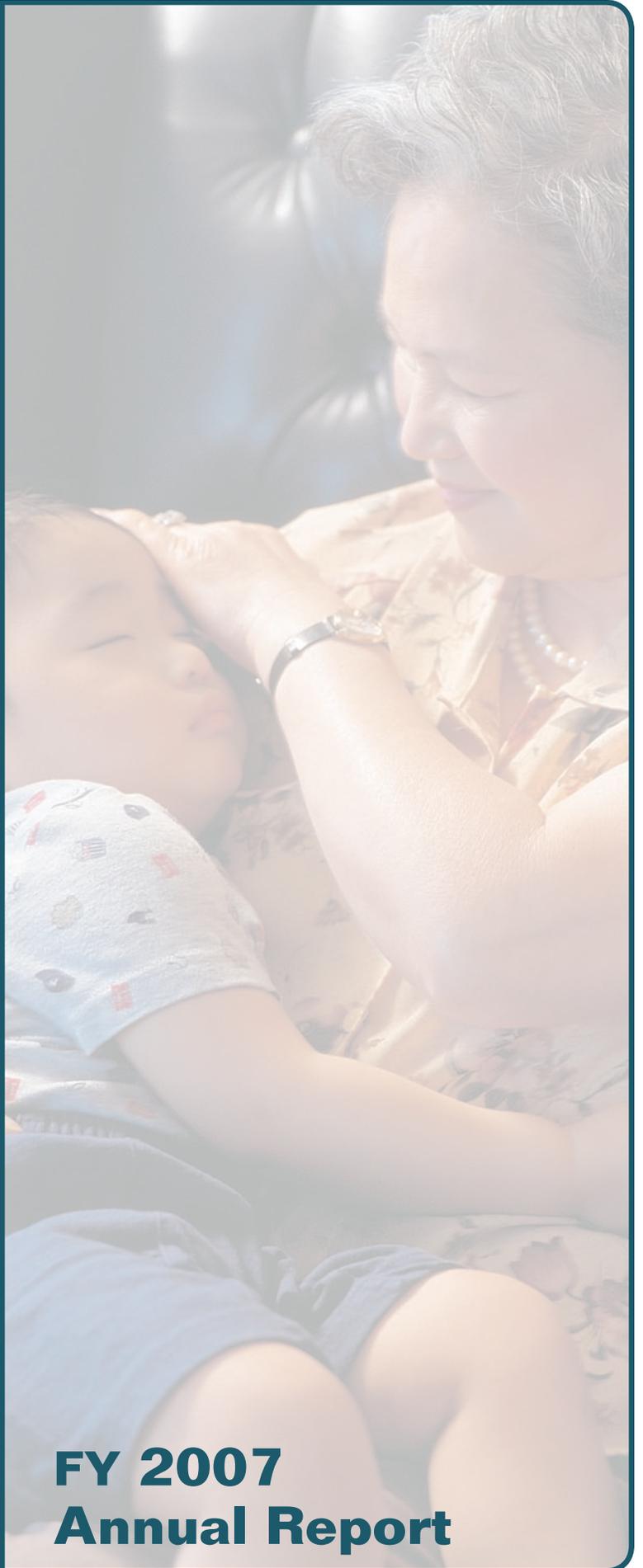


**Alaska
Commission
on Aging**



**FY 2007
Annual Report**



FY 2007

The mission of the Alaska Commission on Aging is to ensure the dignity and independence of all older Alaskans, and to assist them, through planning, advocacy, education, and interagency cooperation, to lead useful and meaningful lives.

*"In youth we learn.
In age we understand."*

- Marie Ebner-Eschenbach, Writer

**Alaska Commission
on Aging**

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Dear Reader,

We are pleased to present the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) 2007 annual report of activities accomplished this fiscal year. ACoA's mission is to ensure the dignity and independence of all older Alaskans through planning, advocacy, education, and interagency cooperation. ACoA's recent accomplishments include development and approval of the Alaska State Plan for Senior Services FY2008-FY2011 by the U.S. Administration on Aging; completion of a successful audit of ACoA by the Division of Legislative Audit; development and implementation of the Healthy Body, Healthy Brain Campaign to inform Alaskans about the relationship between lifestyle and brain health; promoting community education efforts describing the status of Alaska seniors and their issues of concern; and advocating successfully with our partners for passage of legislation to improve programs and services of assistance to older Alaskans.

Alaska's senior population is experiencing accelerated growth and is becoming a larger share of the adult population. Baby boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, comprise more than one third of Alaska's population today and are the source for this unprecedented growth. Through lessons learned from providing care to their aging family members, baby boomers will undoubtedly challenge conventional notions of aging and demand innovations in the system of health care and long-term care support services for seniors as they age in place.

Alaska's seniors and elders enrich the lives of all Alaskans and their communities. Alaskans value the contributions of Alaska seniors as reflected in the State's wide range of programs and senior services that benefit older adults. With the dramatic growth of the senior population and increased costs of providing health care and other supports, there will inevitably be increased strain on the State's service delivery system. Preparing for the projected demands will require advance planning to design quality services that are more cost-effective and address medical and behavioral health needs of older Alaskans; providing greater support for family caregivers so that they can continue to assume personal responsibility by caring for their elderly loved ones at home; and engaging in a coordinated advocacy effort to secure increased funding for senior needs.

While public policy often focuses on the potential costs of services for seniors and may overlook the social and economic benefits of an increased retired senior population, older Alaskans provide a wealth of experience, wisdom, volunteer time, and cash contribution to the state from retirement income, health care spending, and other income sources that totaled almost \$1.5 billion in 2004. Taking into account the social and economic assets Alaska seniors offer, we may do well to consider ways in which Alaska could become more attractive to seniors to ensure their ability to live here and contribute to the progress of our State.

