ALASKA DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGIC PLAN

2020-2023

Acknowledgments

This three year Division of Public Health (DPH) Strategic Plan reflects the results of a collaborative planning process that included multiple Division employees. These efforts were built from a foundation of input given by Alaskans and partner organizations around the state who took the time to respond to a DPH Strategic Plan survey and public comment period. Assuring that Alaskans have the highest quality public health services and programs is truly a team effort; thank you to all who have participated in this effort. This data informed document was written by the DPH Quality & Performance Improvement Manager in April 2020.

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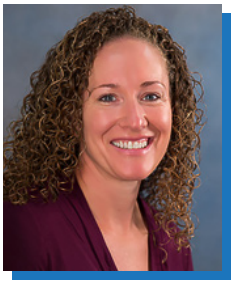
Message from Division of Public Health Director



It is my pleasure to present to you the Alaska Division of Public Health's three year strategic plan for 2020-2023. This plan establishes a strong unified vision for the Division's future and the shared work ahead. Like all that we do, this plan rests on a solid foundation of data. The planning process began with input from division personnel, the public, and key partners about our past performance, emerging issues, and the significant challenges in improving population health that we face as a state. Using this data, with the state health assessment and improvement plan, as well as our internal quality improvement plan, we agreed on our priority focus areas, goals, and objectives that will better position the division toward our vision of Healthy and resilient Alaskans today and tomorrow. The goals are organized within the core functions as a division which are as follows: serve as a strategist for existing and emerging public health issues; protect life, health and safety of all Alaskans and prevent injury and chronic disease; serve as the trusted source of public health information; and strengthen essential public health partnerships, services and infrastructure.

In this plan you will notice a focus on health equity as a key principle in improvement of health outcomes in our state. You will also notice a focus on people and partnerships; our workforce, our partners and stakeholders, and the residents of Alaska. Alaska is unique in its vastness, geographic remoteness, and in its rich diversity of people who work together to make positive things happen. It truly is only together that we can make the health outcomes and changes that we all desire. Lastly, you will notice a focus on performance improvement; measuring progress, learning from our past efforts through evaluation, and using evidence to make informed decisions about our future direction. This plan is part of an ongoing strategic planning process and our goals, objectives and strategies will continue to evolve through periodic evaluation and adjustment. Every part of the division will be engaged in this work. Now more than ever, it is abundantly clear to us all that public health is everyone's responsibility. Let's unite together for a healthy and resilient Alaska!

— Heidi Hedberg, DPH Director

"The past gives us experience and memories;
the present gives us challenges and opportunities;
the future gives us vision and hope"

— William Arthur Ward

Strategic Plan Purpose

This strategic plan sets forth what the Alaska Division of Public Health intends to achieve as an organization and how it will achieve it. The strategic plan provides a common foundation to set direction, serves as a guide for making informed decisions and allocate resources, and commits the division to evaluating performance as it strives to meet the public health needs of Alaskans.

The Division of Public Health conducted a strategic planning process during the fall of 2019 to define the direction and course of the agency for the next three years. The plan positions the division to operate as an effective and significant part of the state's overall public health system by providing Alaskans with quality public health services. This plan is a living document that the division will implement, monitor and evaluate regularly to address the public health needs of the state as human, financial, and leadership capacity allows.

2020-2023 DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS

Strategic Planning Process

The Division of Public Health Executive Leadership Team (ELT), composed of the Chief Medical Officer, Division Director, Deputy Director, Section Chiefs, Public Information Office and Quality Improvement staff, along with the Strategic Planning Workgroup, conducted a strategic planning process over the course of several months in 2019.

Dr. Jerome Adams, Surgeon General of the United States, visits the Alaska Division of Public Health.

Community members and partners: The first step in the planning process was to gather input from external partners and the public through a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threat (SWOT) survey and to review the input residents already offered that was summarized in the State Health Assessment and State Health Improvement Plan, Healthy Alaskans.

