

# **Written Public Comment**

**(received before May 21, 2025)**



**ALASKA  
MENTAL HEALTH BOARD**  
**ADVISORY BOARD ON  
ALCOHOLISM & DRUG ABUSE**

431 N. FRANKLIN STREET, SUITE 203  
JUNEAU, AK 99801  
907-465-8920 Fax 907-465-4410  
Kermit E. Wilson, Executive Director

April 28, 2025

Trustees of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority  
3745 Community Park Loop, Suite 200  
Anchorage, AK 99508

RE: Support \$50,000 to the Alaska Training Cooperative

Dear Trustees,

The Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA) and the Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHB) are statutorily charged with advising, planning, and coordinating behavioral health services and programs funded by the State of Alaska. The Boards are also tasked with evaluating federal and state laws concerning mental health, alcohol, and other drug and substance misuse prevention and treatment services (A.S. 47.30.661, A.S. 44.29.100).

ABADA/AMHB is in full support of ensuring that the Alaska Training Cooperative (AKTC) has sufficient funding to carry out its important work training Alaska's behavioral health professionals, direct service providers, families, and caregivers so they are best equipped to carry out their important work serving Alaska Mental Health Trust beneficiaries.

The AKTC is a key partner to the advisory boards in ensuring high-quality, relevant, and low-cost training. Its programs strengthen the frontline workforce through professional development, certification, and compliance with state and national standards. The AKTC is a vital part of Alaska's workforce infrastructure in the areas of crisis response, public health, behavioral health, long-term care, criminal justice and reentry efforts, peer support specialist workforce., and community/home-based services—sectors that are already strained across the state.

The AKTC offers consistent standards-based training that is especially vital in rural Alaska, where access to education and professional development is limited. A reduction in funding will result in diminished capacity for the AKTC to continue its statewide reach.

ABADA/AMHB respectfully asks the Trustees to prioritize ongoing efforts and sustainability of the Alaska Training Cooperative.

Sincerely,

Kara Nelson, Chair  
Advisory Board on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse

Tonie Protzman, Chair  
Alaska Mental Health Board

**Testimony to:**

**5/15/25**

**The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority**

**Board and staff,**

State law AS47.30.660 states that the state in conjunction with the Trust Authority must prepare an integrated comprehensive mental health program.

It is my belief that the state and the Trust cannot create a successful mental health program when little or nothing is known about psychiatric patients.

To make good decisions the Trust Authority needs the following information:

Number of people each year that rotate in and out of locked psychiatric facilities or units for a forced psychiatric evaluation or treatment.

Number and type of psychiatric patient complaints, injuries, and traumatic events experienced by patients during treatment or transportation each year in locked facilities.

When House Bill 172 became law, it defined what a traumatic event was.

Providers of psychiatric services, and that includes state agencies, have stated verbally and in writing that they do not want to keep and share statistics with the general public and the legislature concerning psychiatric patients' complaints in locked facilities.

Without basic statistics of what is happening to patients in locked facilities, producing a good mental health care system with good outcomes is impossible.

The Trust is supposed to be a partner with the state in setting psychiatric patient care policies.

I am asking the Trust to push the state into producing a plan on how to keep and share statistics concerning psychiatric patients in locked facilities and units.

Thank you,

Faith J. Myers, 907-929-0532     [faith.myers@gci.net](mailto:faith.myers@gci.net)

Author of the book, "Going Crazy in Alaska."

**Mary Wilson, MD.,**

**4/22/25**

**CEO of the Trust Authority,**

**And Board members,**

In 2023, the Mental Health Trust Authority, the Department of Health and the Department of Family and Community Services produced a report to answer the questions: “What are the rights of psychiatric patients in locked psychiatric facilities?” and “What can be done to improve the quality of care and outcomes of patients in locked psychiatric facilities?” The basic cost of the report was \$285,346 but when adding the costs of enlisting state agencies, the report was closer to half a million dollars.

From my examination, not a single recommendation in the report was adopted by the legislature or state agencies. The inaction by the state is damaging to Trust beneficiaries.

