

FY26/27 Trust Budget Development Stakeholder Meeting Summary Notes *July 2024*

Introduction

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority's (Trust) mission is to improve the lives of beneficiaries through advocacy, planning, implementing, and funding a Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Program in Alaska. Trust beneficiaries include groups of Alaskans experiencing mental illness, developmental disabilities, chronic alcohol or drug addiction, Alzheimer's disease and related dementia, and traumatic brain injuries. The Trust also works in prevention and early intervention services for individuals at risk of becoming beneficiaries. Trust beneficiaries include all Alaskans across all age groups.

The Trust prioritizes feedback from partner organizations that support beneficiaries across Alaska. Stakeholder meetings are a cornerstone in the biannual budget development process. The Trust anticipates finalizing the FY26/27 budget in September 2024, following approval by the board of trustees. As is customary, the approved budget will be submitted to the Governor and the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee.

This summary captures key discussions from the FY26/27 Trust budget stakeholder meetings. The Alaska Mental Health Trust emphasizes continuous engagement with partners, ensuring their valuable input informs resource allocation for future beneficiaries. This document also highlights the Trust's top priorities identified through these discussions.

For more information about the current budget development process, visit our [webpage](#).

Purpose of Stakeholder Meetings

The Trust recognizes the importance of collaboration in building a more effective support system for Trust beneficiaries. Stakeholder meetings are a vital platform for gathering diverse perspectives and informing the Trust's biannual budget development process. These meetings brought together representatives from partner organizations supporting beneficiaries across Alaska. The diverse perspectives in the groups fostered insightful conversations, strengthening the overall stakeholder process.

The primary focus of these meetings was to solicit input on how the Trust could best direct resources and efforts to empower beneficiaries to thrive in their communities. As a part of these meetings, Trust staff asked partners to provide input and prioritization of key issues

The Trust offers sincere thanks to all partner organizations who participated in these stakeholder meetings. The experience, expertise, knowledge, and recommendations shared are invaluable in informing Trust budget development and decision making.

impacting Trust beneficiaries. Stakeholders were asked to provide input from their respective areas of expertise by looking at the system holistically, not just what impacts a specific beneficiary group.

Though each stakeholder meeting was unique, the list below includes general questions asked in the meetings. This list does not represent all the questions asked.

- *What services/projects/initiatives do you identify as priorities for the Trust to serve beneficiaries?*
 - *How would you prioritize these areas based upon the needs of your communities?*
- *What kind of resources are needed to support Trust beneficiaries in rural communities?*
- *What investments should the Trust make, that will prevent institutionalization or service in higher levels of care?*
- *Are there projects that need formal evaluation to be replicated or brought to a statewide scale?*
- *What are advocacy priorities related Trust beneficiaries that we can work together on?*
- *How can the Trust better engage with organizations, communities, and regions?*

Stakeholders Engaged

Program staff organized stakeholder meetings around the Trust’s established focus and priority areas, including Housing and Long-Term Services & Supports, Mental Health and Addiction Intervention, Disability Justice, Beneficiary Employment and Engagement, Workforce Development, and Early Childhood and Youth Prevention and Intervention.

This list represents partner organizations that were engaged:

- AARP
- Alaska Addiction Rehabilitation Services
- Alaska Behavioral Health Association
- Alaska Behavioral Health Center
- Alaska Children's Trust
- Alaska Commission on Aging
- Alaska Court System
- Alaska Dementia Action Collaborative
- Alaska Hospital & Healthcare Association
- Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
- Alaska Mental Health Board & Alaska Board on Alcohol & Drug Abuse
- Alaska Youth & Family Network
- Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska
- Anchorage Project Access
- Anchorage Youth Court
- Brain Injury Association of Alaska
- Brain Injury Council of Alaska
- Bristol Bay Native Association
- Cook Inlet Housing Association
- Department of Administration - Public Defenders Administration
- Department of Corrections
- Department of Education & Early Development
- Department of Health & Social Service
- Department of Public Safety
- Division of Behavioral Health

- Division of Public Health
- Division of Senior & Disabilities Services
- Gastineau Human Services Corporation
- Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education
- Independent Living Center
- Interior Alaska Center for Non-Violent Living
- Juneau Reentry Coalition
- NAMI Anchorage
- Recover Alaska
- RurAL CAP
- SAIL, Inc.
- South Central Foundation
- The Glory Hall
- Thread Alaska
- Tribal Behavioral Health Directors From: Kenaitze Tribe, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Southcentral Foundation, Eastern Aleutian Tribes, Metlakatla, Kodiak Area Native Association
- University of Alaska - Alaska Justice Information Center
- University of Alaska Anchorage - College of Health
- University of Alaska Anchorage - Center for Human Development

Note: While the meetings chronicled in this summary were organized expressly to gather information to support Trust budget-related decision making, Trust staff remain engaged with partners throughout the year.