Division Personnel: Staff internal to the division were also asked to identify the division's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and to give input regarding the division's performance.

Division Leadership: The themes that emerged through the SWOT analysis from staff, the public and partners were reviewed and discussed by division leadership. The division's Executive Leadership Team also reviewed the results of Alaska's Public Health System Assessment, past performance of State Health Improvement Plan leading health indicators and the division's Quality Improvement plan.

The following is a summary of identified themes from external partner and Division staff input that formed the basis for the strategic plan and are reflected in the priorities, goals, and objectives within the plan.

STRENGTHS

- Division of Public Health staff are professional, competent and dedicated,
- Use data and evidence to inform programs, strategies and services,
- Responsive to public health emergencies, outbreaks, emerging issues,
- Readily shares data, staff, expertise, and funding,
- Serve as a hub and resource for public health information,
- Consistent, strong community collaborative partnerships with other entities, and
- Excellent public health messaging, informing the public, and providing public health education.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- DPH is consistently underfunded and understaffed which results in limitations of services; not meeting the health needs of entire age ranges and populations,
- Need to strengthen communication about the importance of public health to increase awareness and support,
- Must increase and improve health communication and availability of data using modern communication tools and methods,

- Must increase collaborative partnerships with other organizations and entities to increase local engagement and investment in public health,
- Need to remove internal administrative barriers to efficiency,
- Must consider shifting to a public health systems approach and focus on primary prevention (including Adverse Childhood Experiences, social determinants, strengths based, trauma informed practices, and focus on the young), and
- Need to increase collaboration between DPH sections and use an overarching framework and alignment across sections and increase communication across sections.

EXTERNAL TRENDS, FACTORS AND CONSIDERATIONS THAT MAY IMPACT THE DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

- Decreased funding of public health programs and services via budget cuts,
- Staff turnover, causing workforce instability and limited capacity,
- Lack of ongoing public education about the value of public health and public support,
- Vaccine hesitancy,
- The general devaluing of public health,
- Specific health threats (pandemic flu, substance misuse, re-emerging infectious diseases, anti-fluoride, natural disasters, basic prevention, senior health, unintended pregnancy prevention),
- Anti-science and distrust of government vocal portion of the public.

All data were considered during two strategic planning sessions during which time the mission, vision, core functions, and overarching goals were agreed on. This summary information was sent to external partners and internal staff to get further input which was used to modify and strengthen the goals. Workgroups, each led by an ELT member, were formed to develop a work plan composed of objectives, strategies and measures for each goal. Implementation of these work plans began in January 2020 and will continue throughout the three year strategic plan cycle until completed or modified as regular performance reporting and evaluations are conducted. When developing objectives and strategies, the Division had to keep in mind certain capacity considerations and limitations so that the plan would be feasible within a three year timeframe. These considerations include workforce stability and capacity, limited financial resources, existing infrastructure and technology systems issues, communications management, and support from State leadership.

"The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were when we created them"

