

# Alaska Commission on Aging

## Complex Behavior Collaborative DHSS Division of Behavioral Health Services Services to the Seriously Mentally Ill Component Recommendation: Continued Funding

**Recommendation:** The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA), the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, the Alaska Mental Health Board, the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, and the Alaska Brain Injury Network jointly recommend continued funding for the Complex Behavior Collaborative (CBC), a program administered by the Division of Behavioral Health Services under the Seriously Mental Ill Component. This funding is currently being used to serve 28 vulnerable Alaskans with complex behaviors that include 14 adults (3 of which have Alzheimer's disease and related dementia) and 7 children. (Seven clients have been discharged.) These individuals are at risk for out-of-state placement because their complex behaviors fall outside the range of expertise by local caregivers and providers and available treatment options fail.

**Problem Statement:** Development of an appropriate of services for individuals with cognitive disabilities and complex behaviors is underway. Because of the lack of in-state options, the Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API) serves this population in the most restrictive setting for extended periods of time. Others are inappropriately held in places such as emergency rooms or in correction facilities. The result of the lack of appropriate services in Alaska poses a significant financial cost to the State with some cost assigned to individuals and their families.

Older Alaskans with moderate to severe dementia in addition to co-existing illnesses (such as mental illness) and sensory impairments are particularly vulnerable to complex behavioral disorders and have significant behavioral health needs. They can become physically, verbally aggressive and pose a serious safety risk for their caregivers, others around them, and themselves. Statewide, there are 21 private assisted living facilities (total of 195 beds) dually licensed to care for seniors with dementia, those with mental illness, and people with developmental disabilities (Section of Certification and Licensing, Health Care Services 2011).

The Pioneer Homes serve older Alaskans with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (57% of their resident population) however, their staff are not trained or able to care for residents who exhibit complex and out of control behavior. These residents are often referred to the Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API) for treatment.

The Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API) continues to report significant upward trending of their inpatient bed utilization for people age 60 years and older due to challenging behaviors. In the one-year period from FY 2010-FY2011, API experienced a 42% increase in the number of patients age 60 years and older (API 2012). Although API can serve older adults with complex behaviors, they can only do so on a temporary basis as a hospital. The numbers of older Alaskans living in the community in need of specialized supports who are not already receiving services through DHSS are unknown at this time.

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**Proposal:** Individuals with complex behaviors who present a high risk of danger to themselves and others often require needed interventions that are outside of the skill set of those caring for them. The Complex Behavior Collaborative (CBC) provides consultation and training services for community providers and caregivers who serve people with challenging behaviors. Specifically, the CBC currently provides comprehensive assessment and diagnostic services utilizing a pool of resource specialists; individualized triage services to direct each individual to the appropriate level of care; technical assistance for providers; case-specific consultation and training for community providers to improve their workforce competency and provide earlier interventions to minimize the risk of individuals developing more complex behaviors; and family caregiver training to recognize the warning signs and provide intervention for escalating behaviors.

#### **Consequences if Not Funded**

- Individuals with ADRD, mental illness, and developmental disabilities placed inappropriately in facilities that are not properly staffed or trained to care for persons with complex behaviors.
- Safety issues for individuals with challenging behaviors, their family caregivers, facility staff and other facility residents.
- Individuals at risk for out-of-state placement due to absence of appropriate facilities within Alaska.
- Lost opportunity to develop in-state interventions and services to address the needs of people with cognitive disabilities and complex behaviors.

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