

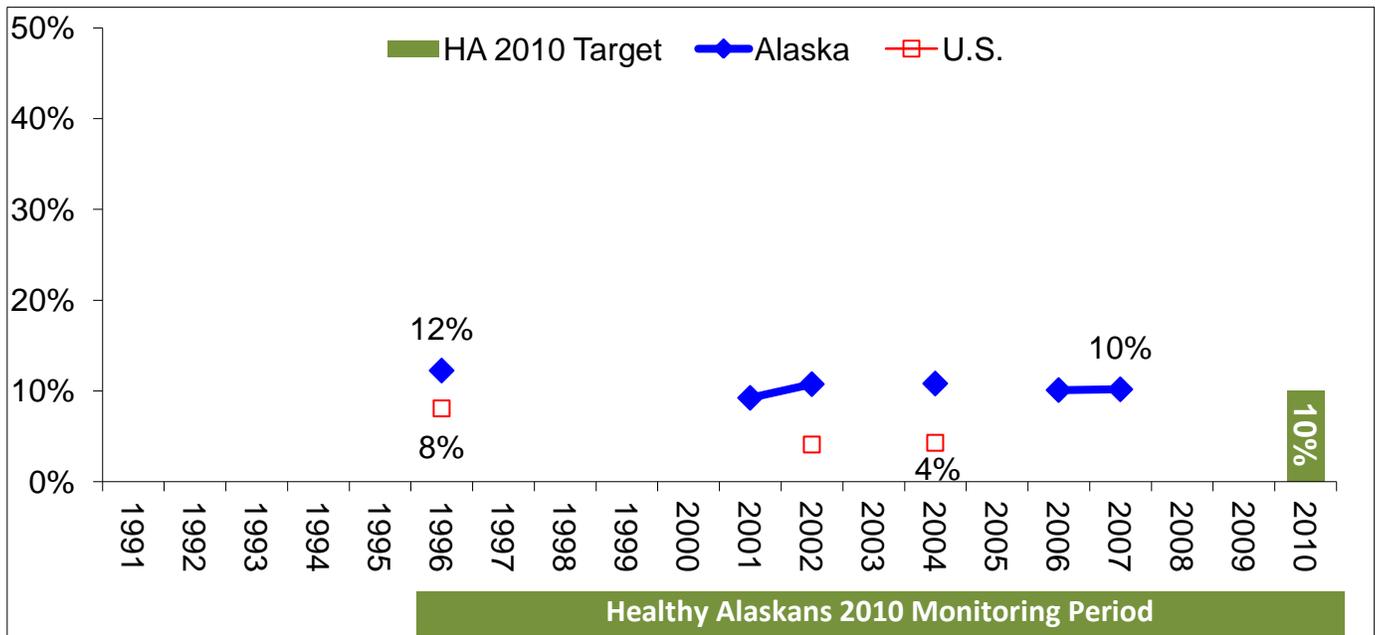
# Alaska Health Status Indicators

## Indicator: *Unlocked, Loaded Firearms in Household*

### Why is this important?

In Alaska there were 735 violent deaths involving firearms from 2003-2008, which accounted for 46% of violent deaths statewide<sup>1</sup>. More than 75% of gun related suicide attempts and unintentional injuries of 0-19 year olds involved guns that were kept in the homes of the victim, a relative or a friend.<sup>2</sup> Thousands of handguns are stolen each year in the United States and are used to commit other crimes. Storing firearms locked and unloaded, with ammunition stored separately, can reduce the risk of deaths, injuries and suicides involving young people.

Percentage of Adults in Households with Unlocked, Loaded Firearms: Alaska and the U.S.



This indicator has been measured sporadically since 1996. The percentage of Alaska adults who live in households in which firearms are kept unlocked and loaded has remained relatively stable since 1996, from 9% in 2001 to 12% in 1996.

#### ❖ How is Alaska Doing Relative to the *Healthy Alaskans 2010 Target*?

The *Healthy Alaskans 2010* target for prevalence adults living in a household with unlocked, loaded firearms is 10% or lower. The prevalence of Alaska adults having unlocked, loaded firearms in their household has been slightly higher than 10% during most of the *Healthy Alaskans 2010* monitoring period, reaching 10% as of 2006. **The *Healthy Alaskans 2010* target of 10% has been met.**

#### ❖ How does AK compare with the US?

The prevalence of adults living in a household with unlocked, loaded firearms has consistently been higher in Alaska than in the US overall.

#### ❖ How are different populations affected?

Sixty percent of Alaskan adults reported having a firearm in the home (regardless of locked or loaded status) in 2007. The prevalence of having a firearm in the home was higher in the Gulf Coast, rural and Fairbanks regions compared to Anchorage and vicinity and increased with increasing income. The prevalence of having a loaded and unlocked firearm in the household was 10% in 2007. Having a loaded and unlocked firearm in the home was higher among non-Native Alaskans (12%) than Alaska Native adults (4%). Adults living in the rural region of Alaska reported

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the lowest prevalence of having a loaded and unlocked firearm in the home, however this difference was not significant.

## What is the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services doing to improve this indicator?

The Injury Prevention program, housed within the Department, participates in the statewide Injury Prevention Coalition facilitated by ANTHC. A current project for ANTHC members is to provide gun safes to western Alaska communities. The coalition also encourages home builders to design built-in areas of new homes for the addition of gun safes. In the past, the department has provided gun locks to communities in southeast Alaska and provided a safety booklet focused on teen safety<sup>3</sup>. Public health attention is needed to encourage safe storage and handling of firearms statewide.

## Indicator Definition and Notes

Percentage of adults who answer “Yes” to all three of the following **questions**: *The next three questions are about firearms. We are asking these in a health survey because of our interest in firearm-related injuries. Please include weapons such as pistols, shotguns, and rifles; but not BB guns, starter pistols, or guns that cannot fire. Include those kept in a garage, outdoor storage area, or motor vehicle.*

- *Are any firearms now kept in or around your home?*
- *Are any of these firearms now loaded?*
- *Are any of these loaded firearms also unlocked? By "unlocked" we mean you do not need a key or a combination to get the gun or to fire it. We don't count safety as a lock.*

## Data Sources

Alaska: Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services; US: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Alaska data were obtained from the Standard AK BRFSS.

## References

1. <http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/injury/akvdrs/assets/AKVDRS.pdf> Accessed August 12, 2011.
2. Grossman, DC, Reay, DT, and Baker, SA. *Self-inflicted & Unintentional Firearm Injuries Among Children & Adolescents: The Source of the Firearm*, 153 Archives Pediatric & Adolescent Med. 875 (Aug. 1999), Accessed at <http://archpedi.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/short/153/8/875> on August 12, 2011.
3. [http://www.chems.alaska.gov/EMS/Assets/EMSC/safety\\_gauge.pdf](http://www.chems.alaska.gov/EMS/Assets/EMSC/safety_gauge.pdf) Accessed August 12, 2011.



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