— Albert Einstein

Division of Public Health Overview

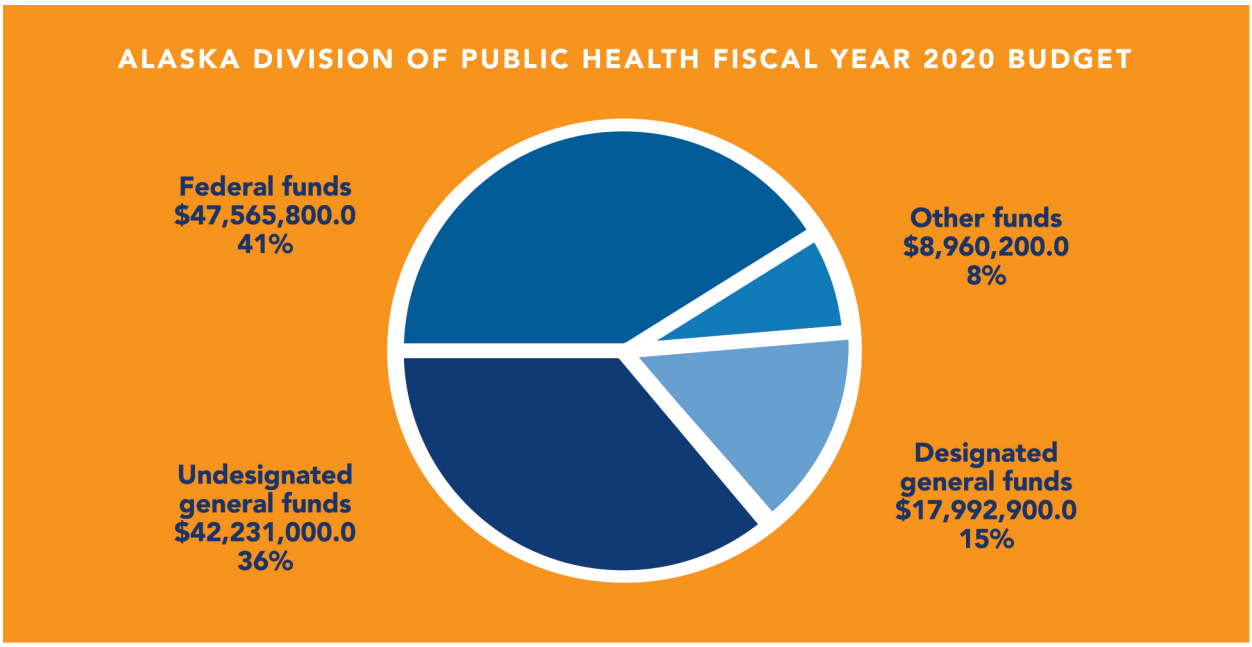
The Alaska Division of Public Health is one of the largest operating divisions within the Department of Health and Social Services in Alaska state government. As the primary public health presence in many communities, the division assures access to quality care and promotes the health of all people in the state with a focus on preventive measures. The Division of Public Health is a significant entity within in the overall statewide health system which includes tribal, local, and regional public health providers.

DPH employees and staff are well known throughout the state. While the Division's base operations are found in Alaska's larger communities, Public Health Nurses and other division staff are on the front lines in towns and villages everywhere.

The division coordinates access to federal initiatives, provides training and certification, technical assistance and oversight, and specialty public health services. It is a source of up to date health information and analytics for the governor, local governments, and Alaskans. This information is used to monitor the health status of Alaska's residents, set health priorities and evaluate the effectiveness of health initiatives. Regulatory functions are focused on positive health outcome and assuring quality and safety, while also minimizing the administrative burden on the personnel, facilitates and programs regulated.

The Division of Public Health currently has approximately 425 staff positions located in 23 communities organized into ten sections; each tasked with providing services to help the agency achieve its vision of *Healthy and resilient Alaskans today and tomorrow.*

The Alaska Division of Public Health administers a budget in fiscal year 2020 comprised of approximately $116.7 million dollars. Forty-one percent is received through federal grants, 36 percent is from undesignated state general funds, 15 percent from designated general funds, and 8 percent is from other sources.



DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH SECTIONS

The Division of Public Health is a highly complex agency comprised of ten distinctly diverse sections. The ten sections of the division represent the work being done within the Public Health Core functions, foundational and 10 essential services as well as work to address Alaska's most significant health needs.

