GOVERNOR’S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES & SPECIAL EDUCATION

Annual Update
October 2016 - September 2017

Creating change that improves the lives of Alaskans with disabilities
Council State 5-Year Plan: The Council is now in the 2nd year of its 5-Year State Plan. If you are interested in participating in the day-to-day work of the Council by becoming a public member on one of the Council’s committees, please contact us: http://alaska.gov/go/49EN

Council Committees Include:

- Developmental Disabilities Committee
- Legislative Committee
- Education Committee (Special Education Advisory Panel – SEAP)
- Early Intervention Committee (Interagency Coordinating Council on Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities – ICC)
- Employment and Transportation Ad Hoc Committee
- Medicaid Ad Hoc Committee
- Autism Ad Hoc Committee
- FASD Workgroup

- **GOAL # 1 — Community Inclusion, Supports, and Services:** Improve service delivery to empower individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs) to live and thrive in their communities with formal and informal supports and services that promote independence.

- **GOAL # 2 — Employment:** Alaskans with disabilities and their families will receive the necessary employment services and supports needed to become competitively employed in an integrated setting.

- **GOAL # 3 — Early Intervention:** Strengthen policies and programs so that infants and toddlers with disabilities, their families, and caregivers receive appropriate early intervention services and supports.

- **GOAL # 4 — Education:** Participate in activities that lead to enhanced practices so that children and youth with disabilities have access to appropriate qualified professionals, curriculum, inclusion, support, and resources to ensure they have the skills they need for educational success and future independence.

- **GOAL # 5 — Healthcare:** Alaskans with disabilities will have greater access to needed health care services that will improve their quality of life.
STATE ADVOCACY

The Council held its annual Juneau council meeting and met with legislators, presented to the House Health, Education and Social Services (HESS) committee on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) and Autism, and had an informative visit about the Council’s priorities at the Governor’s Mansion with Governor Bill Walker, First Lady Donna Walker and several members of the Governor’s administration.

The Council’s 2017 Advocacy Priorities Included:

1. **HB 16 — The Disability Training and Identification Bill.** This bill requires more police officer training on disabilities, especially hidden disabilities, in an effort to improve interactions between individuals with disabilities and law enforcement officials. This has been an interest to the Council for several years and was finally passed by the Alaska Legislature and signed into law by Governor Walker in May, 2017. A big thanks to Rep. Steve Thompson and Senator Cathy Giessel for sponsoring the bill and to the entire “Wallbusters” advocacy group out of Fairbanks for their persistent advocacy.

2. **Community Developmental Disability Grants (CDDG) Refinancing —** The Council educated lawmakers on the effort to refinance a state general fund grant program that paid for community services for those on the Developmental Disabilities Registry (“waitlist”) into a Medicaid financed 1915c Individualized Supports Wavier (ISW), thus allowing the state to get dollar-for-dollar federal funding to support individuals with developmental disabilities in the community.

3. **Alaska Achieving a Better Life Experience Act (ABLE) Program —** The Council thanked legislators for passing legislation in 2016 giving certain persons with disabilities the opportunities to save money while maintaining benefits as a pathway out of poverty, and asked Legislators to spread the word about the Alaska ABLE program to their constituents.

4. **Revenue and Fiscal Plan Resolution —** The Council, jointly with the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), developed a resolution encouraging the implementation of a long-term fiscal plan that would protect vulnerable populations such as Alaskans with disabilities.

5. **Key Campaign —** The Council provided staff support to the Key Coalition on planning the statewide developmental disabilities educational “fly in” to Juneau in March. The Council was also able to provide a limited number of travel scholarships to self-advocates, family members, and support staff to participate in Key Campaign.

FEDERAL ADVOCACY

Through a special grant, Trust funding, scholarships and personal funds, 2 Council members and council staff, plus representatives of Hope...
Community Resources and members of the UAA LEND program participated in the National Disability Policy Seminar in Washington DC in April, 2017. Besides attending educational forums on national issues impacting persons with disabilities, the group was able to meet with Alaska’s U.S. Congressional Delegation, discussing healthcare, special education, and other topics. The Council also sent several follow up comment letters to the Alaska Congressional Delegation, educating them on potential impacts of healthcare and special education legislation or policy changes.