From miners, fishers, statesmen, teachers, medical personnel, and construction workers to those living the subsistence lifestyle, Alaska seniors are the pioneers who developed our state and continue to improve the communities where they live. Their security and well-being are the responsibility of all Alaskans.

Sincerely,

Banarsi Lal
Chair of the Alaska Commission on Aging

Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director

**FY 2007
Alaska Commission
on Aging Members**
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**Frank Appel, Chair
(FY07)**

Public member,
Anchorage

Banarsi Lal, Chair (FY08)

Public member, Fairbanks

**Sharon Howerton-Clark,
Vice-Chair**

Public member, Homer

Patricia B. Branson

Provider member, Kodiak

Michael Black

Director of Community
and Regional Affairs,
Department of
Commerce, Community
and Economic
Development,
Anchorage

Lillian Kasnick

Public member, Sitka

Betty Keegan

Public member, Wrangell

Rod Moline

Director, Senior &
Disabilities Services,
Department of Health
and Social Services,
Juneau

Iver Malutin

Public member, Kodiak

Paula Pawlowski

Public member,
Anchorage

Edward W. Zastrow

Chair, Pioneers' Home
Advisory Board,
Ketchikan

Who We Are

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is a state agency that plans services for older Alaskans and their caregivers, educates Alaskans about senior issues and concerns, and advocates for the needs of older Alaskans. The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) is Alaska's federally designated State Unit on Aging. The responsibilities that come with this designation are carried out by Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS) with the Alaska Commission on Aging. The Commission is an agency of DHSS, administered under Boards and Commissions.

The Alaska Commission on Aging consists of eleven members, seven of whom are public members. They are gubernatorial appointees serving four-year terms. Seven seats are reserved for public members who are older Alaskans and two seats are filled by the Commissioners of the Departments of Health and Social Services (DHSS), and Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED), or their designees. One seat is held for the Chair of the Pioneers' Home Advisory Board. The remaining seat is reserved for a senior services provider, regardless of age. The Commission is supported by an office staff of four, including the Executive Director, two Planners, and an Administrative Assistant.



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What We Do

The Alaska Commission on Aging has several statutory directives. The Commission makes recommendations directly to the Governor, the Administration, and the Legislature with respect to legislation, regulations, and appropriations for programs or services benefiting older Alaskans. ACoA has authority to develop a comprehensive State Plan for Senior Services required by the U.S. Administration on Aging for states receiving federal funds under the Older Americans Act. The Alaska Commission on Aging is one of four statutory advisory bodies, called beneficiary boards, to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority ("the Trust"). The Alaska Commission on Aging, along with the other three beneficiary boards, advises the Trust on issues and funding related to the Trust's beneficiaries. Additionally, ACoA provides representatives to project workgroups of the Trust.

The Alaska Commission on Aging focuses its work in the following areas: planning, advocacy, education and public awareness, and interagency cooperation. The Commission includes six standing committees that focus on specific topics. These committees are as follows:

- Executive
- Legislative Advocacy
- Planning
- By-Laws
- Nominating
- Outstanding Older Workers' Recognition



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**FY 2007
Alaska Commission
on Aging Staff**
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Denise Daniello,
Executive Director

MaryAnn VandeCastle,
Planner II

Deb Gregoire,
Planner I

Rachel Malley,
Administrative Assistant

Jeannette Lacey,
University of Alaska MSW
Intern

.....
**How to Contact the
Alaska Commission
on Aging**
.....

**Alaska Commission
on Aging**
Department of Health &
Social Services

Physical address:
150 Third Street, #103
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Mailing address:
P.O. Box 110693
Juneau, AK 99811-0693

Phone:
(907) 465-3250

Fax:
(907) 465-1398

Website:
www.alaskaaging.org



"Alaska seniors are our mentors, guardians, role models, history keepers, and teachers."

- Frank Appel and Denise Daniello, ACoA Chair and Executive Director.

From the Report on the Economic Well-being of Alaska Seniors, 2007.

Guiding Principles

The Commission has identified eight guiding principles that provide a philosophical frame of reference for all of the Commission's work.

QUALITY OF LIFE

- 1 Seniors will live with dignity and respect and have an opportunity to receive services to promote and enhance their physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional health.
- 2 Seniors will attain and maintain personal and financial independence at the highest level for as long as possible.
- 3 Seniors will be able to age in place, remaining safe in their own homes, chosen communities or regions of the state in the least restrictive setting possible.
- 4 Seniors will remain connected as valued members of their families and communities with opportunities for maximum mutual benefit and harmony between generations.

SERVICES

- 1 Services will provide satisfaction to seniors and caregivers, and demonstrate positive outcomes in the lives of seniors.
- 2 Services to seniors will be provided in as culturally relevant a manner as possible.
- 3 Services will be planned and provided in consideration, collaboration, and coordination with other groups and organizations in order to make maximum use of existing resources while ensuring that seniors receive the range of services they need.
- 4 Service providers will receive adequate training and professional development to ensure competent delivery of services to seniors.

Focal Points for Programmatic Work

Based on input from Alaska seniors, the Commission focuses on the following needs:

- **Independence, dignity, and respect:** Seniors deserve to be personally empowered, to maintain the ability to choose to stay in their own homes and remain close to their family, culture, traditional values, and practices.
- **Safety and security:** Seniors expect to be protected from abuse, neglect, fraud, and other scams which threaten their personal safety and financial security.
- **Community connection:** Older Alaskans desire social involvement that encourages their interactions with all generations, to engage with and become more visible in their communities, and to participate in life at every level.
- **Affordable, accessible health care:** Seniors believe that access to good health care, as well as to health promotion and health maintenance activities, is important for the well-being of all segments of the population, including their children and grandchildren.
- **Education, information, and assistance:** Seniors want to be kept informed of the status of all issues of concern to them and desire convenient access to the information they need about available services and benefits.
- **Improved coordination of resources:** Older Alaskans request that various government programs work together to reduce administrative costs so that more money will be available for actual services to seniors. This includes collaborative efforts for health care, preventive health, and behavioral health services.
- **Equitable service provision:** Seniors believe those in rural areas of the state should have services available to them just as those in urban areas do. They want services available not just to low-income and affluent seniors but to struggling low- and moderate-income seniors who do not qualify for most government programs.
- **Delivery of efficient services consistent with a high level of quality care:** Seniors dislike any type of waste or inefficiency in programs designed for their benefit. They desire high-quality services delivered in the most efficient way possible.