Cause of Death	Deaths	AK Age-Adjusted Rate	US Age-Adjusted Rate	US Rank
1. Cancer	934	173.8	168.6	2
2. Heart Disease	737	148.8	173.7	1
3. Unintentional Injuries	377	56.0	38.0	5
4. Chronic Lower Respiratory Dis.	193	41.2	42.7	3
5. Stroke	167	38.9	37.9	4
6. Suicide	142	20.0	12.0	10
7. Diabetes	106	20.2	21.5	7
8. Chronic Liver Dis. and Cirrhosis	98	12.9	9.7	12
9. Alzheimer's Disease	72	20.4	24.6	6
10. Influenza and Pneumonia	59	59	59	8

Source: ABVS; NCHS (2011 Preliminary)

Section of Chronic Disease Prevention & Health Promotion (CDPHP) works with communities, health systems, worksites, and schools to reduce and manage the most prevalent, costly, and preventable health problems across Alaska. This section promotes behaviors that prevent injuries and reduce the prevalence of chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity, and heart disease by encouraging healthy, active, and safe lifestyles, collecting and sharing scientific data; supporting evidence-based practices in communities and promoting community conditions that result in health equity.

Section of Health Analytics and Vital Records (HAVRS) is responsible for administering vital records for events that occurred within the State of Alaska. Vital records include data from births, deaths, divorces, and marriages, as well as reports of adoption, paternity, and amendments. This section also collects inpatient and outpatient discharge data from Alaska health care facilities, issues burial transit permits, oversees the medical marijuana registry and analyzes data and provides reports to help guide policy.

Office of Substance Misuse & Addiction Prevention (OSMAP) uses a public health approach to prevent and reduce substance use disorders, prevent harm caused by substance use and supports community-based activities across Alaska. OSMAP activities are focused on opioid and marijuana misuse and addiction prevention, data and evaluation, including program and systems changes to mitigate harm.

Section of Rural Community Health Systems (RCHS) leads the way in preparing the State of Alaska and its citizens for any public health emergency or disaster, either natural or human-caused. This section is responsible for providing educational materials to healthcare agencies and the public, training first responders and healthcare agencies, conducting readiness exercises for and with local, state, federal, tribal partners, and providing grant funding for hospital and healthcare preparedness and Emergency Management Services (EMS) operations.

DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH SECTIONS

Section of Public Health Nursing (SOPHN) operates 16 public health centers throughout Alaska and serves 280 small communities and villages. This section offers services such as immunizations, family planning, prenatal counseling and postpartum outreach, well child exams, tuberculosis screening and treatment, school screenings, sexually transmitted infection screening. Public health nurses provide health promotion, protection and disease prevention activities to improve the health of individuals, families, and their communities. Public health nurses emphasize community and population health systems change – a role uniquely the responsibility of public health. Public health nurses prepare communities to respond to disease outbreaks, natural disasters, and other health hazards; and mobilize community partnerships to assess, develop and implement improvement plans to create healthy environments and resilient communities.

Section of Epidemiology (Epi) keeps Alaskans safe from communicable diseases, injuries and environmental, occupational, and other health hazards. This section collects data to assess infectious disease and associated risk factors, identifies and responds to emerging infections, and conducts outbreak investigations and surveillance. Additionally, this section is tasked with evaluating the potential human health effects of new policies, programs, or development projects in Alaska.

Section of Women's, Children's and Family Health promotes optimum health outcomes for all Alaskan women, children, teens and their families through coordination with the primary and public entities within the health care system to improve access to and organization of services in support of families. This section has a particular focus on children with special health conditions, those with low income status and those with limited access to health services. Programs include breast and cervical cancer screening, family planning, coordinating pediatric specialty clinics, newborn screening, prevention of and screening for substance use during pregnancy, oral health, infant safe sleep, home visiting, school nursing, and adolescent health.

State Medical Examiner's Office is responsible for conducting medical and legal investigative work related to unanticipated, sudden, or violent deaths by conducting autopsies, providing court testimony and assisting with the review of all child deaths through the Child Fatality Review Team.

Alaska State Public Health Laboratories provides analytical and technical laboratory information in support of state and national public health disease prevention programs and represents a first line of defense in the rapid recognition of the spread of communicable diseases. Laboratory tests are conducted to identify, treat, and control communicable diseases, and to prevent the ill-effects of toxic substances and radiation.