SELF-ADVOCATE SUPPORT

Peer Power Alaska  The Council has continued to support Alaska’s statewide self-advocacy organization for individuals with I/DD:

- Peer Power has 279 members from across the state.
- Participated in the regional self-advocacy network, Equal Partnerships Interstate Congress (EPIC) conference, presenting on Alaska efforts regarding ABLE accounts as well as being part of the collaborative planning efforts.
- Held the first ever state wide self-advocacy summit for Alaskans with I/DD with 46 attendees (29 self-advocates and 17 supporters) representing Arctic, Interior, Southcentral, and Southeast regions of Alaska.
- The next Self-Advocacy Summit will be held in Anchorage on September 29 and 30, 2018. For more information, contact Ric Nelson at (907) 269-8989 or ric.nelson@alaska.gov.

COMMUNITY CHOICE & SUPPORT

The Council was active in the work of the Alaska DD Collaborative which developed a shared DD Vision:

“Alaskans share a Vision of a flexible system in which each person directs their own supports, based on their strengths and abilities, toward a meaningful life in their home, their job and their community. Our Vision includes supported families, professional staff and services available throughout the state now and into the future.”

An infographic detailing this shared DD Vision was distributed to the Alaska State Legislature, the Governor, as well as across the state and nationally with federal partners.

Check out the Alaska DD Vision Update 2018 video detailing this effort:

- Alaska DD Vision (without reader) — Alaska DD Vision (with reader)

Now the Council is working with partners to make the shared DD vision a reality through the work of six distinct project teams:

Advocate Advisory  Person-Directed Culture Change
Community Awareness  Legislative Engagement
Measuring Success  Direct Support
Professional Workforce Development
• Supported Decision-Making (SDM) — Supported Decision Making is a constitutional and civil rights concept which recognizes that full guardianship is often not the least-restrictive alternative for adults who experience intellectual or developmental disabilities, communication impairment, or dementia. SDM can be best defined as relationships, practices, arrangements, and agreements of more or less formality and intensity that are designed to assist an individual with a disability to make and communicate to others decisions about the individual’s life. The equal rights philosophy underlying SDM is that all people use support for making the important decisions of life; needing more, different, or structured help with getting information, setting goals, weighing options, exploring outcomes does not justify unequal treatment and removal of all rights to make a decision.

With the Council’s work and vision, Alaska has joined nine other states and the District of Columbia in implementing SDM at varying levels. The momentum toward legal recognition of written Supported Decision Making Agreements (SDMAs) has been championed by the American Bar Association and the U.S. Administration on Community Living through state WINGS grants. The Council supported the successful WINGS grant application for Alaska, and is a lead stakeholder in that collaboration along with the court system, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman, and the Office of Public Advocacy. The WINGS project objectives are to reform guardianship, improve court processes, and to provide less-restrictive alternatives to ensure that Alaskans with disabilities have as many options as possible to lead person-directed lives. Within the Council, there is also a work group that is facilitating a pilot project to develop and implement written SDMAs for several adults to replace or prevent full guardianships orders. The Council has presented on SDMAs to a wide variety of audiences and stakeholders this fall, and is creating more training for professional groups and agencies that are involved in adult guardianship or decision-making for others. The Council will also be working with the legislature, the court system, self-advocates, community partners, and state agencies to create processes, forms, professional standards, and institutional support for legally recognized SDMAs.

• Technology for Cost Savings and Independence — The Council continued its collaboration with DSDS on a technology work group, being part of a small group to review what was submitted from the Request for Information. The Trust is now investing money in a technology pilot which the Council hopes can be brought to scale in the future as a Medicaid billable service.

• Public Comments — Through the Council’s Medicaid Ad Hoc Committee, the Council gave input regarding numerous regulation packages and proposed policy and procedure changes with regard to Medicaid services. The ad hoc committee also offered input on the various iterations of the healthcare bill on a federal level with respect to the potential impact on Alaskans with disabilities.

• Workforce Workgroup Initiated — The Council developed a survey to better understand barriers to caregivers with respect to obtaining and maintaining employment.

• interRAI Assessment Research — The Council continued to complete research related to the interRAI assessment tool which has been proposed by the State to replace its current
assessment tool, as well as researching national and international usage of this tool to better understand its potential applicability for Alaska’s developmental disability population.

- **Individualized Support Waiver (ISW) and Community First Choice (CFC)** — The Council has provided input on these new service options for Alaskans with disabilities as well as disseminated information to stakeholders.

- **DD Leadership Development** — The Council has been an active partner in developing a 2018 Alaska DD Leadership event to continue to enhance the skills of leaders in this field.

- **Continued Trust Collaboration** — The Council has continued to partner with the Trust on the Microenterprise grant program, the Beneficiary Employment Engagement Initiative, the DD mini-grants, and many other projects related to services for individuals with a developmental disability.

