

Progress Made since the 1997 Disability Policy Summit

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Administration

- A project funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority is providing training for recreational programs on how to include people with disabilities in private and public recreational programs. More remains to be done.
- The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority is funding a project to provide training and technical assistance to childcare providers statewide so they will include children with disabilities in their programs.
- The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority is funding a project to provide supportive parenting services to parents with disabilities.
- Interpreter grants, computer assisted relays and other technologies are being used to increase access for deaf and/or blind individuals. Complete access to the community remains a goal to be achieved.
- The Division of Personnel is offering workshops on **Valuing Diversity** to teach the knowledge necessary to understand diversity issues, which include disability issues and **Customer Service in the Public Sector** to provide the knowledge necessary to provide outstanding customer services to all customers, including those with disabilities.
- The State of Alaska Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) coordinator is working with state agencies to enforce existing laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, although work remains to be done.
- The Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation has conducted accessibility audits of all State parks and is making needed changes as funds allow.
- The disability community is represented on the State Plan Committee to improve Alaska's election systems.

Legislature

- HB 170 was passed by the 20th Legislature; this bill relates to interference with the rights of persons with physical and mental disabilities and to service animals during their pre-training and training period (puppy guide dog bill).
- HB 451 was passed by the 20th Legislature; this bill relates to assistive technology devices and mobility aids for people with physical disabilities (assistive technology lemon law) and to qualification for teaching the use of certain aids or devices for the blind and visually impaired.
- HB 2 was passed by the 21st Legislature; this bill relates to the issuance of a motor vehicle registration plate or parking permit for a person with a disability.
- HB 346 was passed by the 21st Legislature; this bill requires the Department of Health & Social Services to establish a waiting list for state-

- funded services for persons with developmental disabilities and requiring the department to submit an annual report concerning the waiting list and persons with developmental disabilities.
- SB 73 was passed by the 21st Legislature; this bill increased the minimum reimbursement rate for assisted living homes.
 - HB 320 was passed by the 22nd Legislature; this bill related to electronic balloting equipment that allows voters with disabilities, including those who are blind or visually impaired to cast private, independent and verifiable ballots.
 - SB 206 was passed by the 22nd Legislature; this bill relates to registration plates and parking permits for persons with disabilities and to illegal use of parking spaces for persons with disabilities.

Disability Community

All of these activities are underway.

- Inform consumers and their families about what recreational opportunities are available.
- Provide legal training and advocacy regarding consumer choice, rights, responsibilities, and access to justice.
- Make more effective use of existing natural supports.
- Encourage people with disabilities to join community groups and civic organizations.
- Provide information about disability issues to community groups and civic organizations
- Advocate for more funding for family/individual supports and recreation.
- Work with generic organizations and systems to provide training on the inclusion of people with disabilities.
- Provide training to local businesses about their obligations under the ADA to make businesses and transportation vehicles more accessible.

EDUCATION

Administration

- Approximately 50,000 Alaskans were reached through the **Early Intervention Child Find** campaign to raise public awareness about early intervention.
- As a result of the Alaska Transition Training Initiative, there is increased coordination and collaboration in the transition of children from early intervention programs to preschool to school.
- Federal funding was secured for distance-delivered courses in early intervention, leading to a Child Development Associate credential.
- State and federal funding was secured for a Master's Degree program from the University of Alaska in the areas of early intervention and early childhood special education. Federal funding was also secured for a second Master's Degree program for the education of children with low-incidence disabilities such as autism and deaf/blindness.
- Many stakeholders, including state special education staff, advocacy organizations, parents, teachers and special education administrators helped develop a cooperative plan implementing IDEA 97 amendments.
- There is increased communication and coordination between local school districts and juvenile detention facilities, which results in the provision of consistent special education services.
- **Alaska's Comprehensive System of Student Assessment**, which includes alternate assessments and alternate performance standards for students with significant cognitive disabilities, was developed to hold schools accountable for ensuring that all students reach high standards.
- Five-year federal funding was secured to 1) increase educational services and outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities; 2) increase parent and community involvement; 3) develop partnerships with state agencies; and 4) train and retain educators and paraeducators.
- The University of Alaska changed its Elementary Education Bachelor's Degree program such that all students are required to take 6 credits in special education and 10-week internships in classes with special education teachers and teachers skilled in inclusion.
- The Alaska Staff Development Network sponsored a 2-credit graduate level distance education course and a 1-credit course at the Summer Academy on transition from high school to adult life.

