

2026 ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

Prenatal Alcohol Exposure/Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (PAE/FASD)

Following are bills and budget items impacting Alaskans with PAE/FASD, their families, caregivers, and community professionals that the Alaska Prenatal Alcohol Partnership was tracking in 2026. The FY27 budget and several bills that passed are currently on the Governor's desk awaiting signature, veto, or allowing to become law without a signature.

Bills on the Table for 2025-26

HB 36 - **Foster Children/Psychiatric Treatment**, by Rep. Gray. Addresses psychiatric care for children in state psychiatric custody. An amendment in the Senate added provisions related to licensure and training for a new type of foster home, called "treatment foster homes," "a place where specialized services are provided on a 24-hour continuing basis for children who have a special behavioral, developmental, emotional, or medical need." Passed.

HB 52 - **Minors and Psychiatric Hospitals**, by Rep. Dibert/Sen Claman. Requires a psychiatric hospital to facilitate confidential telephone or video communication each week for one cumulative hour with the minor's parent or legal guardian, or other adult approved by the overseeing physician. Also requires an annual report regarding minors in psychiatric hospitals, seclusion and restraint (chemical, mechanical, or physical), out-of-state residential care, and inspections of psychiatric hospitals.

HB 73 - **Complex Care Residential Homes (CCRH) Licensure**, by Governor Dunleavy. Authorizes the Department of Health to license and regulate "complex care residential homes" to serve the health care needs of Alaskans with complex behavioral, medical, and/or disability-related needs. This new license type will allow for ongoing care in a long-term home-like environment. Passed.

HB 110 - **Social Work Licensure Compact**, by Rep. Gray. Authorizes the Board of Social Work Examiners to establish the compact, promulgate regulations, and appoint a member of the board to serve on the National Social Work Licensure Compact Commission. In the final days of the session, this bill became the vehicle for several other compacts, including the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact for physicians, osteopaths, and physician assistants; the Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact for psychologists; and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Personnel Licensure Interstate Compact. Compacts provide a streamlined process that allows licensed professionals to be licensed in multiple states and to safely and legally treat in-state patients who leave the state. Additional provisions of the bill include licensure for Respiratory Care Practitioners (RCPs) and adds RCPs to the state's definition of "health care provider." It also establishes the Rural Health Transformation Advisory Council, to include representatives from the Alaska Department of Health, Tribal health organizations, federally qualified health centers (FQHC), hospital organizations,

local governments, Alaska Mental Health Trust, and a member from each of the House of Representatives and Senate. Passed.

HB 151 – Medical Assistance; Children Under Age 6, by Rep. Galvin. Guarantees continuous eligibility up to the age of six for Medicaid health insurance for eligible children, ensuring uninterrupted access to care and eliminating the need for annual reauthorization. This supports the consistency of early interventions and supports that prevent more costly problems in the future. Did not pass.

HB 244 - Certified Nurse’s Aide (CNA) Training, by Rep. Underwood. Establishes standards for CNA training program that includes attention to safe and competent care, building relationship, sensitivity to emotional, social, and mental health needs, assistance maintaining independence, promoting problem solving approaches, effective communication skills with clients with dementia, mental illness, intellectual/ developmental disabilities, etc. Passed.

SB 41 - Public Schools: Mental Health Education by Sen. Gray-Jackson. Advises the State 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.” Also requires parent notification of mental health instruction two weeks prior to the class or program.

SB 83 – Telehealth Reimbursement Rates, by Sen. Claman. Requires that health insurers in Alaska reimburse health care services provided by telehealth at the same rate as in-person services. Did not pass.

SB 90 – Minor Mental Health, Age of Consent, by Sen. Giessel. Allows teenagers age 16 or older to consent to five 90-minute outpatient mental health sessions independently of parental consent, followed by a requirement that parents are contacted to determine treatment plan. This bill lowers this age of consent from 18 years to 16 years. Did not pass.

SB 93 – Early Education Programs, by Sen. Tobin. Removes limits on the number of pre-K students and district programs that can be funded in a year, changes the calculation of Average Daily Membership (ADM) to count pre-K students as full-time rather than one-half, and repeals statutes related to repeal of the Alaska Reads Act district-approved pre-K program sunset clauses. Did not pass.