Focal Points for Programmatic Work

-
- Independence, Dignity, and Respect
- Safety and security
- Community Connection
- Affordable, Accessible Health Care
- Education, Information, and Assistance
- Improved Coordination of Resources
- Equitable Service Provision
- Delivery of Efficient Services Consistent with a High Level of Quality Care



FY2008-FY2011
Alaska Senior
Service Goals

.....

① Encouragement of
Healthy Lifestyles

② Integrated Health
and Social supports

③ Support for
Family Care

④ Adequate,
Accessible, Secure &
Affordable Housing

⑤ Stable workforce
for Senior & Health
Care Services /
Range of Senior
Employment
Opportunities

⑥ Safety & Protection
for Older Alaskans



**Working for Alaska Seniors:
FY2008 – FY2011 Alaska State Plan for
Senior Services Goals**

During fiscal year 2007 (FY07), the Alaska Commission on Aging and its agency partners developed the State Plan for Senior Services FY2008-FY2011 in a collaborative process that resulted in the identification of six overall goals for senior services in Alaska. The Alaska Commission on Aging and its partner agencies plan activities to address each of these goals.

Goal One:

Alaska seniors stay healthy and active, and are involved in their communities.

Goal Two:

Older Alaskans have access to an integrated array of health and social supports along the continuum of care.

Goal Three:

Families are supported in their efforts to care for their loved ones at home and in the community.

Goal Four:

A range of adequate, accessible, secure and affordable housing options is available to seniors.

Goal Five:

Alaska supports a stable workforce for senior and health care services as well as a range of attractive employment opportunities for seniors.

Goal Six:

Older Alaskans are safe from catastrophic events and protected from personal exploitation, neglect, and abuse.

Accomplishments

During FY07, the Alaska Commission on Aging was engaged in the areas of Commission business, planning, advocacy, education, and interagency cooperation.

Commission Business

- **Legislative Audit:** ACoA received a successful legislative audit prepared by the Division of Legislative Audit for the years FY03 through FY07. This audit was conducted in preparation for ACoA's sunset which is scheduled for June 30, 2008. Auditors surveyed ACoA's public agency partners (Department of Health and Social Services, Senior and Disabilities Services, the Trust, and others) in addition to senior provider agencies and other stakeholder organizations across the state who rated ACoA as an effective organization that encourages public participation, helps to inform the Governor and the Legislature in decisions affecting older Alaskans, promotes community education, and plays an important advocacy role on behalf of Alaska seniors. The report found no complaints filed against ACoA and recommended to the Legislature that they adopt legislation to extend ACoA's sunset date eight years to June 30, 2016.
- **Proposed Statute Change:** Based on the sole finding of the Legislative Audit – that the ACoA's enabling statutes be modified to reflect the changes in its responsibilities since 2003 – the Commission drafted a set of statute changes which will be forwarded to the 2008 Legislature.
- **ACoA By-Law Revision:** The Commission completed the revision of ACoA's by-laws to reflect organizational changes and to improve the efficiency of operations.
- **Have held Quarterly Commission Meetings in the following locations:**
 - **September 2006** – Ketchikan. Commissioners visited numerous provider agencies in Southeast Alaska (Ketchikan, Sitka, Craig, and Klawock) as part of ACoA's annual rural outreach efforts during this meeting.



*"We found no
complaints
against
the Alaska
Commission
on Aging."*

*ACoA Legislative Audit for
the period of July 1, 2003
through June 30, 2007.*



"The senior population for the U.S. is projected to increase by 104%, but the increase in Alaska is projected to be 256% – faster than any state except Nevada."

From the Alaska State Plan for Senior Services FY2008-FY2011.

- o **November 2006** – Anchorage at the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority offices.
- o **February 2007** – ACoA held its business meeting at the Juneau Centennial Hall and visited with legislators to discuss senior needs and concerns.
- o **May 2007** – Commissioners visited senior provider agencies in Fairbanks, Nenana, North Pole, and Delta Junction and held a business meeting in Fairbanks at the Fairbanks North Star Borough Noel Wien Public Library.



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Planning

- **State Plan Advisory Committee:** Created a state plan advisory committee consisting of ACoA members and staff as well as other government and non-governmental agency staff to draft a state plan for senior services for the period FY2008 through FY2011. The Plan meets federal requirements of the U.S. Administration on Aging for the Department of Health and Social Services to draw down Older Americans Act funds that support senior home- and community-based grant-funded services. The State Plan for Senior Services was completed, submitted to, and approved by the Administration on Aging in June 2007.
- **Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Plan (CIMHP):** Participated in the development of updates to the Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Plan (CIMHP) and provided recommendations that address the needs of older Alaskans, including the development of behavioral health services tailored for older adults, prevention and early intervention in disease management, need for more accessible primary care for seniors due to low Medicare physician reimbursement rates, need for more culturally relevant programs and services, and other considerations.
- **Long-Term Care Strategic Plan:** Participated in discussions within the Department of Health and Social Services to develop a solicitation for a contractor to create a long-term care strategic plan to help guide the development of the continuum of long-term care as the state prepares for the demographic boom of a rapidly aging population.
- **Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs):** Assisted with the implementation and sustainability of the ADRCs mandated by the Older Americans Act and required for federal funding to support state programs. The purpose of the ADRC is to provide information and referral for older individuals and persons with disabilities. The ADRC is designed to serve as a "single point of entry" for persons to gain entrance into the long-term care system. During FY2007, there were five regional ADRCs operated by the Alaska Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC).
- **Arthritis Plan:** Staff participated in the updating of Alaska's Arthritis Plan under the auspices of Public Health.

