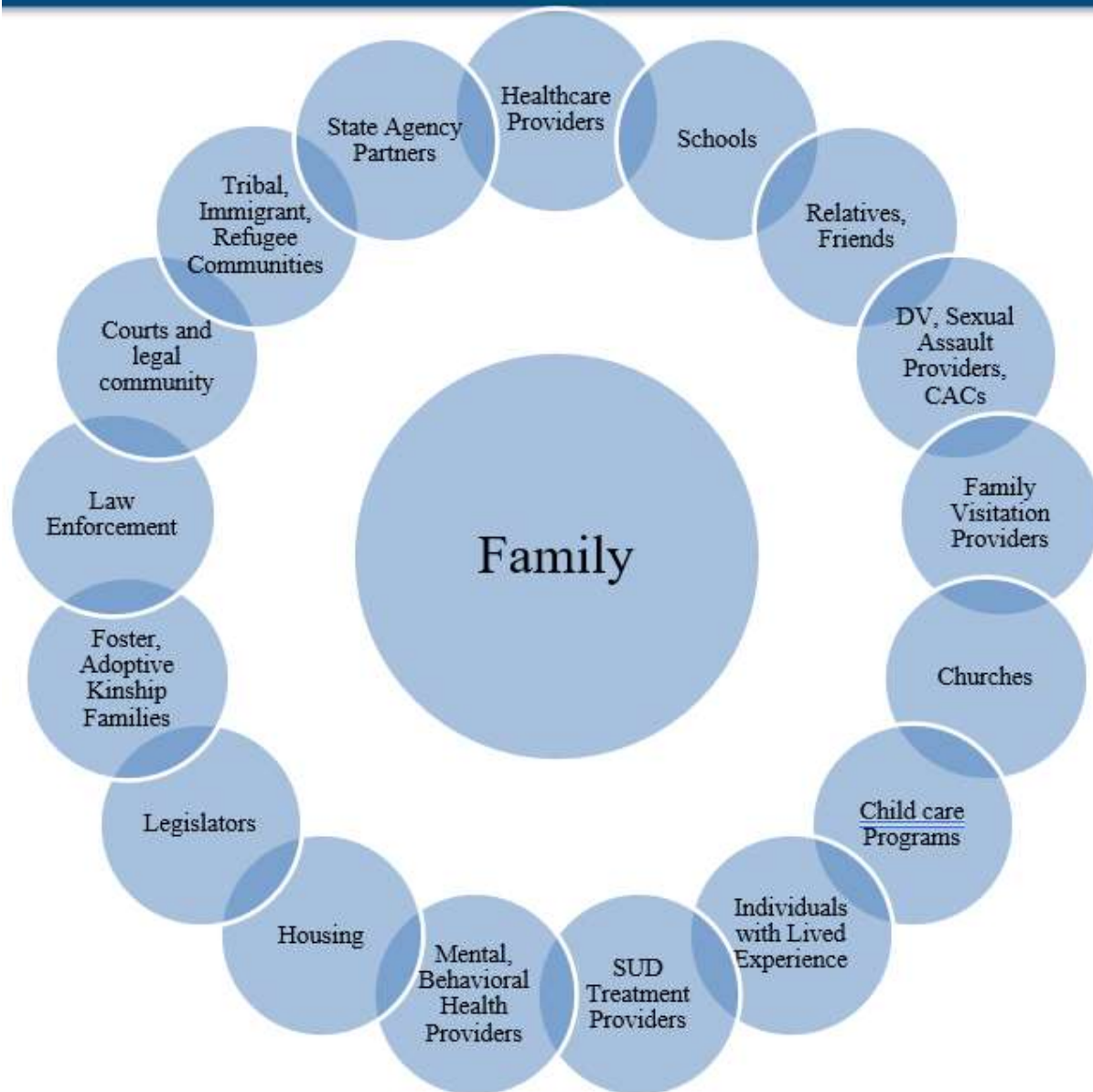
Alia operates on five foundational principles:

1. In order to thrive, children need to be raised in permanent families, preferably their own whenever safely possible.
2. When separation is necessary, children must be provided an opportunity to heal the grief, loss, and trauma that results from their separation.
3. The wellbeing of children is directly related to the wellbeing and stability of their parents. When the caseworker workforce has lower levels of compassion fatigue and turnover, children are safer and achieve permanency in greater numbers.
4. Leaders play a key role in establishing and ensuring a safe, stable, and healthy organizational culture.
5. Individual and organizational resilience can be learned and cultivated.

Alia's work is centered around the idea that the nation's current child welfare system is outdated in its approach and more consideration needs to be given to ensuring the psychological and emotional protection of children who are separated from their families.

The first day included a wide array of community partners in the child welfare system, including law enforcement, GALs, parent attorneys, Legislators, etc., while the second day centered around OCFS leadership and staff. This approach was thoughtfully designed because of the significant role that systems of family support play in Maine's child welfare system.

Maine's Child Welfare System



Alia's vision is closely aligned with OCFS' values, including our Practice Model:



OCFS is grateful for the partnership with MCWAN and Alia that made this convening possible. There were rich and meaningful discussions about Maine's child welfare system including where we've been, where we are today, and where we want to go. What became clear over the two days is the shared commitment to put protection, healing, and belonging for children at the forefront of this work. This vision aligns with OCFS' values and reflects the need for a system-wide approach to supporting families so children can remain safe in their homes without the need for child welfare intervention.

The first day's community summit laid the foundation for the "why" behind the shifting approach to prioritize the well-being needs of children involved with child welfare. Because so many stakeholder groups interact with children and families, it is important to establish a shared vision and goals. Alia then walked the attendees through a process for building a system that can improve outcomes for children and families. The discussions were rich and provided a valuable opportunity for partners who sometimes find themselves at odds to come together, acknowledge and appreciate our shared goals. It was also a chance to recognize that each part of the system is critical to the overall wellbeing of Maine's families and that because of the differing roles and responsibilities partners may take somewhat different approaches to achieve the same goals. Alia's work helped those present to both see the commonalities and consider how approaches can be shifted to more closely align. For instance, the role of concrete support for families in preventing child abuse and neglect is well-established. While some partners find themselves frustrated by the overall lack of availability of such support, they also recognize that it is not OCFS' role to provide systems of primary prevention for families. Instead, OCFS' role is to step in to keep children safe through intervention with the family. The convening provided the opportunity to ponder the complexity of the system and the frustration sometimes experienced

related to gaps in systemic supports available to families, which is sometimes misdirected towards OCFS.

The second day's staff summit again laid the foundation for the "why" behind the shifting approach to prioritize the well-being needs of children involved with child welfare and to allow staff time and space to process Alia's innovative approach to creating a different child welfare system. Wrestling with the status quo is never easy and child welfare leadership has continued to discuss strategies to further incorporate Alia's five principals into OCFS' work. The positive news is that much of this is already included in OCFS' new [Strategic Plan](#) released earlier this year. The Strategic Plan is rooted in the same child and family-centered approach with the goals of maximizing child safety, achieving permanency for children, and increasing the well-being of children. Much like Alia's work, the Plan also has at its core a focus on OCFS' workforce given the significant role they play in OCFS' ability to ensure the safety and well-being of children and families.

OCFS continues to partner with MCWAN and the broader community related to the Child Safety and Family Well-Being Plan to strengthen the supportive structures surrounding Maine families. The Alia Convening was just one part of a larger effort.