SB 178 – Expand Early Intervention Services, by Senate Health & Social Services Committee. This bill will expand access to Alaska’s Infant Learning Program (ILPO and provide healthcare, intervention, and therapy services to more children who experience developmental delays, reducing the need for more intensive and costly care later. The bill lowers the eligibility criteria to children from 50 percent to 25 percent developmental delay. Passed. Signed into law on 6/18.

SB 190 – Guardianship, Conservatorship, by Senator Kiehl. This bill updates Alaska’s standards related to guardianship and conservatorship laws for both minors and adults, allowing more nuanced support in the least restrictive way and shifting the basis for protective appointments from a specific medical diagnosis to a functional assessment. It also clarifies the roles of family members, guardians ad litem, attorneys, and court visitors, while protecting the rights of individuals, and imposes limits on duration of emergency guardianships. Did not pass.

FY27 Operating and Mental Health Budgets (HB 263/HB 265)

Behavioral Health Treatment & Recovery Grants (DOH). The Legislature added +\$3.557 million GF/MH above the Governor's proposal, but did not include the \$3 million Recidivism Reduction Funds passed as an amendment on the House floor. Additional funds will restore declining general funds, stabilize community treatment and recovery services, and address severe financial challenges among mental health and addiction service providers.

Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program (EI/ILP) (DOH). Both the Governor and Legislature maintained \$300,000 MHTAAR. The Legislature added +\$5.72 million GF/MH above the Governor's proposal (\$2.7 million for inflation proofing; \$3.02 million to expand eligibility for individuals with 25% developmental delay, from the current 50% delay). EI/ILP provides support for families with infants and toddlers that include specialized screenings, evaluations, and interventions.

Child Advocacy Centers (DFCS). The Legislature added +\$1.5 million UGF above the Governor's proposal for child-appropriate interviewing of child victims of abuse in a safe environment.

Early Childhood Intervention and Support (DOH). Both the Governor and Legislature included +\$151,000 MHTAAR to implement the Pyramid Model for Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) in early childhood settings, special education, and child care. Includes training and coaching for staff, families, and caregivers who work with infants and young children with challenging or delayed behaviors, birth to age five.

Adolescent Residential Behavioral Health Treatment Services (DOH). The Legislature added +\$336,000 UGF above the Governor's proposal to Medicaid Services for adolescent residential treatment that includes engagement with families and guardians, education, and ongoing coordination with state entities, such as the Office of Children's Services and Division of Juvenile Justice.

Adult Day Services (DOH). The Legislature added +\$1.5 million UGF above the Governor's proposal to Senior & Disability Services (SDS) for structured care and therapeutic activities for seniors age 60+ who experience cognitive and/or functional impairments. Adult day services also provide needed respite and support for families.

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) (DOH). The Legislature added +\$403,000 UGF above the Governor's proposal to SDS to restore SILC funding to pre-2017 levels and support ongoing efforts to develop and monitor the Alaska State Plan for Independent Living. SILC supports Alaska's community Centers for Independent Living through advocacy, training, and access to resources.

Personal Care Services (DOH). The Legislature added +\$15.127 million (+\$8.877 million Fed; \$6.25 million GF/Match) to increase funding and authority to implement the Guidehouse recommendations for Community First and Personal Care Services for Medicaid-eligible elders and disabled people, to promote independence, self-direction, and help them remain in their homes.

Care Coordination Liaison (DOH). \$95,000 MHTAAR IncT (+\$5,700, was \$89,300 in FY26) for care coordinators within the home and community-based services system, including recruiting, problem-solving, and addressing systemic issues.

Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Program (DOH). \$36,000 MHTAAR IncT (decrement - \$135,600, was \$171,600 MHTAAR OTI in FY26). Develops capacity for integrating pediatric primary care and behavioral health services through tele-psychiatric consultation with Seattle Children's Hospital, linking them to local resources through *Help Me Grow* Alaska.

Incentives for Direct Support Professionals Training (DOH). Maintains \$200,000 MHTAAR IncM. Supports incentives for direct care staff and their agencies to complete education and coaching training.