Legislature

- The 22nd legislature passed SB133, which provides an alternative assessment program resulting in a diploma for students with disabilities who do not receive a passing score on the public school competency examination with or without accommodation.

- The 22nd legislature passed HB71, which ensures the State of Alaska is in compliance with federal IDEA law.
- The 22nd legislature passed SB149, HB242 and SB86, all of which provide recruitment, retention and re-hiring incentives for teachers.
- The 22nd legislature passed SB345, which relates to school districts' eligibility to seek payment from Medicaid for covered services paid for or furnished to eligible children with disabilities.

Disability Community

All of these solutions are underway:

- Inform parents about their rights and options regarding a Free Appropriate Public Education for their children.
- Advocate for increased funding for education.
- Promote and celebrate successes in education.
- Attend meetings of the State Board of Education & Early Development and local school district board meetings.

EMPLOYMENT

As can be seen below, considerable progress has been made addressing the barriers that prevent Alaskans with disabilities from working although continued work is needed.

Administration

Ensure that generic employment and labor policy and programs presume that people with disabilities are part of the Alaskan workforce.

- DVR is a required partner in the one-stop job centers and is co-located in the majority of job centers across the state.
- People with disabilities are represented on the Alaska Workforce Investment Board.
- Generic job center partners are serving more people with disabilities. However, individuals with obvious disabilities are often automatically referred to DVR without determining if their needs could be met by the generic system.
- Continued work is needed, particularly in the establishment of goals, performance measures and reporting mechanisms and job descriptions and duties of generic employment staff.

Establish a working group of employers and people with disabilities to identify state policy work disincentives and expand meaningful financial incentives.

- The Alaska Works initiative, a partnership of state agencies, advocacy boards, individuals with disabilities, employers and community service providers, identified and is addressing the interrelated barriers that keep people with severe disabilities from working.
- The Alaska Works Initiative has used an influx of funds from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the federal government to 1) recommend and make policy changes; 2) implement a statewide benefits counseling program; 3) increase the assistive technology capacity of the one-stop job centers and develop resource manuals for job center staff; 4) employ resource specialists in 5 one-stop job centers to make the job centers more useable by people with disabilities; 5) employ 1 business development specialist to develop employer partnerships; 6) employ workforce development specialists at 3 APA offices; and 7) employ a vocational specialist at the Division of Mental Health & Developmental Disabilities.
- As a result of the Alaska Works Initiative, 184 individuals with severe disabilities obtained and maintained employment for over 90 days during the past fiscal year; 168 (91%) are currently working.

- Continued work is needed, particularly in imbedding what has been accomplished into the operating policies and procedures of divisions and programs.

Improve the state purchasing regulations regarding bidder preferences. Provide training for purchasing agents and ensure that existing policies and procedures are being followed.

- The Division of Health & Social Services has included information about bidder preferences into its boilerplate template for department contracts and training for purchasing agents.
- Continued work is needed to ensure that all departments implement similar mechanisms.

Issue an executive order directing all state departments to increase the employment of people with disabilities by 20% by the year 2007.

- Administrative Order 195 implements procedures to renew the state's commitment to diversity, including disability, in the state workforce free from discrimination and harassment.
- An inter-agency work group has formed to make the State of Alaska a model employer of people with disabilities.
- Continued work is needed, particularly in securing high-level commitment to creating a stable and more diverse workforce by increasing the number of state workers with disabilities.

Develop initiatives to promote entrepreneurship among people with disabilities.

