

Written Public Comment

(received after 08/25/20)



AADD
ALASKA ASSOCIATION ON
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
P.O. Box 241742
Anchorage, Alaska 99524

To facilitate a united provider voice for best practices, advocacy, partnerships and networking.

August 24, 2020

Mr. Christopher Cook
Alaska Mental Health Trust Chair
4501 Business Park Blvd. Building L
Anchorage, AK 99503

Dear Mr. Cooke:

AADD, the Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities is the voice of almost 50 providers across Alaska who serve your Trust beneficiaries that experience intellectual and developmental disabilities. Today we want to tell you how important the Alaska Training Cooperative is for many of the organizations we represent.

Providers are currently struggling with an hiring enough DSP's (direct support professionals) to meet the needs. Between fears of COVID-19, children schooling from home, and low wages providers are struggling with recruiting and maintaining DSPs. Additionally providers are struggling with offering fewer services in new formats meaning less revenue. And when budgets are reduced the largest discretionary item, after travel, is training costs. The Training Cooperative has developed both core competency training, frontline leadership training and the Full Lives Conference that has been invaluable to many providers at low or very reasonable costs. The minimal charges for training is imperative for providers in this time of reduced revenue.

A survey of AADD members resulted in 14 responses with a wide range of utilization of the Alaska Training Cooperative from just attending Full Lives to over 100 staff trained by the Cooperative. Most of those members would not be able to pay increased costs for training. Members appreciate the current online/web-delivered, blended and web-based training to make sure that both rural and urban providers can access the trainings as inexpensively as possible.

Thank you for this opportunity to express our strong support for and appreciation of the Alaska Training Cooperative.

Sincerely,

Lizette Stiehr
Executive Director, AADD

From: [Maggie Winston](#)
To: public.comment@mhtrust.org
Subject: AKTC 10% reduction
Date: Wednesday, August 26, 2020 2:55:45 PM

Greetings Trustees,

I'm an individual with a disability on the Kenai Peninsula. I acquired spinal cord injury in 2005 when I was 21. I have no functional use of my arms and my legs and require a lot of support to maintain my health and safety. I am well supported in my home by quality, trained DSPs that enable me to work, play and live in my community.

I'm writing today to express my concern over the potential detrimental impact of a 10% budget reduction to the Alaska Training Cooperative in FY 22, and again in FY23.

This reduction in funding would be detrimental in several ways:

- **Enhancing the burden on DD providers.** Many service providers do not have the capacity to train DSPs in house. Since DSPs are not able to bill for services while in training, it's a "double whammy" to the agency that still has to pay for their hourly rate and training.
- **DD Shared Vision DSP workforce work group progress and goals.** This sub committee has been meeting for three years, which I cochaired for the last year, and we've made great progress! We created four goals to focus on for FY 21, with the number one goal being: "operationalize a career pathway for direct support workforce." The Trust's investment into the AKTC has huge value – the AKTC has the infrastructure, staff expertise and training abilities to be the foundational resource for making a true DSP career pathway to become a reality and the DSP workforce will be better skilled and knowledgeable in being able to provide services for Trust beneficiaries.

Additionally, it is my understanding that one strategy the Trust has recommended is for AKTC to increase fees for trainings to cover the funding reduction. This is potentially an increase of as much as \$23 or more per training seat. This would put extra burden on service providers to cover the cost of training their DSPs and could cause agencies to **decrease** training which would be hurtful and detrimental to Trust beneficiaries.

Alaska has made some amazing progress and goal progression toward an empowered workforce for DSPs to enhance the lives of Trust beneficiaries. We need quality, trained staff that is armed with resources and support.

Please reconsider the 10% reduction in funding to AKTC in FY 22 and FY23.

Thank you very much and take care.

- Maggie Winston