

State of Alaska
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Sarah Palin, Governor

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DHSS hires Bring The Kids Home Coordinator

Coordinator tasked with continuing to keep Alaska's kids in state

(Juneau, Alaska) — The Bring the Kids home project — a major initiative by the Department of Health and Social Services — has seen a 30-percent decline in the number of Alaska youth in out-of-state residential psychiatric treatment facilities from a year ago. To continue this trend and to coordinate all efforts within and outside the department, Brita Bishop has been named as coordinator of the Bring the Kids Home initiative.

“It’s my pleasure to name Brita Bishop as coordinator for the Bring the Kids Home program,” Deputy Commissioner Bill Hogan said. “The many groups both inside and outside of our department working on this project will sometimes encounter roadblocks when trying to find the resources they need. Brita will provide more efficient and effective communication between these groups to continue to bring, and keep, the kids with serious emotional disturbance home.”

Bishop will assume her new duties on July 9. Brita’s background involves extensive experience in children’s behavioral health, including her service as the state behavioral health staff member responsible for developing community-based systems of care for children and families.

Currently there are 301 Alaska youth in out-of-state residential psychiatric treatment facilities. At this time last year, there were 429. State collaboration with community stakeholders has increased the types of treatment options available for youth in Alaska. Improved coordination for children in acute psychiatric care settings and children “stepping down” from out-of-state residential treatment centers has also led to the development of better in-state services and supports for children and families.

Also contributing to Bring The Kids Home success is the Behavioral Health Integration Project (BHIP). BHIP is a four-year state initiative which blends mental health and substance abuse services for individuals who have a co-occurring (mental health and substance abuse) disorder and need both kinds of treatment options, including some of the children coming back to Alaska. In a recent study, providers said these services were significantly more integrated and accessible compared to a baseline survey 18 months ago.

Bring The Kids Home began in 2004 with the goal of treating Alaska’s youth with serious emotional disturbances in their own homes and communities. The state attributes much of its success to funding partners such as the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority; Denali

Commission; Rasmuson Foundation; Southcentral Foundation, Alaska's congressional delegation; and state legislators. One of several recent collaborations is resulting in the construction of a new facility to meet the goals of the initiative. The Southcentral Eklutna Project, located in Eklutna, is a 44-bed cottage style facility which will service Alaska's children and families. Planning partners, including the Alaska Native Tribal Health Corporation, Alaska Advocacy Boards, parents, youth organizations and service provider agencies also continue to play an essential role.

For more information about Bring The Kids Home, visit the Web at www.hss.state.ak.us/dbh/resources/initiatives.

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