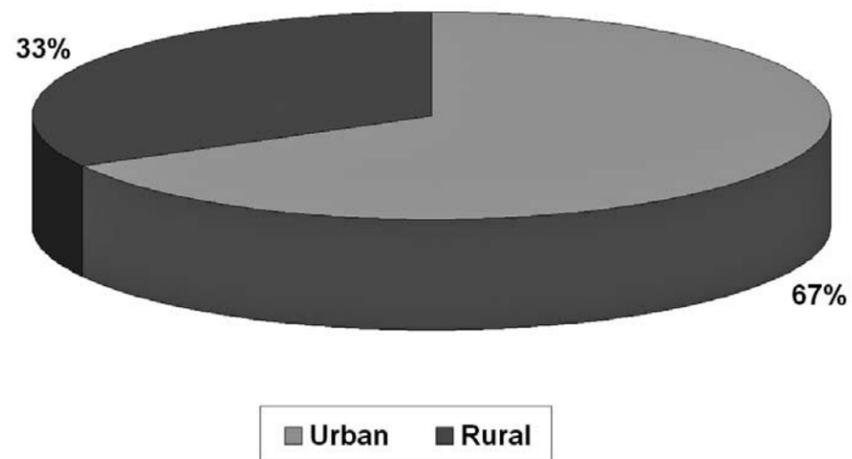
"I am particularly pleased by the efforts of the Alaska Commission on Aging in involving seniors, the public and providers as well as state agencies in the development and public review of the plan."

*-Josefina G. Carbonell,
U.S. Assistant Secretary
for Aging*

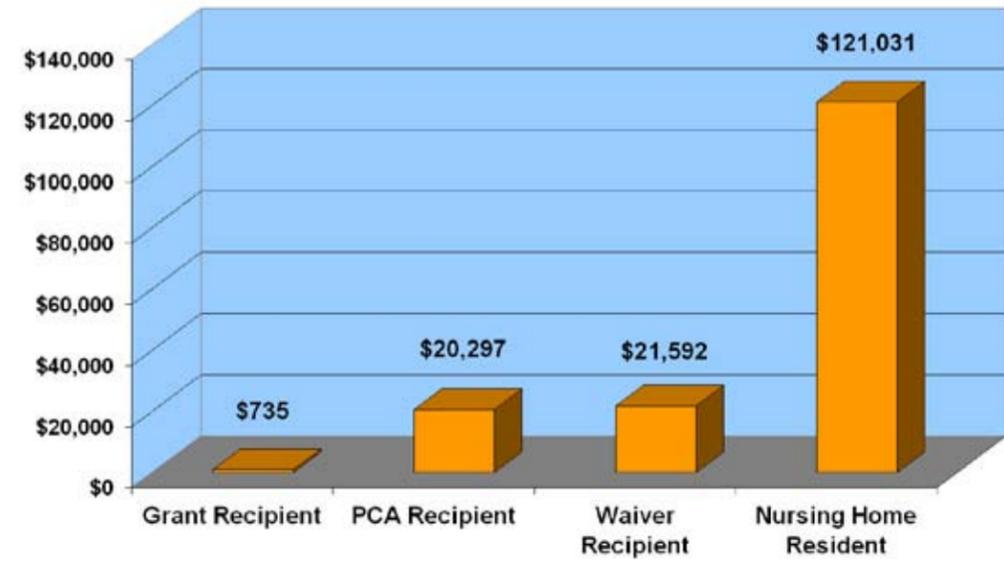
From the Alaska State Plan for Senior Services FY2008-FY2011.



