



From Crisis to Hope

*A presentation on the youth mental health crisis in Alaska
and solutions to improve the overall system of care.*





Who We Are

VOA Alaska is a non-profit providing behavioral health and well-being services to Alaska's youth, young adults, and families at low or no cost.

Our Mission: Empower Alaskans and uplift the human spirit through recovery services, housing, and promoting healthy communities.

Our Vision: A community that supports the hope, health, and healing of every Alaskan.



Alaska is facing a youth mental health crisis of alarming proportions.

- Number one in the country for youth suicide rates.
- Sharpest increase in suicide attempts occurring among the youngest demographic, specifically those aged 11 to 14.
- Increased client acuity and instances of self-harm and suicidal ideation.
- We have witnessed reports of prior abuse have increase by 550%.
- PTSD is in top three diagnoses for clients served at VOA Alaska.

Hospitals are Overwhelmed

Per the Health Facilities Discharge Data dashboard, in 2022, nearly **1,200 children and emerging adults** (0-24-year-olds) were **admitted to a hospital for a behavioral health-related diagnosis.**

About **1,900 children and emerging adults were admitted to ER** due to behavioral health-related diagnoses.

30-40% of young people discharged from the hospital (BH-related) received continued care in the community.

Alaska's Child Welfare System is Struggling

Over the past year, 2,700 youth involved with OCS are in OHH placements. Only 53% of these youth are receiving BH services.

From Dec 2022 to Dec 2023, the OCS reports there are **124 kids each month with an Assessed Substantiated Claim of childhood maltreatment or abuse, and over 1,600 kids annually.**

OCS saw a 14% reduction in OCS-Licensed Residential Childcare Centers

Schools are on the Frontlines

Self-Harm and suicide increased 28% for 15-24-year-olds in 2021

In 2023, Alaska holds the unfortunate distinction of being the **number one state in the country for youth suicide rates.**

The **sharpest increase in suicide attempts occurred among the youngest demographic, specifically those aged 11-14 years old.**

INVESTIGATION OF THE STATE OF ALASKA'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEM FOR CHILDREN



United States Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division

December 15, 2022

Department of Justice Findings

Alaska's current continuum of care for children, adolescents, and families is fragmented.

A United States DOJ Civil Rights Division Investigation of the State of Alaska's Behavioral Health System for Children found that there is reasonable cause to believe the State is violating the Americans with Disabilities Act by **failing to provide appropriate treatment options**. Furthermore, the investigation found that Alaska children experience unnecessarily long stays at inpatient psychiatric and residential facilities **due to a lack of community-based treatment options**.

A glance at the money being spent:

Per the US Department of Justice (DOJ) report on Alaska Youth Behavioral Health Services (Dec. 2022), in 2020, Alaska Medicaid paid **\$83 million to serve children with behavioral health disabilities at a psychiatric hospital or PRTF and only \$32 million for ALL community-based behavioral health services.**

In 2021, Alaska Medicaid paid **\$37 million to PRTFs** – most (80%) are located out of Alaska.

2023 Medicaid inpatient rates with waiting times for youth to transfer to psychiatric care:

MINIMUM 15 DAYS

Alaska Regional

$\$4,140.56/\text{day} \times 15 = \$62,108.40$

Providence

$\$3,355.34/\text{day} \times 15 = \$50,310$

UP TO 60 DAYS

Alaska Regional

$\$4,140.56/\text{day} \times 60 = \$248,433.60$

Providence

$\$3,355.34/\text{day} \times 60 = \$201,230.40$



VOA Alaska is on the frontlines of the youth mental health crisis.

- Served over 1,000 youth, young adults, and families in 2023.
- Comprehensive continuum of care.
- Expanded community-based services by 300% since 2021.
- Rapid Response team
- Growth in recent years has been to strategically meet the gaps in Alaska's system of care.
- Meeting youth and families where they are.

How We Serve: Our Continuum of Care

Community Coalitions

Advocating for policy changes alongside community partners and leaders to address youth substance use in our community with the VOA-led **Anchorage Adolescent Substance Misuse Prevention Coalition**.

Prevention Education

Engaging youth in self-evaluation and equipping them with the tools they need to make healthier choices about drugs and alcohol with **PRIME for LIFE** classes.

School-Based Mental Health

Providing on-site mental health and wellness support to students, staff, and families with VOA clinicians based in elementary, middle, and high schools throughout Anchorage.

Mental Health & Substance Use Counseling

Supporting youth and young adults in learning coping skills, building resiliency, and improving their mental health and well-being.

Intensive Outpatient

Creating a safe space for youth and young adults struggling with drugs or alcohol to take charge of their recovery and maintain sobriety.

Day Treatment

Helping youth overcome barriers in their continued recovery by combining academic and therapeutic services in which youth engage at least 20 hours per week.

Supportive Housing

Ending the experience of homelessness for young adults through affordable housing, mental health and wellness services, and life-skills development.

Residential Treatment

Empowering youth to address their substance use and co-occurring mental health challenges in a structured, therapeutic environment at the **Adolescent Residential Center for Help (ARCH)**.

Peer Support and Care Navigation | Providing immediate connection to youth and families in need, creating engaging pathways to care, and guiding youth in their journey through mentorship from those with lived experience.

Family Services | Supporting all families with youth enrolled in VOA Alaska's care through education, intervention, home-based services, and family therapy; with additional supports for Alaskans raising relative children.



