

State of Alaska
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Sarah Palin, Governor

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NEWS RELEASE



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Criminal background check regulations effective Feb. 9

Department committed to safety of vulnerable children and adults in care

(Juneau, Alaska) — Persons who have previously committed serious criminal offenses will be barred from working with vulnerable children and adults under new regulations recently adopted by the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. The regulations, which will be effective Feb. 9, affect employees and other persons who have unsupervised contact with clients in nursing homes, hospitals, assisted living homes, and other facilities and programs licensed or certified by the department.

The department significantly rewrote the proposed regulations based on an extraordinary amount of public comment received. A copy of the regulations along with a summary and analysis of the public comments is available at: www.hss.state.ak.us/publicnotice/regulations.cfm#LtGovernor.

“I want to thank everyone who took the time to comment on these important regulations that will make the most vulnerable Alaskans safer,” said Commissioner Karleen Jackson. “The public comment process was essential and the changes suggested by the public strengthened and improved these regulations.”

The department will provide training and technical assistance to health care providers to make implementation of the new requirements as cost-effective and efficient as possible. The department has also contracted with the University of Alaska to conduct training on the prevention of abuse and neglect.

A new Background Check Unit in the Division of Public Health, Certification and Licensing Section, is providing timely and accurate criminal background information to health care facilities. Since March of 2006, the unit has processed over 7100 applications. To date, approximately 34 percent of all applications have indicated the possibility of prior criminal activity. The unit has identified one applicant with a prior homicide, 13 with felony assaults, five with crimes against children, eight with sexually-based offenses, as well as applicants with histories of drug-related, robbery, Medicaid fraud, and other serious crimes.

The new background check regulations are the latest in a series of regulations implementing legislation passed in 2004 that revised the department’s licensing statutes. The overall goal of the new statute and regulations is to enhance client safety while at the same time streamlining the department’s administrative processes.