Stakeholder Discussion Summary

The summaries below represent the comments recorded by Trust staff during the FY26/27 budget development stakeholder meetings.

Prior to being summarized in the table below, comments were organized by common themes as they relate to areas of focus in Strengthening the System: Alaska’s Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Program Plan, 2020-2024 and the 2025-2029 draft plan, aka the Comp Plan. The Comp Plan is comprised of ten Areas of Focus (AOF), intended to ensure that Alaskans receive comprehensive prevention, treatment, and support services at the appropriate level of care across the lifespan, leading to meaningful lives in their home communities. The areas of focus include:

AOF. 1: Early Childhood & Youth
AOF. 2: Healthcare
AOF. 3: Economic & Social Well-being
AOF. 4: Substance Use Disorder Prevention
AOF. 5: Suicide Prevention
AOF.6: Protecting Vulnerable Alaskans

AOF. 7: Services in the Least Restrictive Environment
AOF. 8: Services in Institutional Settings
AOF. 9: Workforce
AOF. 10: Data

While organized by area of focus, many of the themes below were discussed in multiple stakeholder conversations, and across areas of focus.

Area of Focus Description	Meeting Themes
1. Early Childhood & Youth	Early Intervention: Stakeholders emphasized the need for wider access to early screening and intervention programs for infants, toddlers, and their families. This includes expanding

<p>Programs serving young children and youth will promote resiliency, prevent and address trauma, and provide timely access to early intervention services. Programs serving youth will provide connections to community, safe and secure options, and ongoing system coordination and development will be prioritized.</p>	<p>eligibility for services like Infant Learning Programs (birth-3 years old) to remove barriers and ensure all families can participate.</p> <p>Supporting Families: Increased involvement and support for parents, caregivers, and families is essential. This includes in-home programs and services for kinship families raising children and youth. Family support helps reduce Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), build resilience, and prevent child welfare involvement. However, there's a gap in mental health consultation services for young children, despite the growing demand.</p> <p>Workforce: Stakeholders stressed the need for continued training in early childhood and youth services. This training should focus on cultural competency, trauma-informed practices, and evidence-based approaches like Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health, Positive Behavioral Intervention & Supports in schools, and the Pyramid Model in early learning settings.</p> <p>Expanding Access: Stakeholders highlighted the need for more behavioral health services in schools, aligned with new legislation on medical assistance in schools. Additionally, there's a strong demand for increased access to early Head Start, Head Start programs, and general preschool options.</p> <p>Childcare: The lack of childcare options, both during the day and after school, was a recurring concern. These programs are crucial for child development, behavioral health, and overall well-being. Limited childcare options also negatively impact the workforce.</p>
<p>2. Healthcare Alaskans have access to integrated healthcare options that promote optimal health, wellness, and independence</p>	<p>Stakeholders expressed strong concerns regarding access to healthcare for beneficiaries, emphasizing the need for the Alaska Mental Health Trust to prioritize improving integrated care options that promote overall health, wellness, and independence.</p> <p>Critical Need for Increased Providers: A recurring theme was the critical shortage of providers across the state, particularly for underserved populations. Stakeholders called for increased accessibility of services, including the expansion of telehealth options, to ensure all Alaskans, regardless of location, have a chance to receive necessary care.</p> <p>Focus on Specific Beneficiary Populations: The feedback specifically identified a need for increased access to care for beneficiaries with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traumatic and acquired brain injuries (TABI) • Other brain-based disorders such as Alzheimer's disease and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) • Individuals experiencing complex behaviors.

