

State of Alaska
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

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Alaska Veterans and Pioneers Home in Palmer

Historical Perspective

For nearly 30 years many people in Alaska, including veterans, struggled to develop a viable plan for an Alaska home for veterans. The 23rd Legislature provided statutory authority for the state to offer a veterans home within the Alaska Pioneer Home system, consistent with the requirements of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). State and federal funding was also provided for renovations.

Implementation

The VA requires that a facility certified as a Veterans Home comply with current building codes and standards, to ensure the building infrastructure has a 20-year useful life cycle. Renovations to the Palmer Pioneer Home to convert to the Alaska Veterans and Pioneers Home included upgrades to lighting, heating and ventilation systems; roof repair; addition of a medical exam room; safety and infection control upgrades; and improved fire evacuation areas. The renovations also upgraded many parts of the building to make a more pleasant and therapeutic environment for the residents. Construction began in August 2005. During construction residents were relocated to other rooms, only as necessary, to assure safety and to free up work areas.

The completed facility has 79 beds. The home will serve veterans, veterans' spouses or dependent children, and non-veterans who qualify for admission to the Pioneer Home system.

Seventy-five percent of the beds in Palmer will be designated for veterans, and 25 percent will be available for non-veterans. No current resident will be asked to move from the Palmer Pioneer Home, and no veteran will be forced to move to the Home. Veterans who are in other Pioneer Homes may request a transfer to the Palmer facility, and when a bed is available with the required level of service, the request for transfer will be accommodated.

A five- to eight-year transition plan will assure that veterans and other residents of the Pioneer Home system are not compelled to move out of the home in which they reside solely because the Palmer home is designated as the Alaska Veterans and Pioneers Home.

After the renovation was completed, the VA conducted surveys of the facility in August 2006 and February 2007. The certification letter was received on June 12, 2007. Effective Feb. 7, 2007, veterans living in the Alaska Veterans and Pioneers Home may qualify for veteran's home benefits, which include the VA reimbursing the state about \$31.30 per veteran, per day for services provided by the home.

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Pioneer and Veterans Home Services

The services provided to veterans in the Alaska Veterans and Pioneers Home will be the same as those currently provided to residents of the Pioneer Home system.

Level I service primarily provides housing, meals, emergency assistance and opportunities for recreation.

Level II adds, as stated in the resident's assisted living plan, medication administration, recreation, and health-related services, including reminders and hands-on assistance with the resident performing the majority of the effort.

Level III is a high level of professional health care services where assistance provided by a staff member includes hands-on assistance with the staff member performing the majority of the effort. Residents are periodically assessed to assure they receive the appropriate level of service.

Veterans in the Pioneer Homes

The table below shows how many veterans reside in the Pioneer Homes as of May 2007.

Pioneer Home	Licensed Beds	All Residents	Veterans
Palmer	79	62	19
Sitka	75	63	16
Fairbanks	93	80	20
Anchorage	165	160	38
Ketchikan	48	44	8
Juneau	45	41	4
	505	450	105

Renovation Funding

Total cost for the project was about \$4.15 million. Federal reimbursement was slightly less than \$2.3 million.

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