**Alaska Safety Planning Empowerment Network (AS PEN)** — A collaboration between the Council, the University of Alaska Anchorage’s Alaska’s University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) Center for Human Development (CHD), Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), and Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA), this statewide partnership invested in helping Alaska community providers serve the needs of people with disabilities who are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. 2017 was the last year of this collaborative, which resulted in 6 Alaskan communities developing shared plans and policies.

**Activities and Accomplishments**

- FY 17 and final ASPEN Community had key informant interviews (over 45), multiple focus groups that included 37 services users/participants, and a policy and procedure review for multiple agencies in the region.

- Positive outcomes include: collaboration between disability agencies, domestic violence/sexual assault shelters, independent living centers, behavioral/mental health agencies, and tribal organizations, with of a “no wrong door” model facilitated allowing referral and wraparound care, increased cross-training between service delivery systems, and long-term systemic changes.

**AUTISM AD HOC COMMITTEE**

- **Project Autism ECHO**: Led by the Center for Human Development at UAA, the Council participated in Project Autism ECHO, a learning and guided practice model that revolutionizes medical education and exponentially increases workforce capacity. This collaborative learning community consists of a statewide group of professionals who meet via twice a month and share a case study and a learning didactic led by national autism experts.

- **Autism Regulations**: The Council commented on regulations related to billing Medicaid for autism services under Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT).
• **5-Year Plan on Autism Focus Areas:** We have begun the third year of our 5-year plan which focuses on 5 priority areas: Screening and diagnosis, Workforce development, Early intervention and education, Integrated Services, Sustainability

• **Pediatric Neurodevelopmental Specialists:** The Council has been supporting the search for pediatric neurodevelopmental specialists, and Alaska now has two! Dr. Siv Fasci with Providence Alaska Medical Center and Dr. Randy Zernzach with South Central Foundation began working in Alaska this year. The outreach clinics are continuing to see and diagnose kids in rural Alaska and held 12 clinics last year.

**FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER (FASD)**

• 5-Year Plan on FASD: Over 50 stakeholders from around the state have helped to develop a robust 5-year plan around FASD with the following priority areas: Prevention, Screening and Diagnosis, Early Intervention and Education, System Transformation and Navigation: Youth and Adults, and Community Outreach and Engagement. The Vision is “Through education, prevention, and provision of quality, relevant supports and services, the prevalence of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) is reduced and individuals who experience FASD and their caregivers are empowered to reach their unique and full potential.”

• Members and staff presented an informational session to the Alaska House Health & Social Services Committee while the Council was in Juneau on our targeted disparity of neurobehavioral disabilities (autism and FASD).

• **FASD Day (9/9) Awareness Activities:**
  - The Council hosted a Mask Making event with the Unmasking Brain Injury Project and Stone Soup Group on 9/9 at the Loussac Library. This activity served as a way for individuals to express themselves and what it is like to live with FASD.
  - Worked with Senator Kevin Meyer’s office to have a Governor’s Proclamation for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness Day on 9/9/2017

**EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS**

• The Council leads the Business Employment Services Team (BEST) which is a collaboration between the Departments of Health and Social Services and Labor and Workforce Development with the mission of meeting the workforce needs of Alaska businesses and improve hiring outcomes for individuals with disabilities and veterans.

• Part of this BEST employer engagement included the 3rd Annual Employment First Job Fair led by the Council in partnership with Department of Labor staff. In 2017, 718 job seekers attended, visiting 49 employers. Individuals attended with job coaches, the local paratransit entity was continually bringing and picking up job seekers throughout the Job Fair. Employer
survey results revealed that: for the 2016 job fair employers estimated that 75 individuals were hired as a result, and for the 2017 job fair employers expected 167 hires to result with 202 resumes accepted and 47 provisional/conditional job offers were extended that day.

- The Council co-sponsored the Alaska Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) annual conference keynote, with Division of Senior and Disabilities Services Director Duane Mayes giving an inspiring address to over 300 of Alaska’s top HR professionals from across the state. The Council facilitated an employer resource table for hiring individuals with disabilities at this 2-day SHRM conference, and also partnered with the State Vocational Rehabilitation Council (SVRC) to award a small and large employer for their work in hiring individuals with disabilities.

- Council staff presented nationally regarding Alaska’s innovative employer engagement efforts at the annual Partnerships in Employment annual meeting as a requirement of the Council’s federal grant.