- DVR changed its self-employment policies, which has resulted in a 73% increase in the number of successful self-employment closures from FY98 to FY00.
- The Center for Human Development at the University of Alaska Anchorage developed a self-employment program for people with severe disabilities and received funding from the Alaska Workforce Investment Office to train one-stop job center staff on self-employment for the persons they serve.
- The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority is funding a micro-enterprise program for start-up equipment and working capital for Trust beneficiaries.

Ensure disability community participation in formulating income support and health care policy.

- Individuals with disabilities participated in focus groups, 3 Think Tanks and a Policy Summit to plan and coordinate Alaska Works activities.

- Results include 1) a 5-year strategic plan, which was used to secure commitment from division directors and management staff; 2) the development of goals and objectives and designation of lead agencies for the 3 grants available through the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act; 3) planning for the implementation of the Ticket program; and 4) the development of policy recommendations related to the Medicaid Buy-in, Personal Assistance Services in the workplace, disability populations and job center services.

Legislative Solutions

- Alaska was the first state to pass legislation and the second state to implement a Working Disabled Medicaid Buy-in; the program has grown slowly but steadily since its inception with 162 participants as of October 2002.

Disability Community Solutions

Provide training to people with disabilities regarding their employment rights and responsibilities.

- Training has been provided on understanding benefits and work incentives and the Ticket-to-Work program, which was implemented in Alaska in November 2002.
- Statewide leadership and advocacy training has been provided to individuals with disabilities.
- As a result, a cross-disability leadership coalition, the Alaska Consumer Leadership Network, has been formed to improve employment options and outcomes statewide for people with disabilities and conduct outreach about the benefits of working and the use of available resources.

Identify ways to improve employment and support services for people from underserved groups.

- DVR is continuing to work with Native organizations to secure section .121 vocational rehabilitation grants from the Rehabilitation Services Administration; as a result, there are 12 grantees in Alaska, far more than any other state.
- Focus groups were held with mental health consumers, people with traumatic brain injuries, people with multiple sclerosis and high school students with disabilities and their parents. Findings are being used to drive continued systems development.

HEALTH CARE

Administration

- Alaska was the first state in the country to close its intermediate care facilities for people with mental retardation and developmental disabilities.
- A Consumer Directed Personal Care Assistance Program was implemented. This program allows consumers to manage their own care, select, hire, fire and supervise their own Personal Care Assistance with administrative support provided by a fiscal intermediary. This program began October 2001. Satisfaction with the program is very high; consumers are able to hire people they know rather than having services provided by strangers and it is a very attractive model to people from diverse cultures.
- The beginnings of a consumer (peer) program system for persons with mental illness are in place.
- The Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API) replacement project has created community alternatives to institutional care in Anchorage.
- The Division of Mental Health & Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse, the Alaska Mental Health Board and the Advisory Board on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse are working on the integration of substance abuse and mental health services, with the goal of making both systems capable of providing services to people with dual diagnoses.
- The disability community was involved in the drafting of ***Healthy Alaskans 2010***.
- Some initiatives are underway to sensitize assisted living, home care and direct service workers to the ongoing health care needs of people with disabilities.
- The Division of Senior Services has 2 projects funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to address the length of time to qualify for the Choice waiver and to streamline paperwork for persons being assessed for long-term care.
- Federal resources have been secured to transition people from nursing homes to the community, promote consumer control, input and self-determined services, improve service coordination and make the Medicaid program work better for people with disabilities.
- Resources have been secured from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to identify the most effective menu of services to meet the needs of people with disabilities, mental illness, addictions or Alzheimer's or related dementia through new or improved Home and Community Based Waivers, Medicaid options, or Medicaid State Plan services.

Legislature

- Alaska was the first state to pass legislation and the second state to implement a Working Disabled Medicaid Buy-in; the program has grown slowly but steadily since its inception with 162 participants as of October 2002.
- HB 451 was passed by the 20th Legislature; this bill relates to assistive technology devices and mobility aids for people with physical disabilities (assistive technology lemon law) and to qualification for teaching the use of certain aids or devices for the blind and visually impaired.
- Funding was provided to replace API and create community alternatives to institutional care.