	<p>Stakeholders emphasized the importance of a comprehensive continuum of care for those with brain injuries or disorders. This continuum would ideally encompass:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening and early intervention • Coordinated care across various settings like schools and rehabilitation facilities. • Lifespan support services <p>Addressing Funding and Data Collection Challenges: Stakeholders highlighted the need for solutions to address funding limitations that hinder expansion of these services. They called for improved data collection on specific populations to gain understanding of their needs and to advocate for additional resources.</p>
<p>3. Economic & Social Well-being Trust beneficiaries have strong economic and social well-being.</p>	<p>Feedback highlighted several key areas for the Alaska Mental Health Trust to focus on to strengthen the economic and social well-being of beneficiaries.</p> <p>Economic and Social Support: Stakeholders emphasized the need for programs that help beneficiaries find and maintain employment through workforce development, supported employment services, and workplace stigma reduction efforts.</p> <p>Focus on Affordable Housing: Stakeholders overwhelmingly support building more affordable housing, especially for beneficiaries with complex needs. This includes transitional housing for those leaving institutions or treatment, specialty housing across categories, and permanent supportive housing like sober living. Rural housing access presents a particular challenge.</p> <p>Simplified Grant Applications: Stakeholders requested a simpler application process for Trust grants, including user-friendly materials, technical assistance workshops, and streamlined online systems.</p> <p>Culturally Appropriate Services: Culturally competent care is crucial, particularly for Alaska Native communities. This requires training providers, partnering with Alaska Native organizations, and investing in culturally relevant outreach materials.</p>
<p>4. Substance Use Disorder Prevention Prevention and treatment for drug and alcohol misuse provided through collaborative, effective, and informed strategies.</p>	<p>Stakeholders placed a strong emphasis on the need for the Alaska Mental Health Trust to address substance use disorder (SUD) and prevention efforts. Their feedback highlighted several key areas for improvement.</p> <p>Comprehensive Continuum of Care: Like the focus on healthcare, stakeholders emphasized the importance of a comprehensive continuum of care for those struggling with SUD. This continuum would ideally encompass:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention programs: This could involve educational initiatives in schools and communities aimed at reducing risk factors and promoting healthy lifestyles. • Early intervention and screening: Identifying and addressing potential issues early can be crucial for preventing escalation. • Treatment options: A range of treatment options should be readily available, including medication-assisted treatment, behavioral therapy, and peer support programs. • Recovery support services: Programs should be in place to help individuals maintain recovery and reintegrate into society. <p>Feedback also highlighted the need for culturally relevant programs and services, particularly for Alaska Native communities, where SUD rates are often higher.</p> <p>Addressing Stigma and Access Barriers: Stakeholders identified the need to address the stigma surrounding substance use disorder. Public awareness campaigns and educational efforts can help reduce the stigma associated with seeking help. Additionally, stakeholders emphasized the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access to treatment facilities, especially in rural areas. • Explore alternative treatment options, including telehealth services, to improve accessibility. • Simplify the process for individuals to access treatment and support services. <p>Advocacy and Funding: Stakeholders called for increased advocacy efforts to secure funding for SUD prevention and treatment programs.</p>
<p>5. Suicide Prevention Individuals, families, communities, and governments take ownership to prevent suicide and self-harm in Alaska</p>	<p>Stakeholders representing a broad range of suicide prevention efforts across Alaska convened to discuss critical areas for improvement. While strong support for Crisis Now services was voiced, the discussion focused on a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention.</p> <p>Securing Funding and Combating Stigma A central concern for stakeholders was securing continued financial support for suicide prevention initiatives statewide. Additionally, they emphasized the importance of launching anti-stigma campaigns that promote suicide prevention and raise awareness about the new 988 mental health hotline.</p> <p>Empowering Rural Communities and Ensuring Transparency Stakeholders underscored the need for increased resources for suicide prevention coalitions, particularly in rural areas where access to services can be limited. They also requested more transparent communication about how advisory boards</p>

	<p>function, suggesting a model like successful campaigns for Trust Land advocacy.</p> <p>Addressing Workforce Shortages and Expanding Services The critical issue of workforce shortages in mental health and intellectual/developmental disability services emerged as a major priority. Stakeholders proposed developing a pipeline for students through degree programs and loan repayment programs. They also suggested highlighting the value of peer support roles in recruitment and retention efforts. Expanding outpatient behavioral health programs, such as the tribally operated program serving a large non-tribal population, was seen as another important step. Stakeholders believe this could significantly increase access to services in communities across Alaska.</p> <p>Integrating Cultural Knowledge and Building Capacity Finally, stakeholders encouraged exploring ways to involve Elders in teaching and integrating cultural knowledge into mental health services. This approach could help bridge the gap between Western and traditional healing practices, potentially leading to more effective and culturally sensitive care. Stakeholders also expressed a desire to explore the potential of peer support roles in recruitment and retention efforts.</p>
<p>6. Protecting Vulnerable Alaskans Alaskans are free from abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and exploitation.</p>	<p>Expanding Support for Working Families: Stakeholders advocated for increased support for working families to promote resilience and prevent situations that might lead to child welfare involvement. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to affordable, high-quality childcare, particularly in rural areas where options are limited (Campfire Rural program was highlighted as a successful model). • Universal pre-K programs. • After-school programs. <p>Early Intervention and Trauma-Informed Care: Stakeholders emphasized the importance of early intervention services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased access to prenatal and early childhood home visitation programs. • In-home therapy services. • Trauma-informed parenting classes. <p>Strengthening the Protective Services System: 1115 Medicaid Behavioral Health Waiver Implementation: Stakeholders requested leadership and support for implementing the early intervention services outlined in the waiver, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with the administrative burden of these services. • Faster access to the continuum of care to prevent crises.

