

Alaska Mental Health Board & Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse

September 2018 Update



Alison Kulas, MSPH
431 North Franklin Street
Juneau, AK 99801

Smart Spending for Community Services

- When community-based services are reduced or eliminated, Alaska's most vulnerable citizens become more likely to be served in expensive emergency rooms, psychiatric hospitals, nursing homes, out-of-state residential care, or jails and prison—usually **at state expense**.
- Advocates stress the importance of supporting community-based services so people with disabilities are served appropriately and cost-effectively so they can remain safe and stable and members of the community

FY 19 Budget



Department of Health and Social Services

- Adds \$7 million ACHI (GF) for matching \$7 million federal DSH funds. Language: Funds were appropriated to DHSS “for hospital-based mental health care, for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2019 and June 30, 2020.”
- Adds \$3.1 million for API nursing shortage- recruitment and retention
- Adds \$159,000 GF and \$159,000 MHTAAR for API Forensic Feasibility
- Adds \$12 million to the capital budget for Substance Use Disorder Service Expansion over 3 years

Medicaid Services

- FY18 supplemental included in the capital budget: \$28M of the \$48M needed
- FY19 operating budget: \$30M less than the Governor's proposed budget
- Intent language: "It is the intent of the legislature that the department significantly increase its efforts to reduce the state share of Medicaid service costs by managing Medicaid utilization to index with the national average per enrollee cost. In doing so, the department should take into consideration a multiplier to the national average to account for a reasonably higher cost of health care in Alaska."
- The Legislature budgeted a savings of \$20M due to increased Tribal Medicaid claiming and provided a staff increase to facilitate

Medicaid Services cont.

- With the FY18 shortfall, DHSS prioritized payments to those with fewer resources to withstand lack of payment. Smaller providers continued to be paid and a few others that contacted the department promptly issued their payments. All payments were made early July.
- At the end of the session, both the FY18 and FY19 shortfalls are expected to result in a supplemental request next session

The Importance of Fully Funded Medicaid

- When people's medical needs are met, they are more likely to hold down a job, maintain a stable home, and contribute positively in the community.
- Parent access to physical and mental health care is important so they are healthy and providing for their families.
- Access to behavioral health care helps people with mental illness or addiction disorders who are homeless get on their feet so they can gain employment and move into stable housing.
- Medicaid provides Alaska's prisoner and parole population better access to health care upon release into the community, which has shown to increase the likelihood they will remain stable, sober, and crime free.

Division of Public Assistance

- Adds \$1,107.2 GF and \$1,107.2 federal and 20 FTE
- Funding addresses
 - Backlog of over 20,000 public assistance applications
 - Provides aid to low-income Alaskans, including seniors and people with disabilities
- The Division reported that roughly 17,500 Alaskans were waiting an average of 231 days for their first-time Medicaid application to be processed

Public Advocacy

Public Guardians

- Adds \$700,000 GF and 7 PFT (Permanent Full Time) Public Guardians positions to the Base.
- Adds \$465,000 GF and 4 PFT Guardian Ad Litem positions to the Base and \$86,700 MHTAAR for 1 Guardian Ad Litem to improve services provided to abused and neglected children.

Public Defender Agency

- Adds \$827,200 GF and 4 PFT to the Base.

Recidivism Reduction

- FY19 is the 3rd year of the 3 year commitment to fund community reentry and rehabilitation services for returning citizens after incarceration.
- \$375,000 in Recidivism Reduction Fund, \$1,125.0 in federal
- Supports increased access to transition and reentry services:
 - Housing and employment services
 - Case management
 - Substance abuse and mental health treatment
 - Peer and recovery support
 - Life skills financial training

Children, Youth and Families

- The Legislature restored **\$1.2 million GF** for additional early learning programs support to the Base (DEED)
- Added **\$978,700 GF** and **\$481,800 federal** to support enhanced training for all front line case workers to serve clients efficiently and retain case workers (DHSS)
- Added **\$157,700 MHTAAR** for a supervisory mental health clinician in DJJ facilities statewide

Looking Forward



Current Focus Areas

- Smart Spending and Community-Based Support Services
- Substance Abuse Across Beneficiary Groups
- Justice Reforms and Reinvestment
- Medicaid Reform: Moving Forward
- Housing for Trust Beneficiaries
- Beneficiary Employment and Engagement
- Prevention



Recipient Support Services

- Proposed regulation changes to the Medicaid state plan removes “sight and sound supervision during sleep hours”.
- Removing sight and sound separation during sleep hours from the state plan **could reduce services at an appropriate level of care** for Alaskans with a **serious emotional disturbance** or **severe mental illness**, who reside in assisted living facilities, congregate housing, and other group homes.
- These closures **could increase referrals to the API** at a level of care that is not warranted for some of these patients, and/or Alaskans could receive services at the community level in a lower level of care than they need.

Recipient Support Services cont.

- We strongly urged the Department to **wait to implement** these changes until the **1115 waiver** is ratified and implemented.
- If they are not included in the waiver, then we encouraged the Department to look at **grant or other supportive funding** to supplement personnel costs of providers for these services.

Reduce Alcohol Use in Alaska

- Revisions to Title IV are still required to improve the public's health, increase enforcement, and bring the licensing structure up to the current needs of Alaska.
- Potential areas of increased funding:
 - Effective enforcement to prevent underage drinking
 - Public Education of the law and behavior changes
 - Increased staff for AMCO

Justice Reforms

- The Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) reports that on any given day **65% of their population are Trust beneficiaries**, and their median length of stay is “significantly longer than for other offenders”
- The philosophy behind justice reforms is that justice-involved individuals are best served with **improved supervision, treatment, case management and other support** so they are more likely to be **rehabilitated, crime-free, and contributing productively** in the community

Department of Corrections

- The Legislature added intent language that the commissioner “prioritize funding and implement solutions that may include, but not limited to, transitional housing and diversion programs, that reduce the disparity in Alaska Native incarceration throughout the state.”
- Also added intent language that the commissioner “prioritize expanding the Electronic Monitoring program to Bethel.”

Reducing Justice Involvement

- Increase the use of pre-charge and pre-trial diversion without incarceration and expand immediate access to treatment and support services for individuals who come into contact with law enforcement and the legal system
 - Build a **comprehensive case management system** to assess client needs and facilitate referrals and assistance. Includes:
 - Standard assessment
 - Access to immediate safe housing resources as needed
 - Access to timely treatment services at all levels depending on individual's need
 - Care for all client needs
 - Data management and analysis to track program outcomes
 - Identify regional resources
 - Advocate for additional necessary, sustained funding



Questions? Comments?

Alison Kulas, Executive Director

431 North Franklin Street

Juneau, AK 99801

alison.kulas@alaska.gov

907.465.8920

Thank You!