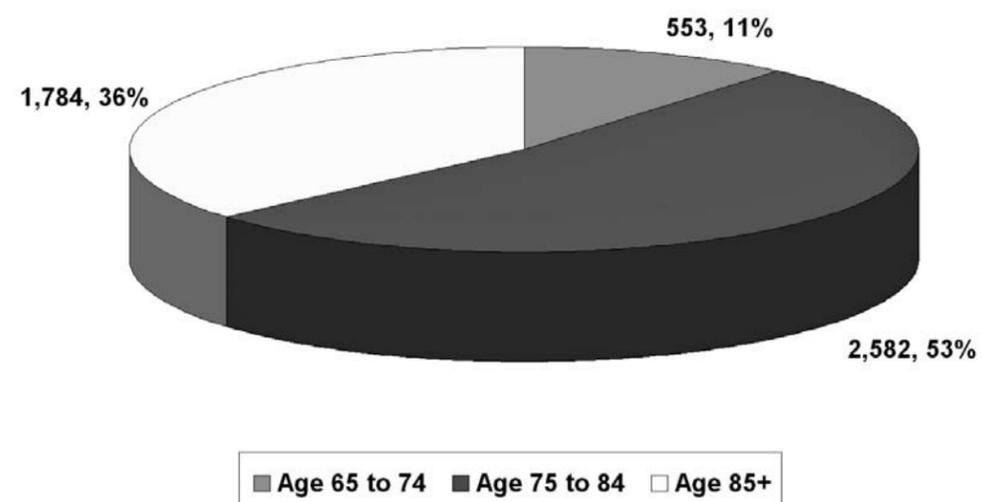
Urban and Rural Older Alaskans



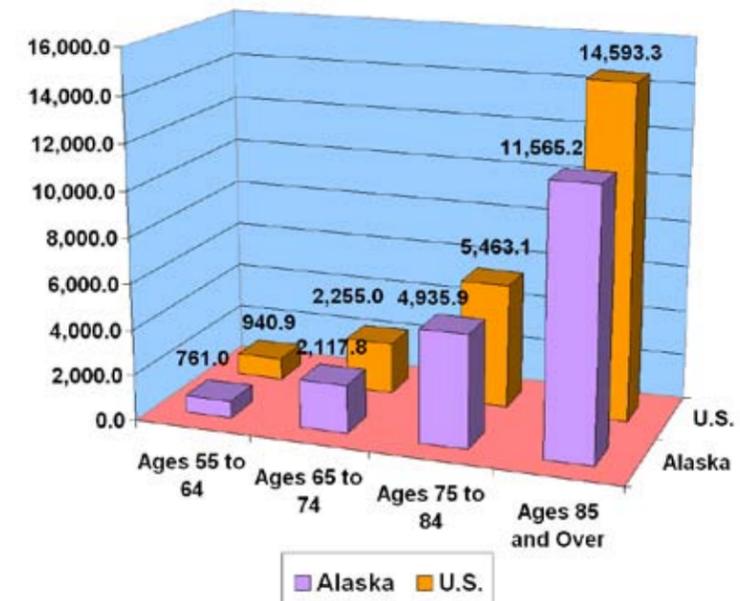
Average Annual Costs of Long-Term Care Options, FY 06
(Senior & Disabilities Services)



Estimated Number of Alaskans Age 65+ with ADRD



Age-Adjusted Death Rates (Per 100,000) by Age Group



ALL GRAPHS PRODUCED BY ACoA

ALL GRAPHS PRODUCED BY ACoA



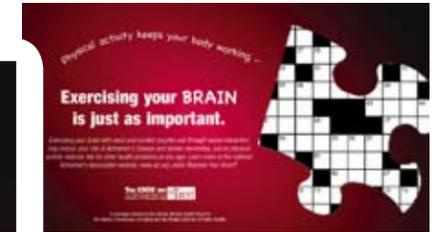
Education & Awareness



Traveling Advocates:

The Alaska Commission on Aging performs community outreach and holds Commission meetings at different locations throughout the state annually.

ALL PICTURES COURTESY OF ACoA



Healthy Body, Healthy Brain

Help protect your brain against the risk of Alzheimer's Disease & Related Dementia with:

- Mental Challenges
- Eating Smart
- Physical Activities & Fun with Others

To find links to websites with info on how to help protect your brain visit www.alaskaging.org

Alaska Commission on Aging: Healthy Body, Healthy Brain www.alaskaging.org/ Click on: Healthy Body, Healthy Brain www.alz.org/ Click on: We Can Help > Brain Health

The Alzheimer's Disease Resource Agency of Alaska www.alzaska.org/ Click on: About Alzheimer's Disease

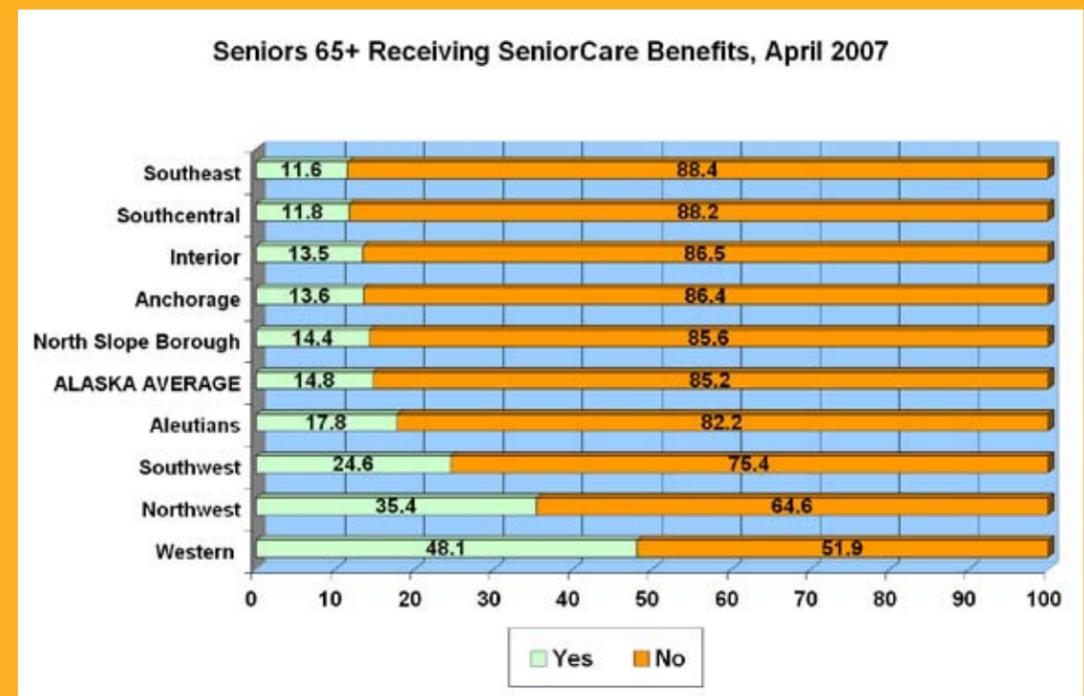
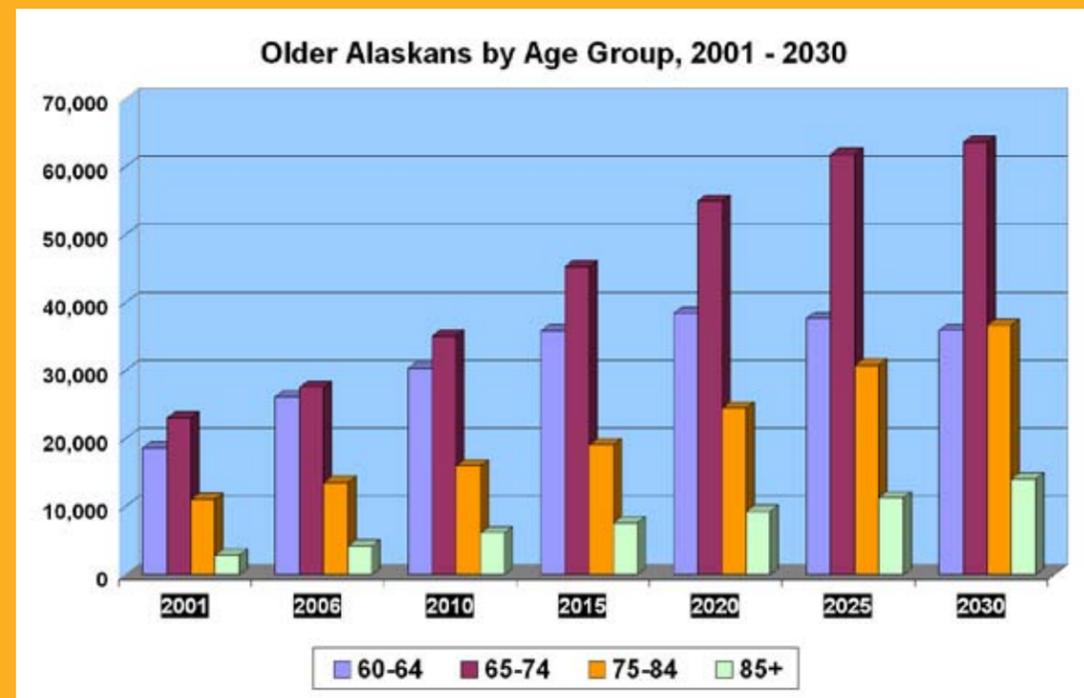
AK Public Health: Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/ Click on: Chronic Disease Prevention