Alaska Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act — Becoming law in 2016, this act allows qualified individuals with disabilities the opportunity to save without jeopardizing vital public benefits (such as SSI and Medicaid). The Council led the #ABLEtoSave campaign for Alaska in the month of August which included a mailout to over 23,000 individuals using outreach money from the Trust. The Council has completed numerous outreach presentations on ABLE and is available to put together webinars or conduct in person presentations for the Anchorage region for any interested entity; contact ric.nelson@alaska.gov.

To learn more, visit: https://savewithable.com/ak/home/plan-benefits.html

Alaska Project SEARCH — The Council supported four Project SEARCH sites statewide, allowing 21 youth with disabilities in 2016-2017 to gain transferable employability skills in hospitals in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Mat-Su, and Kenai. The Council has worked actively towards expansion over the past year, pursuing an additional site in Anchorage in a different industry outside of hospitals and a site for Juneau.

To learn more, visit: http://alaska.gov/go/F4VS

Alaska Disability Benefits 101 Website (AK DB 101) — The AK DB 101 website assists individuals with disabilities and those supporting them to navigate through questions around benefits and work.

To learn more and use this website which includes plain language articles with interactive tools in addition to a benefits to work calculator, visit: ak.db101.org

For videos and additional tools on how to best use this exciting new employment tool, visit the resources page: http://dhss.alaska.gov/gcdse/Pages/db101.aspx

AK DB 101 usage from just January to August of 2017 showed utilization by 1,509 unique users with 2,346 total sessions. This website’s reach has included many different regions of Alaska:

Public Outreach on Employment — Over 4,500 individuals were reached through employment trainings, presentations, and activities. The majority of the trainings were held in collaboration with the Alaska Training Cooperative, out of the UAA Center for Human Development as part of the Council’s federal Alaska Integrated Employment Initiative (AIEI) employment grant work.

Take Your Legislator to Work — Disability Employment Awareness Month — This is the first time Alaska has ever held such an event where employed individuals with disabilities invite their legislator to their workplace to see what they do and learn why employment is important to them. This event was led by the Council and the Alaska Association of People Supporting EmploymentFirst (APSE), promoting “Real Jobs and Real Wages for Alaskans with Disabilities.” This event was held in October celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month; Governor Walker also completed a proclamation for Alaska.

Collaborative Work with DD Act Partners — The Council has worked with the Disability Law Center of Alaska, Alaska’s Protection and Advocacy organization on Bottom Dollars documentary showings across the state showing the perspective of individuals with disabilities making subminimum wage. This work reached 137 individuals and showings included: Bears Tooth Theatre, the Care Coordination Conference, Juneau Council Meeting Public Forum, and the Alaska State Special Education Conference. Currently, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development is pursuing regulation repeal of Alaska’s sub-minimum wage which the Council supports. The Council has also collaborated with the UAA CHD, Alaska’s UCEDD, on a national Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation Alaska case study which was just published: https://content.iospress.com/articles/journal-of-vocational-rehabilitation/jvr903. Both efforts are part of the Council’s Alaska Integrated Employment Initiative (AIEI) federal grant through the Administration on Community Living for which the Council. This grant will now continue through September, 2018 bringing in additional federal funds to Alaska around enhancing employment outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities.

*NEW* Alaska Transition Handbook — In September, the Council launched the “Alaska Transition Handbook Pathway to Adulthood and Employment”. This new Alaska specific resource to assist individuals with disabilities in successful transitions is a culmination of the 5-year AIEI grants work around transition and was a collaborative project with input from stakeholders statewide. It includes success stories, information on state agency resources, benefits and work, savings, and employment support services. http://alaska.gov/go/AP2R

Self Employment — The Council administers the Trust Microenterprise Grant with the UAA CHD and recently launched a self-employment section on its website, including a success story video and information on the grant opportunity. To learn more, visit: http://alaska.gov/go/85E9
EARLY INTERVENTION

• Universal Developmental Screening — Working with the state office of Women’s, Children’s and Family Health, the Council created a Universal Developmental Screening task force comprised of health professionals and stakeholders from around the state which drafted long and short term goals via a midwest academy format. It is estimated that 72% of children 0-5 who either have or are at risk for a developmental delay are not eligible for early intervention or special education pre-school services. This is roughly 10,000 kids (Source: Part C & Part B 619 Data Display, 2016).

• Childcare — The Council worked with the Alaska LEND (Leadership Education in Neuro-developmental and related Disabilities) Program Fellows to do a statewide survey of childcare available to families with children with disabilities. This included research into what inclusive childcare is, and an environmental scan to look for gaps and recommendations. The finished project was a one page info sheet for parents and a short training for childcare providers.