	<p>Investing in Provider Resources: Stakeholders emphasized the need to invest in provider resources to strengthen families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative programs that support the whole family, not just the individual entering the system. • Recruitment and retention of foster parents. • Exploring the potential of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) workforce for prevention efforts. <p>Focus on the Child Welfare System: Stakeholders called for ongoing investments and strategies to improve the child welfare system, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing workforce shortages in child protective services. <p>Additional Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders highlighted the importance of culturally sensitive practices across all programs. •
<p>7. Services in the Least Restrictive Environment Trust Beneficiaries' behavioral health needs are accurately assessed and met in the least restrictive environment.</p>	<p>Economic and Social Support: Stakeholders emphasized the need for programs that help beneficiaries find and maintain employment through workforce development, supported employment services, and workplace stigma reduction efforts.</p> <p>Focus on Affordable Housing: Stakeholders support building more affordable housing, especially for beneficiaries with complex needs. This includes transitional housing for those leaving institutions or treatment, specialty housing across categories, and permanent supportive housing like sober living. Rural housing access presents a particular challenge.</p> <p>Simplified Grant Applications: Stakeholders requested a simpler application process for Trust grants, including user-friendly materials, technical assistance workshops, and streamlined online systems.</p> <p>Culturally Appropriate Services: Culturally competent care is crucial, particularly for Alaska Native communities. This requires training providers, partnering with Alaska Native organizations, and investing in culturally relevant outreach materials.</p> <p>Expanding Support for All Beneficiaries: Stakeholders highlighted the need for HCBS waiver services to be available for all beneficiary categories, not just those with IDD waivers or co-occurring disorders. This would ensure comprehensive assistance for beneficiaries requiring long-term or lifelong support. Strong advocacy exists for implementing self-directed services as a Medicaid waiver/PCS option within the Alaska system. This would provide beneficiaries with more control and independence in managing their care.</p> <p>Building Strong Families: Investing in preventative and early intervention services for families is crucial. By supporting</p>

	<p>healthy child development, we can ultimately reduce reliance on the criminal justice system and create a safer future for all Alaskans.</p> <p>Reduced Incarceration Rates: Stakeholders prioritized reducing incarceration rates and emphasized that the Department of Corrections should not be the primary provider of behavioral health services. Diverting Trust beneficiaries into local crisis care programs whenever possible is a more effective solution.</p> <p>Strengthening the Criminal Justice System: Stakeholders stressed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding the Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) program for law enforcement will ensure better equipped officers and safer communities. • Increased resources, particularly housing, are needed for both victims and offenders who are Trust beneficiaries caught up in the criminal justice system. This will help them rebuild their lives and contribute positively to society. • Workforce shortages within the legal system require innovative solutions like certification programs, telehealth, and utilizing contracts instead of state-funded positions. <p>Improved Data and Information Sharing: Improved access to criminal justice data is crucial for effective decision-making. This includes regular updates on Department of Corrections releases, a central hub for reentry resources, and current reports on Trust beneficiaries within the system.</p>
<p>8. Services in Institutional Settings Trust beneficiaries who are in an institutional setting receive the necessary services and recovery supports to return to the community of their choice.</p>	<p>Technology Infrastructure: Stakeholders emphasized the need for investment in technology infrastructure within Department of Corrections (DOC) institutions. This would allow for improved delivery of behavioral health programs and reentry coordination. While legislation to support this was introduced in the past legislative session, no legislation passed.</p> <p>Expanding Occupational Therapy: Expanding occupational therapy (OT) programs within Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) institutions is crucial. OT helps beneficiaries with complex care needs, such as those resulting from acquired brain injuries, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, or significant trauma. This can help them regain independence in daily life.</p> <p>Housing: A concerning trend is the decrease in safe and affordable housing options, coupled with rising rents. There's a clear need for dedicated, flexible funding to assist reentrants with securing housing quickly and accessing essential support services.</p>