And for advocacy efforts, The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority www.mhtrust.org/ Click on: Beneficiaries of the Trust

A Little Education Goes a Long Way:

A joint ACoA and Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority "You KNOW me..." ad campaign has been showing in Alaska theaters to remind viewers that staying active, eating healthy and engaging in mental challenges may help to reduce the risk of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD).

In 2007 ACoA launched its own campaign, funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, to educate Alaskans about the latest research on ADRD. The Healthy Body, Healthy Brain Campaign is aimed at Alaska seniors as well as Alaska baby boomers. The effort to date has included a senior poster, a baby boomer poster, and bookmarks, which have been distributed to senior centers and other organizations throughout the state as well as surveys to determine Alaskans' current level of knowledge about risk factors for ADRD.



ALL GRAPHS PRODUCED BY ACoA

Advocacy

- Senior Legislative Teleconferences:** During the session, ACoA hosted eleven senior legislative teleconferences in which 20 host sites across the state participated with ACoA members and staff in examining and discussing a wide range of legislation of interest to seniors and senior advocates.
- Alaska Aging Advocacy Network:** Continued support of the Alaska Aging Advocacy Network and coordinated efforts with statewide senior advocacy organizations such as the Senior Advocacy Coalition, AgeNet, and AARP. The purpose of the Alaska Aging Advocacy Network is to provide and receive input on issues of importance to older adults and their caregivers, and to mobilize support for senior-related legislation and projects as needed during the legislative session. The Alaska Aging Advocacy Network has 125 individual members, many of whom helped the ACoA obtain legislative victories in bills and resolutions during the 2007 legislative session.
- Long-Term Care Strategic Plan:** Emphasized the importance of creating a long-term care strategic plan to the Department, the Trust, and other agencies to help guide the development of the continuum of long-term care services for all Alaskans requiring such care.
- ABRD and TBI Waiver:** Advocated for the development of a waiver to help income-eligible persons with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia and traumatic brain injury as primary diagnoses to receive Medicaid waiver services. These populations do not qualify for existing waiver programs.
- Legislative Efforts:** Collaborated with other organizations to obtain legislative victories for the following bills and resolutions during the FY07 legislative session through meetings with legislators and their staff, support letters, testimony, position papers, and other advocacy efforts:
 - Successfully advocated for the passage of the new Senior Benefits program, which provides a monthly cash benefit to low-income seniors. This program began August 1, 2007.



"This program continues important assistance to Alaska seniors. I promised that seniors would not go hungry and we worked with the Alaska Legislature to address this critical need."

- Governor Sarah Palin upon signing Senate Bill 4, July 2007



"The aging population is expected to increase the demand for physicians per thousand from 2.8 in 2000 to 3.1 in 2020."

From the Alaska State Plan for Senior Services FY2008-FY2011.

(Legislative Efforts Continued from page 10)

- Supported legislation to double the number of slots for Alaskan medical students enrolled in the WWAMI (Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho) program from 10 to 20 per year to help address Alaska's physician shortage.
- Secured base funding in the amount of \$250,000 for "flexible long-term care supports" for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.
- Advocated in support of Alaska Senate Joint Resolution 3 urging Congress to increase Medicare reimbursement rates for Alaska. ACoA met with Congressional staff in Washington, D.C. on this issue and followed up with support letters to Senator Ted Stevens, Senator Lisa Murkowski, and Representative Don Young detailing the need for an increase in reimbursement rates in order to ensure primary care is available to all seniors in Alaska. ACoA's chair testified on this subject at a congressional hearing held in Anchorage in February 2007.
- Collaborated with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and other agencies to take steps to eradicate homelessness through the creation of the Alaska Housing Trust.
- Advocated for the Keep the Elders Home Initiative for increased funding to support existing senior home- and community-based grant-funded services that include home-delivered meals, congregate meals served at senior centers, transportation, adult day services, respite, care coordination and other senior services targeting older Alaskans most in need. These core services help seniors stay healthy and able to live independently longer, postponing or eliminating the need for nursing home placement. This initiative was proposed as a fiscally sound alternative strategy to control the rising cost of Medicaid-paid health and emphasized the provisions of the Older Americans Act concerning the role of home- and community-based care. While not funded in 2007, this initiative was supported by AARP, AgeNet, and the Trust and was identified as a long-term care priority at the Trust's Advocacy Summit in September 2006.