• State Interagency Coordinating Council on Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (ICC) — The Council completed an annual review of the performance report and parent satisfaction survey, and wrote a letter with comments and recommendations to be included with the report to the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the Governor.

• Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program — The State Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program (EI/ILP) staff are active members of the Council and provide a monthly update to the Early Intervention Committee (EIC). The Council also provides necessary stakeholder input for EI/ILP and meets regularly with the director and her staff on issues relating to reporting, workforce development and fiscal sustainability.

EDUCATION

• New Workgroups Initiated — 1) The Council formed a discipline workgroup to look specifically at exclusionary discipline, suspension and expulsion; 2) a work group on unmet needs for curriculum for real rural transitions to adulthood; and 3) a workgroup to research the use of alternate diplomas in other states.

• Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) Activities — 1) Attend monthly Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) leadership call with Commissioner Michael Johnson; 2) Reviewed and commented on accommodation protocol for the ACT for students with disabilities; 3) participated in the annual review of the Alaska Part B Annual Performance Report/State Systemic Improvement Plan, and made recommendations, before the submission to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

• Alaska State Special Education Conference (ASSEC) — The Council had a resource table with Council staff giving several presentations.

• Stone Soup Group Parent Conference

• Public Comment — The Council completed several comment letters regarding special education on both a state and federal level, including defending the Alaska Performance Scholarship, supporting the creation of a Dyslexia Task Force, and responding to federal regulatory reform efforts.
• **Inclusive Practice Award 2017** — There were 16 nominees ranging from a preschool teacher to a statewide program leader on post-secondary transition. The winner, Adam Ahonen and the Service High School Partners Club, was announced at an ASSEC luncheon before 300 educators. This team is made up of 30 students with intellectual disabilities, 8 staff members, 72 peer teachers and 100 partners that work together on educational goals, life skills activities and community inclusion. Led by Adam Ahonen, the Partners Club works to develop activities that both promote awareness and inclusion.

**HEALTH**

**Emergency Preparedness**

- **GetReady! Toolkits** — This past year, over 1,500 copies of this toolkit have been distributed throughout the state. To access the GetReady Toolkit, visit: [http://alaska.gov/go/H8HN](http://alaska.gov/go/H8HN)
- **Safety Kept in Place (SKIP kit)** — over 1,000 starter emergency kits were distributed to families across the state.
- **Emergency Preparedness Presentations** — More than 230 people were trained by Council staff through emergency preparedness presentations.

**Health Promotion**

- **Healthy Activity Partnership Activities Included** — health fairs, partnering with the CHD on a FitExplorers (a health and wellness promotion pilot study), and serving on the Disability and Aging Coalition.
- **2nd Annual Aging and Disability Summit** — The Council supported this second annual event by having staff on the steering committee, completing a summit presentation during the family night event on the ABLE Act, having a resource table, and participating in the partnership panel. Over 75 individuals were in attendance with over 40 agencies/groups represented from all across the state.
- **Teddy Bear Picnic** — The Council again partnered with Anchorage Inclusive Play Champions to put on the 2nd Annual Teddy Bear Picnic at an inclusive playground in Anchorage, drawing more than 3,500 attendees with more than a dozen disability agency resource booths. There are now 10 inclusive playgrounds in Anchorage. To learn more about inclusive parks in Anchorage, visit: [http://anchorageparkfoundation.org/programs/inclusiveplay/](http://anchorageparkfoundation.org/programs/inclusiveplay/)
25 Council Members
1. Banarsi Lal — Fairbanks
2. Jill Burkert — Juneau
3. John Cannon — Juneau
4. Anthony Cravalho — Kotzebue
5. Sandra DeHart-Mayor — Anchorage
6. Art Delaune — Fairbanks
7. Donald Enoch — Juneau
8. David Fleurant — Anchorage
9. Dean Gates — Anchorage
10. Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus — Kiana
11. Mallory Hamilton — Anchorage
12. Maureen Harwood — Fairbanks
13. Alexis Henning — Anchorage
14. Elizabeth Joseph — Kongiganak
15. David Kohler — Anchorage
16. Sarah Kveum — Juneau
18. Amy Simpson — Eagle River
19. Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich — Anchorage
20. Maggie Winston — Kenai
21. Anna Atla — Anchorage
22. Meghan Clark — Anchorage
23. Christian Muntean — Anchorage
24. Corey Gilmore — Juneau
25. Heidi Kelly — Anchorage

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