Director's Office ensures an efficient and effective division. This section provides management and leadership, legislative and regulatory information, overall strategic direction and policy for the division, coordinates budget development, revenue and financial management, human resources services, procurement, and manages grants and contracts. This section is also responsible for all division wide performance and quality improvement including public health accreditation activities.

Division of Public Health Strategic Plan 2020-2023

ALASKA DIVISION OF Public Health

VISION:
Healthy and resilient Alaskans today and tomorrow.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:
Service, Health Equity, Integrity, Excellence, Leadership, and Dedication.

MISSION:
To promote the health of Alaskans. This is derived from Article VII of the Alaska Constitution which states "the legislature shall provide for the promotion and protection of public health" and Alaska Statute AS 18.05.010(a) Section 18.05.010 Administration of laws by department.

CORE FUNCTIONS

- Serve as a strategist for existing and emerging public health issues.
- Protect life, health and safety of all Alaskans and prevent injury and chronic disease.
- Serve as the trusted source of public health information.
- Strengthen essential public health partnerships, services, and infrastructure.

GOALS

1. Address risk factors and conditions that affect multiple aspect of health and well-being.
2. Increase availability of reliable, trusted public health data to improve the health of Alaskans.
3. Align public health information in ways that are useful, understandable and actionable.
4. Use quality improvement and performance management to improve processes and results.
5. Strengthen collaborative partnerships to achieve shared health outcomes.
6. Enhance the competency level and professional development of our workforce.
7. Provide management and leadership to ensure an efficient and effective public health system.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

form a framework within which we conduct our work as public health professionals. These principles spell out the word "SHIELD" because the concept and act of prevention is what sets the Division of Public Health apart from all others.

SERVICE – Demonstrate commitment to public health through compassionate action and stewardship of time, resources and talent

HEALTH EQUITY – Ensure that all Alaskans have full and equal access to opportunities to lead healthy lives

INTEGRITY – Exemplify uncompromising ethical conduct and the highest standards of responsibility and accountability

EXCELLENCE – Use the best available knowledge, expertise, and data to inform public health polices and practice

LEADERSHIP – Provide public health vision, purpose, and strategies to improve the health of Alaskans

DEDICATION – Continuously and enthusiastically work to achieve the best health for Alaskans and their communities

THE CORE FUNCTIONS OF THE DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH ARE:

- Serve as a strategist for existing and emerging public health issues
- Protect life, health and safety of all Alaskans and prevent injury and chronic disease
- Serve as the trusted source of public health information
- Strengthen essential public health partnerships, services, and infrastructure

Strategic Goals and Objectives

The three year strategic plan addresses the health needs of Alaskans identified in the State Health Assessment, as well as areas of needed improvement from the most recent State Public Health System assessment.

The Division of Public Health continues to forge ahead in carrying out its critical responsibilities in challenging times. Working together with federal health agencies, local communities and tribal health organizations, we are making a difference in the lives of all Alaskans.

A number of plans, including the State Health Improvement Plan Healthy Alaskans, the 2016-2020 Division of Public Health strategic plan, the Quality Improvement Plan, and input given by staff and partners were used to set priority focus areas, goals and objectives. The 2020-2023 Division of Public Health Strategic Plan goals are as follows:

GOAL 1: Improve Alaska's health by enhancing our ability to address risk factors and conditions that affect multiple aspects of health and well-being.

Objective 1.1: Develop and present to department leadership a brief on Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) and recommended high priority SOA strategies.

Objective 1.2: Ensure that high priority SDOH data is available in a public-facing online tool.

Objective 1.3: Develop and begin implementation of a plan to support a workforce able to implement SDOH interventions.

Objective 1.4: Develop policies and guidance that create dedicated staff and funding to implement high priority strategies to address and define clear linkages between SDOH and health outcomes in Alaska communities.