	<p>Medicaid Reentry Options: There's stakeholder interest in exploring a Medicaid Reentry Section 1115 demonstration program. This would expand Medicaid benefits coverage for individuals transitioning out of incarceration, specifically during the 90 days before their release.</p> <p>Addressing Complex Needs In-State: Investment is needed for in-state solutions to better address the needs of individuals with complex behaviors. This could help keep them from being transferred out of state for treatment. The Trust should be more involved in these discussions to ensure responsible solutions are developed.</p>
<p>9. Workforce The State of Alaska has the workforce capacity in place to support the resources and funding of a Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Program.</p>	<p>Workforce and Care for Complex Trust Beneficiaries: Stakeholders emphasized the need for real access to integrated healthcare, especially for Trust beneficiaries with complex needs. This includes individuals with dual diagnosis (intellectual disabilities and mental health challenges) as well as those experiencing traumatic brain injury, other brain disorders, or complex behaviors.</p> <p>Stakeholders also noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce Shortages: A lack of qualified providers across professions (DSPs, peer support, mental health) hinders access to care. • Workforce Development: Targeted strategies to recruit and retain qualified professionals. • Provider Sustainability: Financial limitations threaten the stability of providers serving Trust beneficiaries. • Improved Access to Care: Expansion of integrated care, telehealth options, and a comprehensive care continuum for Trust beneficiaries. • Gaps in Care: Limited access to integrated care, telehealth, and a comprehensive continuum of care for complex needs were identified.
<p>10. Data The State of Alaska has the data and technology systems in place to support the resources and funding of a Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Program</p>	<p>Data and Technology: Stakeholder feedback acknowledged the existence of data and technology systems within the State of Alaska, but also highlighted the need for improvements in utilizing this infrastructure to support the Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Program.</p> <p>Data Sharing and Collaboration: Stakeholders emphasized the need for improved data sharing and collaboration between the Trust, state agencies, and service providers. This would enable a more comprehensive understanding of beneficiary needs and program effectiveness.</p> <p>Data Collection and Analysis: Optimizing data collection practices is crucial. Stakeholders called for:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on Specific Populations: Collecting data specific to beneficiary subgroups (e.g., rural residents, youth, Alaska Native communities) allows for targeted interventions and resource allocation. • Outcome-Based Data Collection: Shifting focus to data that measures program outcomes can help demonstrate the impact of Trust-funded services. <p>Data-Driven Decision Making: Stakeholders encouraged the Trust to utilize data effectively for program development, resource allocation, and advocacy efforts. Data can provide a strong foundation for evidence-based practices.</p> <p>Technology Infrastructure Investment: Investments in user-friendly technology platforms could streamline data collection and analysis for both the Trust and service providers.</p> <p>Addressing Privacy Concerns: Stakeholders emphasized the importance of data privacy and security. The Trust should ensure all data collection and sharing practices comply with HIPAA and other relevant regulations.</p>
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The Alaska Mental Health Trust emphasizes key areas to ensure effective resource allocation and improve the well-being of beneficiaries. The **top themes** identified through stakeholder discussions that align with the Trust's mission, are:

- **Sustainability of Providers:** Ensuring the long-term financial viability of service providers within the comprehensive mental and behavioral health program.
- **Addressing Leadership Gaps:** Identifying and developing strong leadership throughout the system to navigate complex challenges and drive positive change.
- **Integration of Behavioral Health into Primary Care:** Supporting the integration of mental and behavioral health services into primary care settings, improving access, and creating a more seamless care experience for beneficiaries.
- **Workforce Development:** Addressing challenges in recruitment, retention, and compensation of mental and behavioral health professionals to ensure a qualified workforce can meet the needs of Alaskans.
- **Housing:** Guaranteeing access to safe and affordable housing options for beneficiaries, a crucial element for stability and recovery.
- **Data Collection:** Implementing a comprehensive data collection plan to identify service gaps, resource deficiencies, and inappropriate placements. This data will be instrumental in informing future resource allocation and program development.
- **Policy and Advocacy:** Leveraging data collected to inform policy recommendations and advocacy efforts that promote systemic change and improve mental and behavioral health services across Alaska.

In consideration of these themes, the Trust aims to create a more robust and accessible system of care for all Alaskans.