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) (DOH). The Legislature added +\$11,143,600 (\$6,143,600 Fed; \$5 million GF/Match) above the Governor's proposal to Medicaid Services for implementing the Guidehouse recommendations to address the reimbursement rates. DSPs provide essential personalized assistance, help with daily tasks, coaching, and community integration for individuals with physical, intellectual/ developmental, and/or behavioral needs.

Occupational Therapists (OTs) (DFCS). Both the Governor and Legislature maintained \$100,000 MHTAAR for contract OTs serving youth in the neuro-behavioral treatment units of the Bethel and Fairbanks within the Division of Juvenile Justice.

Parents as Teachers (DEED). The Legislature added +\$355,800 UGF above the Governor's proposal to support families—pregnancy through age five—in providing personalized in-home visits, developmental screenings, and resources to boost child development, school readiness, and family well-being.

Head Start Grants (DEED). The Legislature added +\$3,756,800 UGF above the Governor's proposal for grants to programs serving low-income families and children ages 0-5 years in both classroom and home-based settings. Head Start promotes school readiness, health, nutrition, and school readiness.

Student Mental Health Support (UA). The Legislature added +\$785,000 UGF above the Governor's proposal to expand the University's capacity to serve students in need of mental health support, to be distributed as follows: +\$340,000 UGF to the UAA Anchorage campus for three PFT support positions; +\$300,000 UGF to UAF Troth Yeddah campus for clinical psychology; and +\$145,000 UGF to the UAS Juneau campus for mental health and life skills support.

Peer Support Certification (DOH). Maintains \$50,000 MHTAAR for ongoing training and certification coordinated by DOH for Peer Support Specialists, with oversight of the Commission for Behavioral Health Certification and Peer Support Statewide Conference. Peer support is a foundational recovery-based strategy highlighted in the state's 1115 Medicaid Behavioral Health Waiver.

Crisis Contact (Call) Center (DOH). Both the Governor and Legislature included \$1 million MHTAAR for Crisis Contact (Call) Centers. The Legislature added an additional +\$500,000 GF/MH above the Governor's proposal. Crisis contact centers provide de-escalation, triage, intervention, and referral to services for people experiencing a mental health or substance use crises. Also, authority for +\$585,000 federal funds was included to expand services to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) and Behavioral Health Training for First Responders (DPS). \$60,000 MHTAAR (adds +\$10,000) for CIT training for Alaska State Troopers, offering skills in de-escalation, intervention, and diversion for a person experiencing a behavioral health crisis.

Complex Care Program (DFCS). Maintains \$400,000 MHTAAR for admissions, assessments, treatment plan coordination, discharge planning, and identifying gaps to improve care for individuals with complex health needs.

Small Group Home Placements for Stabilized Clients with Complex Needs (DFCS). Maintains \$750,000 UGF to serve vulnerable Alaskans who are leaving psychiatric, residential care, corrections to move to group homes, with under three clients. Small group home settings encourage socialization, improved supervision and resident and staff rapport, and typically lead to improved behaviors and outcomes. Alaska Psychiatric Institute's (API) current average per patient daily rate is about \$2,500, or \$912,500 per year. Small group home settings cost below \$1,200 per day, a savings of \$474,500 annually per client served.

Trauma Engaged Schools: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (DEED). \$150,000 MHTAAR (adds +\$20,000) to assist school districts (counselors, social workers, teachers, staff) in developing mental health supports for schools, prioritizing rural and remote districts that do not have adequate mental health resources.

Public Guardian for Office of Public Advocacy (DOA). Both the Governor and Legislature maintained \$138,000 MHTAAR to support vulnerable adults unable to manage their own affairs. Funds also support OPA's effort to reduce caseloads from approximately 100 cases to 40 cases per public guardian. Additionally, the Legislature added +\$242,300 UGF to hire an attorney who will provide legal support and leadership for protecting the agency from liability and addressing the needs of the growing client base.

Public Guardian for Office of Children's Services (DOA). Both the Governor and Legislature maintained \$91,500 MHTAAR for a public guardian position who works directly with Trust beneficiaries who have aged out of the child welfare system and need support as they transition to adult systems and supports.