Objective 1.5: Coordinate relationships with partners necessary to implement high priority strategies that address and provide clear linkages between SDOH and health outcomes in Alaskan communities.

GOAL 2: Increase availability of reliable, trusted public health data to improve the health of Alaskans.

Objective 2.1: Ensure comprehensive documentation of data standards within the Division of Public Health.

Objective 2.2: Implement data integration efforts within the Division of Public Health to optimize data utility.

GOAL 3: Align public health information in ways that are useful, understandable and actionable.

Objective 3.1: Establish user friendly web-based platform for the communication and query of de-identified Public Health Data.

Objective 3.2: Develop an online Division of Public Health information clearinghouse.

Objective 3.3: Develop and implement health communication training for program staff.

Objective 3.4: Develop a division wide organizational branding strategy.

GOAL 4: Use quality improvement and performance management to improve processes and results.

Objective 4.1: Attain accreditation status with the national Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) to strengthen the Division's ability to better serve Alaskans.

Objective 4.2: Develop and implement a Quality Improvement Plan to improve the quality of the Division's processes, services and programs.

Objective 4.3: Develop and implement a system to evaluate and manage overall performance of the Division and educate staff on how to use it.

GOAL 5: Strengthen collaborative partnerships to achieve shared health outcomes.

Objective 5.1: Improve the Division of Public Health's ability to build and maintain successful partnerships.

Objective 5.2: Identify and evaluate the benefits of established partnerships.

Objective 5.3: Build new partnerships that maximize the use of available resources, including personnel, subject matter expertise, and funding.

GOAL 6: Enhance the competency level and professional development of our workforce.

Objective 6.1: Decrease the overall Division vacancy rate of active positions by enhancing the Division's employee recruitment and orientation efforts.

Objective 6.2: Decrease the Division turnover rate by enhancing employee retention efforts.

Objective 6.3: Develop and begin to implement a written Division of Public Health Workforce Development Plan.

GOAL 7: Provide management and leadership to ensure an efficient and effective public health system.

Objective 7.1: Improve division administrative process efficiency.

Objective 7.2: Develop policies and enforce laws that support division efforts to provide the essential services that protect and promote the public's health.

Objective 7.3: Enhance overall effectiveness of division management, leadership, and strategic oversight processes and actions.

Objective 7.4: Secure stable and adequate funding to support foundational public health services and capabilities.

"There are risks and costs to a program of action, but they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction"

— John F. Kennedy

Next Steps: Implementation, Performance Monitoring & Evaluation

Strategic planning is a key component of a larger performance management system. The Division of Public Health's performance management system has four components; performance standards, performance measures, reporting of progress, and quality improvement. Through continuous integration of all of these components, the division supports its capacity to improve the public's health.

