

Adam Crum
Commissioner

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**Department of Health
and Social Services**

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Investigation and response to cyberattack ongoing; divisions implement alternate business processes to continue serving Alaskans

June 7, 2021 ANCHORAGE – The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) is continuing to work with law enforcement, as well as federal and state partners, to perform a thorough and deep analysis of the cyberattack identified on May 17, while also further strengthening systems and restoring services.

The DHSS Information Technology team, with the support of the State’s Office of Information Technology, is working through a standard, three-step process in response to the cyberattack. This process includes:

- Detection and analysis: Determining what was attacked and how.
- Containment, eradication and recovery: Evicting the attacker and getting services that are resilient to cyberattack back up and running.
- Post-incident activity: Strengthening people, processes and tools so that all IT services are more resilient to cyberattack.

The large size of the department’s IT infrastructure and complexity of the data and systems used by the department requires a careful, meticulous approach that will take more time.

“I’m sure Alaskans have many questions about this attack, but I ask for their patience and understanding to give our team the time needed to complete the investigation,” said Commissioner Adam Crum. “Just as law enforcement agencies are cautious in releasing details during an active investigation, we must be careful not to inadvertently give the attackers any details about our actions that could further hinder our recovery.”

An accurate timeframe for full restoration of online services is still unavailable and won’t be known until the complete scope of the attack and all its impacts are fully understood. Protecting Alaskans’ data and restoring services is of paramount importance.

Divisions and sections within DHSS have been communicating directly with their customers and community partners about any changes to normal day-to-day processes. Wherever possible, they have implemented manual processes to ensure services continue. Most divisions have a temporary web

page hosting important documents and providing contact information at dhss.alaska.gov. COVID-19 vaccine information can be accessed at covid19.alaska.gov. The programs noted below normally handle a high volume of public requests and have altered their procedures to compensate for the loss of online services:

Background Check Unit (BCU)

The Health Care Services (HCS) Division is continuing to conduct background checks through manual processing and review. Depending on circumstances, the process could take up to 15 days but at this time are typically being handled in 2-3 days. That could change if volume increases. Larger health care providers with multiple requests can notify BCU they will be sending their applications in batches along with appropriate payment for bulk processing. To help keep turnaround times low, HCS has brought on additional staff, authorized overtime, and is diverting all calls to a live person, whenever possible. When call lines are full, customers are called back within hours. See this temporary webpage for more information about the interim background check process and to download forms: dhss.alaska.gov/dhcs/.

Vital Records Section

Vital records are still available by request, but because of the need for manual processing, turnaround times may be slower and depend on the type of record being requested. Birth, death and marriage certificates are available through the Juneau office. Since the Anchorage office does not have physical access to certificates stored securely in Juneau, they are unable to handle those types of requests. Both the Juneau and Anchorage offices can process marriage license applications. See this temporary webpage for more information on how to request records and download forms: dhss.alaska.gov/dph/vitalstats/.

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