ALASKA'S PLAN TO

Promote the Health of People with Disabilities

Summary 2015-2017

The *Alaska's Plan to Promote the Health of People with Disabilities* covers state fiscal years 2015 – 2017, and will advance the integration of disability into the health promotion, disease prevention, and emergency preparedness infrastructure within our state and increase the focus on health and wellness in the disability community. It calls upon all Alaskans to share expertise and resources to build the state's capacity to improve the health of people with disabilities across the lifespan. The plan does not address every disparity, but challenges us to tackle inaccessible environments, discriminatory attitudes, policies and norms that result in barriers to health, wellness, and quality of life for people with disabilities.

Vision Statement

All Alaskans with disabilities achieve optimal health across the lifespan.

Purpose

- Enable all people to attain a high quality of life that is free of preventable disease, disability, injury, and premature death.
- Create social and physical environments that promote good health for people with disabilities.
- Promote quality of life, healthy development, and healthy behaviors across all life stages for people with disabilities.

Alaskans with disabilities, nearly one quarter of the state's population, experience significant health disparities, including:

- higher body mass index
- increased tobacco use
- less physical activity
- fewer preventive screenings
- poorer mental health
- higher rates of diabetes
- lower rates of health care utilization

The plan's goal is to increase awareness of the health disparities experienced by Alaskans with disabilities, so that priorities are set and attention and resources focus on solutions that will benefit individuals with disabilities, their family members, community, and our state. The stakeholders focused on identifying ways people with disabilities could be included in the planning and thinking from the beginning, rather than as a separate addition in the appendix, or as an afterthought. Long-term success will require a shared culture of inclusiveness, the sharing of resources and knowledge, along with active cooperation and collaboration among multiple and diverse local, state, and national partners.

Strategic plan addresses identified priority areas:

- Abuse Prevention and Intervention
- Emergency Preparedness and Response
- Behavioral Health
- Nutrition and Physical Activity
- Oral Health
- Preventive Screenings
- Sexual Health
- Tobacco Use

Each priority area plan section includes:

- Definition
- Rationale
- Vision Statement
- Measurable action steps for each of four domains:
  - Access
  - Data/Surveillance
  - Education/Awareness
  - Collaboration/Integration

Alaska Needs Assessment

In 2013, the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) Center for Human Development (CHD) was contracted by the State of Alaska Division of Public Health (DPH), Alaska Health and Disability Program (AHDP), to conduct a statewide needs assessment regarding the health status of Alaskans with disabilities. The needs assessment consisted of four activities:

1. Focus group interviews with Alaskans with disabilities and family members,
2. Survey of health care providers,
3. Survey of agency and support staff, and
4. Emergency preparedness survey of Alaskans with disabilities and family members.

Data collected in the needs assessment activities assisted in the development of the plan and informs the DPH and others about health care services in Alaska. This information is used to develop training and outreach activities to improve health across the lifespan of Alaskans with disabilities. Summary sheets of key findings from each activity as well as the complete needs assessment results are available on the the Alaska Health and Disability Program website.

Vision and example action steps within each priority area:

Abuse Prevention and Intervention Vision:
Alaskans with disabilities have access to culturally competent integrated support systems to prevent violence and abuse, and to promote recovery and healing when abuse has occurred.

The UAA CHD will utilize a train-the-trainer model to promote evidence-based education for youth and adults with disabilities (and their families and caregivers) about healthy relationships, boundaries, safety, and rights, such as the Friendships and Dating Program, to providers at least annually.

Behavioral Health Vision:
Alaskans with disabilities and their families will receive necessary and adequate prevention, intervention, treatment, and supports required to achieve and maintain optimal mental health and freedom from substance abuse.

AHDP and the Division of Behavioral Health will promote the use of standard depression screener questions by health care professionals for people with disabilities.

Emergency Preparedness and Response Vision: *Alaskans with disabilities, their families, and households are fully prepared for a disaster.*	Municipality of Anchorage, Fairbanks North Star Borough, and Mat-Su Offices of Emergency Management will adopt the *Get Ready!* Alaska's emergency preparedness toolkit as their primary emergency preparedness resource for people with disabilities.
Nutrition and Physical Activity Vision: *Alaskans with disabilities are active and healthy. They have access to quality physical activity and healthy foods.*	AHDP, Division of Senior and Disability Services, and parent organizations will work with disability providers to identify best practices among agencies using evidence-based guidelines to promote the use of physical activity, nutrition, and weight goals on Plans of Care.
Oral Health Vision: *Alaskans with disabilities will have access to quality oral health care.*	Alaska's Oral Health Program will advertise resources on oral health that are accessible and inclusive of people with disabilities using diverse images of people with disabilities, person-first language, and varied literacy levels and formats.
Preventive Screenings Vision: *Alaskans with disabilities receive all recommended preventive health screenings.*	The Section of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion will collaborate with Hope Community Resources to assess baseline health data of three licensed assisted living homes, pilot a healthy lifestyle education program with residents, and collect post-intervention health data.
Sexual Health Vision: *Alaskans with disabilities will have access to screening services, resources for informed decision-making, and increased awareness related to sexual health.*	CHD will develop and disseminate an on-line tool kit for health care providers on health promotion and prevention topics including sexual health for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities.
Tobacco Use Vision: *Alaskans with disabilities will live a tobacco free life.*	State of Alaska's Tobacco Prevention and Control Program will include resources on tobacco use and prevention that are accessible and inclusive of people with disabilities, using diverse images of people with disabilities, person-first language, and varied literacy levels and formats.

State of Alaska
Bill Walker, Governor

Department of Health and Social Services
Valerie Davidson, Commissioner

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To access the full plan or for more information, visit the Alaska Health and Disability Program website.