There was an oral presentation of the report to a Senate committee---it was pointed out that of the 12 psychiatric facilities or units visited, only one had written a policy to comply with the gender choice of staff for intimate care law AS18.20.095. In truth, there is no state requirement that psychiatric facilities write policies that require them to follow state and federal law concerning the treatment of psychiatric patients. Without the requirement of hospital policies that follow the law, hospital staff will not carry out the practices that follow the law.

Something that should be of importance to the Trust Authority, and should have been included in the report, but was not: “Are the locked psychiatric facilities and units in Alaska following the basic tenets of the Americans with Disabilities Act passed in 1990?”

From my experience, that question gets an emphatic “NO.” Here is a sentence from the Disabilities Act: “historically, society has tended to isolate and segregate individuals with disabilities.” Senator Matt Claman, because patients were being disconnected from families and community, introduced Senate Bill 44.

Another sentence from the Disabilities Act: “insure that qualified individuals receive services in a manner consistent with basic human dignity.” In 2006 at API,

there were 250 negative patient complaints including 3 sexual abuse allegations. One fifth of the complaints were that patients felt they were not being treated with respect and dignity.

Here are the questions that the Trust Authority staff and state agencies have refused to ask psychiatric patients to date in a survey---“Were you treated with respect and dignity?”---“Were you injured during treatment or transportation?”---“Did you experience any trauma during treatment or transportation?”---“Did you file a complaint and were you satisfied with the process?”

To follow the Disabilities Act, these questions must be asked of Trust beneficiaries in locked psychiatric facilities or units.

In closing, I am asking the Trust Authority to apply pressure to the state to improve the care of Trust beneficiaries in locked psychiatric facilities or units, keeping in mind the tenets of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Please let me know if you will help.

Faith J. Myers, 907-929-0532,

Author of the book, ” Going Crazy in Alaska.”



# ALASKA ASSOCIATION ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

PO Box 20874  
Juneau, Alaska 99802

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

May 19, 2025

Trustees  
Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority  
3745 Community Park Loop, Suite 200  
Anchorage, AK 99508

## **Re: Support for Continued Funding for the Alaska Training Cooperative**

Dear Trustees,

On behalf of the Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities (AADD), I am writing to express our strong support for maintaining FY27 funding for the Alaska Training Cooperative (AKTC) at \$685,000. The AKTC plays a vital role in Alaska's behavioral health and developmental disability systems by providing essential training and workforce development for the direct support professionals who serve Mental Health Trust beneficiaries.

The AKTC has built an extensive library of high-quality, relevant training opportunities, and continues to evolve its offerings to match the changing needs of the field. Their integration with the University of Alaska system serves as a critical bridge—connecting workforce needs to higher education pathways and advancing the skills of those who provide front-line care. This connection both strengthens the pipeline of skilled workers and promotes long-term sustainability within Alaska's health and human services systems.

The importance of this role is clearly reflected in Alaska's **Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Program**. Specifically:

- **Objective 9.1** calls for strengthening workforce capacity through improved recruitment and retention;
- **Objective 9.2** emphasizes advancing the competencies of the healthcare, behavioral health, and public health workforce; and
- **Objective 9.3** highlights the need for sustained funding to support these strategies.

The AKTC is central to achieving these objectives. Yet, while AADD recognizes that the Trust does not typically provide long-term core funding, the AKTC's critical infrastructure is not easily replaced. Most Medicaid-funded providers operate on thin margins, and alternative funding options are

increasingly limited. Without consistent investment, Alaska risks losing ground on the workforce progress it has worked so hard to build.

We are especially excited—along with the Alaska Alliance of Direct Support Professionals (AADSP)—about the DSP Certification Pilot currently underway. Early feedback from providers indicates this opportunity is transformational for the direct support workforce. This initiative depends heavily on AKTC’s leadership and capacity, which in turn requires stable, ongoing funding. AADD respectfully urges the Trustees to consider a long-term base funding commitment to the Alaska Training Cooperative. In the face of shrinking federal resources, your continued investment is essential to maintaining and growing a workforce that is capable, confident, and ready to meet the needs of Alaska’s Mental Health Trust beneficiaries.

Thank you for your leadership and steadfast support of the systems that serve some of Alaska’s most vulnerable citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim A. Champney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K" and "C".

Kim Champney, MSW  
Executive Director