Disability Community

All of these activities are underway.

- Identify cost efficiencies in the delivery of services.
- Advocate to maintain appropriate levels of Medicaid funding for people with disabilities.
- Continue to provide training to people with disabilities to become more informed consumers of health plans and services.
- Continue to provide training to people with disabilities on how to make effective use of Social Security and Internal Revenue work incentives.

HOUSING

Administration

- The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority has provided funding for home modifications for Trust beneficiaries through the Home Accessibility Modifications Brokerage Program, which is managed by the Department of Health & Social Services.
- HUD/AHFC provide funding for senior accessibility modifications through the Senior Access Program.
- The Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Program operated by HUD/AHFC provides funds for rehabilitation of owner-occupied households outside of Anchorage. Funds may also be used for accessibility modifications.
- The Section 8 Homeownership Program (HUD/AHFC) provides qualified Housing Choice Voucher program participants with disabilities with the option to use their vouchers to help pay for a mortgage.
- The Assistance Provider Interest Rate Reduction Program (AHFC) provides an interest-rate reduction on a mortgage if a live-in provider and a person with a disability occupy the home.
- AHFC was awarded a competitive grant under the HUD/AHFC Section 8 Mainstream/Fairshare Housing Choice Voucher Programs to provide additional vouchers for people with disabilities and Medicaid waiver eligible households.
- The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority has provided supportive housing funding for Trust beneficiaries and other special needs populations.
- HUD/AHFC sponsored 3 universal design workshops in 2001 and 2002, which were conducted by the Center for Universal Design.
- Fair Housing Workshops (HUD/AHFC/MOA) are conducted bi-annually and include the participation of people with disabilities, disability organizations and their advocates.
- AHFC is currently updating its analysis of impediments to fair housing and is involving the disability community.
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development has created two Fair Housing Enforcement positions in Anchorage.
- AHFC has a HOME CHOICE class, open to the public, which provides information about buying and maintaining a home. HUD has funded a Homeownership Center to provide housing and consumer credit counseling.

Disability Community

- The disability community has been actively involved in the development of the State of Alaska Public Housing Plan and Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan, making policy and funding recommendations.
- The State Independent Living Council and the Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education have formed housing committees.

TRANSPORTATION

Administration

- Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority funding and Federal transit Administration 5310 funding (for elderly and people with disabilities, including transfers from highways) pay for vehicles, equipment, purchase of services, facility acquisition or construction, start-up operating funds, and maintenance; slightly more than \$6 million has been awarded since FY97.
- The State Transit Office of DOTPF, at its annual State Community Transportation Conference, hosted a Transportation Funding Summit in October 2001 in Anchorage. Many public agencies and private non-profit organizations, including the disability community, participated in the day-long summit. Topics included Federal, State, and Local Funding Resources, Coordinating Community Transit, Coalition-Building and Advocacy, and a Call to Action.
- As a result of this summit, the Alaska Mobility Coalition (AMC), a nonprofit statewide organization of individuals and agencies throughout Alaska committed to advocating for and seeking funding for community-appropriate transportation services was established in 2002. Specific goals include: 1) Improved and stable capital and operating funding for existing community public transportation systems and services available to the public; 2) Safe and cost-effective rides to meet local, regional and state mobility needs; and 3) New sustainable coordinated community transportation. Officers and board members were elected at the first annual meeting of AMC at the State Community Transportation Conference in October 2002.
- Advocacy at the federal level has recently resulted in a \$500,000 Jobs Access and Reverse Commute earmark to the AMC to fund transportation services to jobs and job training for low-income individuals and people with disabilities.

Disability Community

All of these activities are underway.

- Acknowledge and congratulate the collaborative and supportive activities (joint planning and funding) of the DOTPF, the Department of Health & Social Services and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority.
- Review DOTPF proposed projects and provide input.
- Publicize the availability of assistive technology loans for vehicle modifications and other assistive technology.
- In addition, the disability community was actively involved in establishing the Alaska Mobility Coalition and in securing federal Job Access Reverse Commute funds for the coalition.