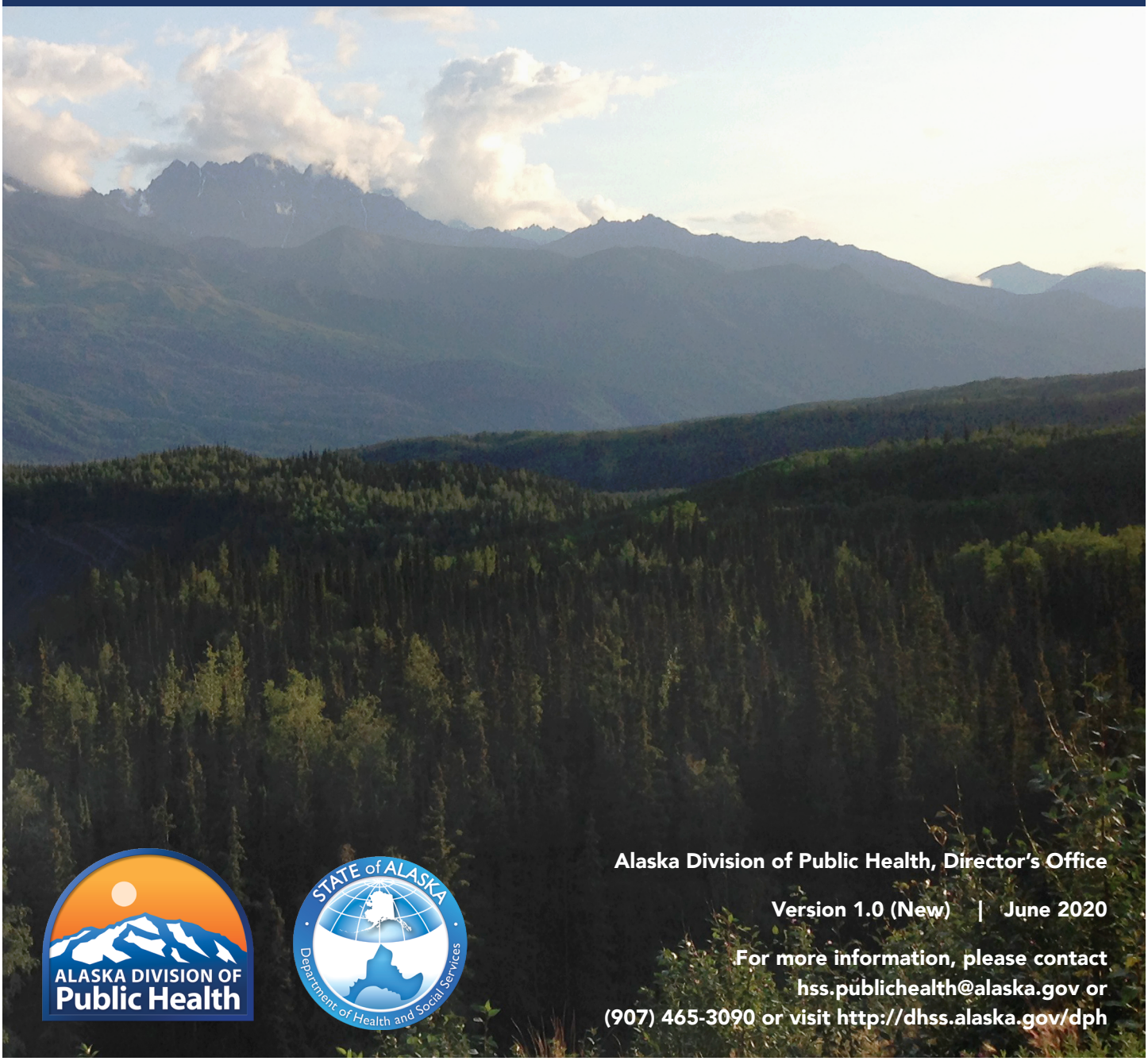
PUBLIC HEALTH PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Division of Public Health Executive Leadership Team (ELT) formed a workgroup for each strategic plan goal, led by an ELT member. Work groups developed goal-specific work plans containing strategies, measures and timelines, and are responsible for implementing and completing the work plan. They will also be responsible for tracking specific indicators and reporting progress periodically. The Executive Leadership Team is responsible for monitoring and guiding progress of overall strategic plan implementation with the use of a performance measure tracking system.

As the Division of Public Health moves ahead in the years to come, it will do so with an overarching commitment to build a healthier Alaska, despite the numerous challenges faced including declining resources and emergent public health threats. This strategic plan is a roadmap that lays the management foundation for change and improvement within the Division of Public Health. The dedicated employees of the Division of Public Health bring a wealth of expertise and a commitment to improving the well-being of the people of Alaska. Our partners in the public health system are equally committed to creating a healthier Alaska, which is why we incorporated their input into the development of this plan. Together, we will achieve our vision of healthy and resilient Alaskans today and tomorrow.

"Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything"

— George Bernard Shaw



Alaska Division of Public Health, Director's Office

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