Education and Public Awareness

- **Report on the Economic Well-Being of Alaska Seniors:** ACoA published this report in cooperation with the Department of Health and Social Services, the Trust, the University of Alaska Institute of Social and Economic Research, and Phoenix and Associates. The report contains demographic and economic information about the health and welfare of Alaska seniors and underscores the economic value that older Alaskans provide to the state.
- **Healthy Body, Healthy Brain Community Education Campaign:** Funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority for FY08 and FY09, ACoA and Public Health initiated a Healthy Body, Healthy Brain public outreach education campaign to increase public awareness of the relationship between making positive lifestyle choices (healthy eating, physical activity, mental challenges, and social activities) and decreasing the risk factors for Alzheimer's and other dementias. Community and legislative presentations, surveys, bookmarks, posters and other promotional strategies are included in the ongoing implementation efforts.
- **May 2007 Older Americans Month:** Conducted a media campaign celebrating May 2007 as Older Americans Month that emphasized the importance of making healthy choices for a long and active life. The effort included statewide distribution of a poster sent to senior provider agencies and copies of the proclamation signed by Governor Palin designating May 2007 as Older Americans Month in Alaska.
- **"You KNOW me..." Campaign:** Participated in the Trust's public awareness campaign aimed to reduce the social stigma attached to persons with behavioral health illnesses and dementia.
- **Community Presentations:** Delivered public presentations to community groups regarding the demographic growth of the older Alaskan population, issues affecting older Alaskans, and the economic value of Alaska senior contributions.
- **Quarterly Newsletters:** Published a quarterly newsletter circulated to 850 subscribers.

2007 Education and Awareness Efforts

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- **Report on the Economic Well-Being of Alaska Seniors.**
- **Healthy Body, Healthy Brain Campaign**
- **May 2007 Older Americans Month**
- **"You KNOW me..." Campaign**
- **Community Presentations**
- **Quarterly Newsletters**



"...the Commission would like to see the (Senior Benefits) program include the higher income and benefit levels featured in House Bill 198."

- Denise Daniello, ACoA Executive Director.

From the June 6, 2007 House Finance Committee hearing on the topic of senior benefits.



- **Enhancement of Behavior Health Awareness:** Enhanced public awareness of the need for additional behavioral health services designed for older Alaskans.
- **Collaboration with Other Agencies:** Collaborated with the Alaska Department of Labor Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training program to develop the Outstanding Older Worker and Distinguished Employer of Older Worker awards in September 2007.



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Interagency and Non-Government Cooperation:

- Participated with other boards and councils in the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority "You KNOW me..." public awareness campaign.
- Developed and presented information to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority on behavioral health issues affecting seniors .
- Commissioner Banarsi Lal served on the Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education.
- Commissioner Frank Appel represented the Commission on the Pioneers Home Advisory Board.
- Executive Director Denise Daniello served on the Alaska Brain Injury Network, a nonprofit organization promoting education, prevention, and advocacy for a service system to meet the needs of traumatic brain injury survivors and their caregivers. (Many traumatic brain injuries are caused by falls, and falls are the number one source of injury to seniors.)
- Executive Director Denise Daniello participated in meetings with the Department of Transportation to discuss strategies to enhance highway safety for seniors.
- Commission staff participated in monthly data group meetings with the Department and other advisory boards to update the Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Plan.
- The Commission has designated commissioners and staff who serve as representatives on the following Trust committees and focus areas: Housing, Workforce Development, Coordinated Communications, Disability Justice, Trust Beneficiary Group Initiatives, and the Trustee Applicant Review Committee.



"Fifty-two thousand retired Alaska seniors, aged 60+, contributed \$1.5 billion to the Alaska economy in 2004."

From the Report on the Economic Well-being of Alaska Seniors, 2007.



"(In the 1990's) the fastest rate of increase was in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, an increase of 88% in the 65+ population."

From the Report on the Economic Well-being of Alaska Seniors, 2007.

On The Horizon

The Alaska Commission on Aging is looking to the future and identifying both upcoming challenges and opportunities to support the work set forth for us in our mission statement.

Challenges

Alaska and Alaska seniors are confronting a range of challenges in the near-term and long-range future that require comprehensive and thoughtful planning to provide services in a respectful manner that uphold the dignity and independence of older Alaskans. Alaska seniors are culturally, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse, reflecting the wide range of Alaskan lifestyles. Quality health care and long-term care supports, sufficient funding for programs and services, income security for seniors, workforce development in all health care and supportive service industries, and housing are some of the challenges before us as a state as we prepare to meet the demands of a growing aging population.

- Changing Demographics:** Unlike its youthful past, Alaska's senior population is now growing faster than all other states except Nevada. Over the next 25 years, the population of those 65 and older is projected to grow at an annual rate of 4%. As the state with the highest proportion of baby boomers (32%), the numbers of Alaska seniors will more than double between 2000 and 2020 as a result of a combination of aging-in-place and migration patterns. The 85 and older age group, who are the most frail and most in need of services, will more than triple in number by 2030. Addressing health needs of seniors at early stages and promoting healthy lifestyles (physical and mental) enhances the quality of life for all Alaskans and saves money down the road.
- Access to appropriate and affordable health care:** Although Alaska seniors today live longer and remain in better health than their predecessors, a longer life also means a larger share of the senior population may experience a prolonged period of frailty, including dementia, in their later years. Currently seniors in some parts of Alaska, including the Anchorage and Mat-Su areas, have difficulty finding primary care physicians who will accept Medicare patients because physicians report that their reimbursement rates are too low. Moreover, Medicare does not cover long-term care,

dental care, hearing aids or glasses and provides only limited coverage of other items.

