

## Alaska Behavioral Health Association (ABHA)

April Kyle, President

Tom Chard, CEO

P.O. Box 32917 Juneau, Alaska 99803

907-321-5778

[tom@alaskabha.org](mailto:tom@alaskabha.org)



January 9, 2020 – ABHA Presentation to House H&SS on Medicaid Reform Efforts and SB 74

The Alaska Behavioral Health Association is comprised of over 70 provider organizations representing all parts of the behavioral health continuum.

ABHA has three key messages to share today:

- ✓ A snapshot of Alaska's current behavioral health system
- ✓ An update on Medicaid reform and the impact on our behavioral health system
- ✓ Next steps needed for successful behavioral health reform

### What does the current behavioral health system look like?

- We have strong, passionate, competent providers working hard to help Alaskans every day. Our services help Alaskans achieve and maintain recovery from mental illness and drug and alcohol problems. Our work impacts people's lives and our communities.
- The problem is – the resources aren't enough to keep up with the demand.
- What does that mean for Alaska? There is a financial toll and a human toll.
  - Without access to behavioral healthcare, people wind up in emergency departments, repeat detox services, in API, and going out of state for the care they need.
  - We see increases in homelessness, families torn apart, and increases in crime.
  - We have increased costs in law enforcement, children's services, and corrections.

### Update on Behavioral Health Medicaid reform: *The question we can't ask yet:* Have the changes worked?

- The 1115 waiver is a 5-year demonstration project, and it's just starting. CMS approved the substance abuse treatment portion of the 1115 waiver in November 2018, and we just started implementing those services this past July. CMS approved the mental health services portion of the 1115 waiver in September 2019, and those new services have not yet started. We are at the beginning of the 5-year test.
- The Administrative Services Organization (ASO) contracted to help manage our system of care is launching next month. It will take time to see the impact of the ASO.
- We hope the 1115 and ASO will foster new behavioral health services and improved access because we know investment in good behavioral health access helps Alaskans and saves money.

Ideas to reform our behavioral health system authorized by Senate Bill 74 have started, but we are at the beginning of that journey. It will take time to see the results.

Next steps: *The good news:* We have a solid business case for investing in behavioral health to save money on more costly, reactionary parts of our state budget. It's effective, it helps Alaskans, and it saves money.

We need two things for reform to work:

- ✓ Upfront capital to fund the system changes we need, and
- ✓ Ongoing stable and predictable operational funding