



*Advocacy for Awareness, Training, Diagnosis, Prevention, and Individualized Supports for Alaskans Impacted by Prenatal Alcohol Exposure, Families, Service Providers, and Communities*

## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

### Prenatal Alcohol Exposure/Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

The Alaska Prenatal Alcohol Partnership is a coalition of Alaskans impacted by prenatal alcohol exposure/fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (PAE/FASD) in Alaska—including individuals with lived experience, family members, caregivers, and professionals.

- About 1 in 20 children are born with PAE/FASD every year in the United States, according to a 2018 study published in the *Journal of American Medical Association*.
- It is estimated that only 1 out of every 600 individuals impacted by prenatal alcohol exposure will receive an FASD diagnosis, according to a 2020 review in *Alcoholism, Clinical, and Experimental Research*.

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**SB 41 Public Schools: Mental Health Education** (Sen. Gray-Jackson). This bill requests the Board of Education and Early Development develop guidelines for instruction in mental health in consultation with the Departments of Health, and Family & Community Services, regional tribal health organizations, and representatives of national and state mental health organizations. It also requires providing parent notification of mental health instruction two weeks before the class or program.

### FY26 Operating and Mental Health Budgets (HB 53/HB 55)

#### *Department of Health*

**Intensive At-Risk Early Intervention Services.** \$460,000 MHTAAR. Funds support increased outreach, screening and evaluation, developmental monitoring, parenting guidance, parenting classes, resources and referral. The project focuses on high-risk families with young children, ages birth to three, who experience developmental delays, disabilities, and early mental health and/or social emotional concerns for regional programs in Kodiak, Homer, Fairbanks, and Juneau.

**Infant Learning Program (ILP) Statewide Equity Project.** \$300,000 MHTAAR. Funds support increased access to infant learning and early intervention services for infants, toddlers, and families—especially in rural areas. Due to flat-funding, the state's infant ILP/EI program has resulted in reduced access to supports and services for families in rural areas. This funding will allow for expanded delivery in rural areas through regional hubs for improved access to screening, evaluation, and specialized supports and services.

**Crisis Call Center** \$1.5 million (\$750,000 GF/MH; \$750,000 MHTAAR). Funds will support exploration and initial implementation of crisis call centers in Alaska to provide direct

intervention, talk line, services, and referrals to treatment and recovery supports for Alaskans experiencing severe mental illness, substance use disorders, and at-risk youth. Funding can be used for staffing and operations support, expanding services, workforce development, early intervention programs, and more.

**"No Wrong Door" Coordinated Access to Services.** \$300,000 MHTAAR. Funds support the "Coordinated Access to Services" project to develop "a network of service providers trained to focus on people, not process," enhance existing work, and empower Alaskans with disabilities to make informed decisions about their own care.

### ***Department of Family & Community Services***

**Occupational Therapy (OT) in Youth Facilities.** \$100,000 MHTAAR. Funds will support OT services for youth at the Bethel and Fairbanks youth facilities neurobehavioral treatment units. OT's provide interventions that help youth develop skills and strategies that have shown to prevent future involvement in the criminal justice system. DJJ is seeing increased complexity of behavioral health needs of youth in their custody.

**Complex Care Program.** \$400,000 MHTAAR. Funds support two full-time Complex Care Coordinators—one to focus on the adult population and one to focus on youth—within DFCS to support hard-to-place Alaskans with complex needs. Additional efforts will include convening stakeholders and working toward building access to care.

**Small Group Home Placements for Stabilized Clients with Complex Needs.** \$750,000 GF. Funds will support youth "stepping down" from acute behavioral health care to a lower level of support to meet the level of care needed for complex patients to transition to a less restrictive community-based setting. A community-level supported setting is a better fit for people with complex behaviors and mental health needs due to the smaller facilities' size of about one to three clients.

### ***Department of Education and Early Development***

**Trauma Engaged Schools; Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Coaching.** \$130,000 MHTAAR. Funds support continuing to build on increased capacity for trauma-engaged practice and mental health supports and coaching for schools. The PBIS in schools' initiative helps school districts support students with complex behaviors, prioritizing rural and remote school districts. Studies indicate a significant need for student and family mental health support. The expansion of behavioral health supports in schools provides resources for staff and students, such as student motivation, problem behavior management, students on the autism spectrum, parental involvement, and termination of care during the summer.

### ***University***

**Alaska Area Health Education Centers (AHEC).** \$150,000 MHTAAR. Funds support day camps across Alaska to engage youth in behavioral health careers exploration. Topics include social work, counseling, behavioral health aides, psychologists, psychiatrists, and other positions within behavioral health and social services. The camps include training in Mental Health First Aid, presentations from local elders, clinicians, substance abuse counselors, and behavioral health aides; tours of local providers; and featured discussion panels. The additional \$50,000 proposed in FY26, will support expanding residential camps to rural communities.