Address Co-Occurring Mental Health & Addiction Issues (DOC). Maintains \$151,700 MHTAAR for a nurse at the subacute mental health unit at Goose Creek Correctional Center in Wasilla who administers medication, reviews medical requests, and monitors healthy hygiene habits.

Trauma Treatment for Incarcerated Women (DOC). Maintains \$150,000 MHTAAR for trauma-related services for women at Hiland Mountain Correctional Center (HMCC) and Yukon-Kuskokwim Correctional Center (YKCC), including in-person groups, individual counseling, and telehealth.

Supported Employment (UA). Maintains \$75,000 MHTAAR for planning, training, coordination, and collaboration with community agencies to ensure access to training and employment resources for a competent workforce.

Criminal Justice Mental Health First Aid Train the Trainers (UA). Adds +\$50,000 MHTAAR for Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) train-the-trainers for up to 16 new professional criminal justice trainers in Alaska. MHFA equips professionals with the skills to recognize, de-escalate, and connect people in crisis to appropriate care.

Alaska Training Cooperative (AKTC) (UA). \$585,000 MHTAAR. The AKTC, which is part of University of Alaska Anchorage's Center for Human Development (CHD), manages training for direct care staff statewide who work with disability agencies.

Family Services Training Center (UA). Adds +\$80,000 MHTAAR IncT for the *Infant, Child & Youth Conference* for professional training targeting early childhood and youth service providers statewide. Additionally, the conference provides continuing education credits for professionals to maintain licenses to provide services.

Discharge Incentive Grants (DOC). Maintains \$200,000 MHTAAR IncT. Assists with monthly rent and housing support for vulnerable, marginalized, and mentally ill inmates leaving incarceration that includes treatment, housing, and sobriety support.

Holistic Defense (DOA). Adds +\$119,200 MHTAAR IncT. Funds support a social worker to manage child welfare cases, involuntary commitment, and more. Holistic Defense uses a team approach that includes a criminal attorney to address a defendant's criminal legal needs, a civil legal aid attorney to address civil needs, and a social services navigator to assist with unmet community needs.

Assess, Plan, Identify, and Coordinate (APIC) Discharge Planning (DOC). \$200,000 MHTAAR IncT (decrement -\$90,000, was \$290,000 in FY26). Supports justice-involved Alaskans with behavioral health and other challenges, including housing, treatment, and medication support, as they transition back to their communities after incarceration.

Criminal Justice Mental Health First Aid Train the Trainers (UA). Adds +\$50,000 MHTAAR IncT. Supports a criminal justice-specific train-the-trainers for Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) for up to 16 new criminal justice professional trainers in Alaska. MHFA equips criminal justice staff with skills to recognize, de-escalate, and connect people in crisis to appropriate care.

Capital Items in HB 265

Homeless Assistance Program (HAP) (DOR).

Both the Governor and Legislature maintained \$5 million (\$950,000 MHTAAR; \$4.05 million AHFC/DGF) for this program. The Legislature added \$5.15 million to maintain FY26 funding levels. HAP provides assistance to non-profit organizations, local governments, and regional housing authority for emergency housing, shelters, rental assistance, and other support for individuals and families who are homeless or near homelessness.

Special Needs Housing Grant (SNHG) (DOR). Both the Governor and Legislature included \$1.95 million (\$200,000 MHTAAR; \$1.75 million AHFC Div). SNHG grants support both long and short term housing needs of Alaska's most vulnerable unhoused citizens, including rental assistance and support services.

Person Centered Transportation (DOH). Both the Governor and Legislature included \$250,000 MHTAAR for transportation support for people with physical and developmental disabilities, cognitive impairments, and other challenges, for accessing work, social activities, and healthcare.

TERMS:

MHTAAR = Mental Health Trust Funds

GF/MH = General Funds/Mental Health Budget

GF or UGF = General Funds / Undesignated GF

DOH = Dept. of Health

DOC = Dept. of Corrections

DFCS = Dept. of Family & Community Services

DEED = Dept. of Education & Early Development

DPS = Dept. of Public Safety

DOA = Dept. of Administration

UA = University of Alaska