- Long-Term Care:** The greatest potential expense confronting seniors is long-term care services. With the aging of the senior population, particularly those aged 85 and older, there will be an increasing need for home- and community-based services. Investment in these services helps seniors remain in their own homes and communities as they prefer, provides support for family caregivers, helps prevent the development or progression of disease and disability, and postpones the need for more costly nursing home care. Income-eligible persons with a primary diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease and related dementia are not currently eligible for the Medicaid waiver in Alaska. Assisted living homes are in short supply, especially in rural areas, where long-term care providers struggle to maintain financial solvency and witness the growing number of elders displaced to urban assisted living and nursing homes where they are without access to their traditional food, language, and culture.
- Workforce Development:** The need for all types of health care and long-term care workers, from physicians and nurses to home- and community-based services workers, will continue to grow. A 2006 report by the Alaska Physician Supply Task Force states that Alaska will need nearly twice as many physicians in the next 20 years as it currently has if the state is to meet the expected demands from a growing population of older adults. Similarly, the demand for registered nurses is increasing during a period when health care professionals are retiring. This situation is true for home- and community-based workers such as personal care attendants, nursing aides, home health aides and other service providers where shortages are linked to low pay, lack of benefits, absence of potential career advancement, heavy workloads, and limited training in geriatric care, among other issues. The pool of qualified workers continues to shrink as the demand for services increases.
- Senior Housing:** Alaska has a statewide shortage of accessible, affordable housing options for seniors. In some regions of the state, there is inadequate availability of some housing types, such as assisted living homes. In other regions, especially urban centers, affordability

Challenges for Alaska Seniors

- Changing Demographics**
- Accessible, Appropriate, & Affordable Health Care**
- Long-Term Care**
- Workforce Development**
- Senior Housing**



"The 'retirement industry' is a very healthy enterprise for Alaska's economy. Some of its many advantages are:

- *Local spending*
- *Diverse job mix*
- *Year-round employment*
- *Stability*
- *Environmentally benign*
- *Compatible with other industries*
- *Non-enclave*
- *Economies of scale."*

From the Alaska State Plan for Senior Services FY2008-FY2011. Based on the Report on the Economic Well-being of Alaska Seniors, 2007.



is a larger obstacle. Developing appropriate models of long-term care is critical, including resident-centered models. According to a report by the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, which supports legislation to provide affordable housing to Alaska's homeless population, 11% of the homeless in Alaska in 2006 were seniors.

Opportunities

- An increasing emphasis on health promotion and disease prevention gives us the opportunity to redefine and expand our definition of "health." As a state, we need to recognize that the full spectrum of health includes all aspects of mental, emotional, and physical health. Being socially involved and civically engaged strongly support the individual's efforts to stay healthy. Community involvement provides the connections necessary for individuals to access information, maintain relationships, and foster personal growth. It is important to develop health promotion programs such as our Healthy Body, Healthy Brain Campaign to help people stay healthier longer.
- The Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs), regional sources for information and assistance to help seniors and those with disabilities access local services and benefits into the long-term care system, is being developed and enhanced as an accessible resource for seniors.
- The aging of the Baby Boomer generation, which has now begun to enter its senior years (the first Boomers turned 60 in 2006), is expected to bring new energy, intensity, and models of support into the arena of senior advocacy and services. While the population surge this group creates will be a challenge to the long-term care infrastructure, it is also likely to demand a higher profile for the concerns of seniors as well as more innovative approaches to senior needs.
- Alaska's seniors have a resounding economic impact on the state. Collectively, seniors bring \$1.5 billion of revenue into the state each year through retirement and other income, as well as medical payments. Additionally, seniors play a huge role in supplying knowledge to following generations through mentoring, teaching, and professional expertise. Alaska's seniors actively volunteer in their communities in large numbers and many continue to work in their respective professions. Seniors also constitute a large segment of our caregiving network for other seniors, the

disabled, and family members, including grandchildren. As the senior population grows in Alaska, so will the value of their contribution.

- Many Alaskans are recognizing the wisdom of expanding community-based services options to meet the needs of high-risk seniors who are not eligible for services under the Medicaid Waiver Program, including individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders, and some individuals with developmental disabilities, brain injuries, behavioral health concerns, and physical challenges.
- With falls as the top cause of injuries to seniors, there is a need for a comprehensive fall prevention program to help assess seniors for risk factors, to help them improve balance and coordination, and to provide environmental design strategies to make homes, businesses, and communities safer.
- The Commission and its partners are called on to support efforts to create adequate levels of workforce development for long term care facilities, assisted living homes, and home and community-based services, to promote geriatric training for health professionals, and to encourage state-approved personal care attendant training for those who provide senior care services.
- State programs and the Legislature can collaborate in the planning for future health care, behavioral health care services, transportation, in-home services, and other programs that benefit older Alaskans. The Commission looks forward to working with Governor Palin and the Legislature in the coming year.



"The number of Alaska seniors will likely increase by between 2 and 3 thousand each year for the next 25 years."

From the Report on the Economic Well-being of Alaska Seniors, 2007.



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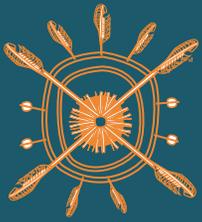
All photos courtesy DHSS, ACoA, and ACoA's FACES campaign.

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