1,124 Alaska youth, young adults, and families were reached directly by VOA Alaska in Fiscal Year 2023.*



651 youth, young adults, and caregivers received treatment services, such as individual, group, or family therapy.

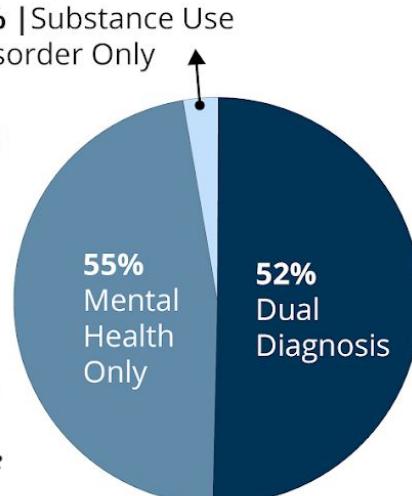


238 caregivers and children received Kinship Care wraparound supports.

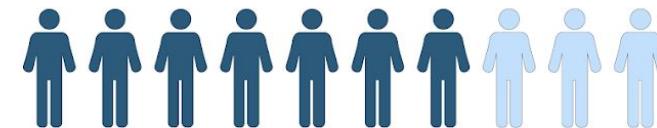


235 youth and community members engaged in prevention education and community Town Halls.

Primary Diagnoses of Youth in Treatment

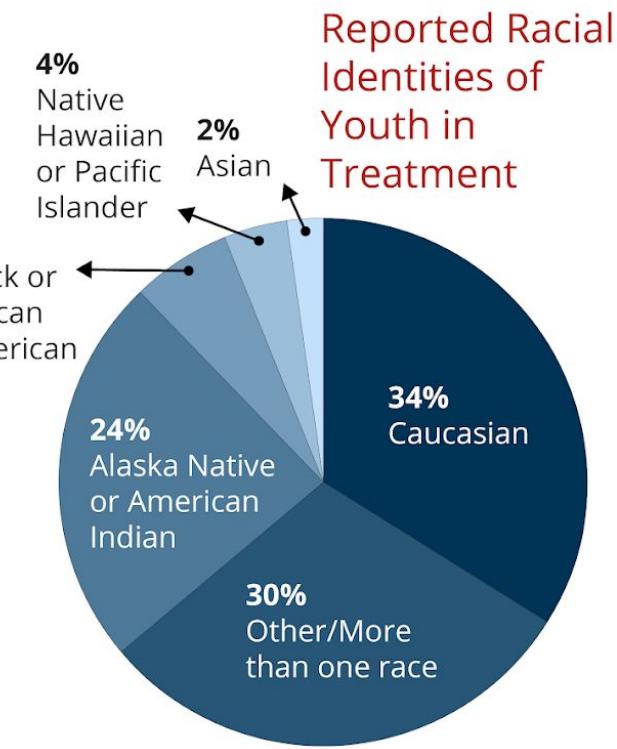
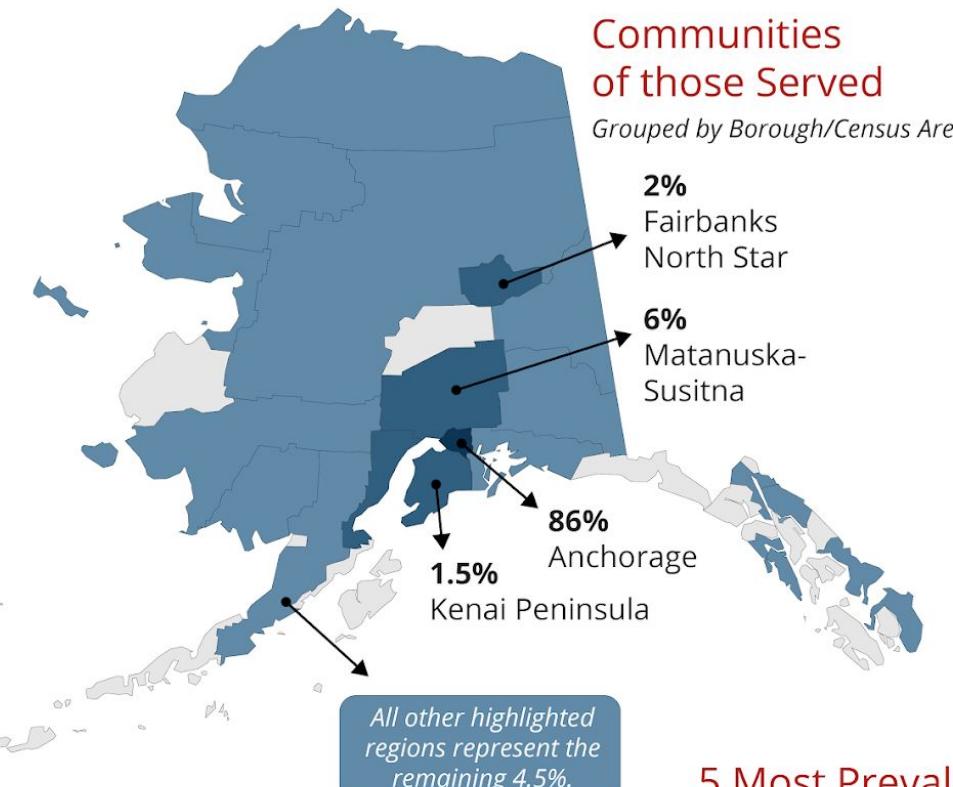


"Mental health only" diagnoses have increased 120% from 2021, surpassing dual-diagnosis for the first time in 2023.



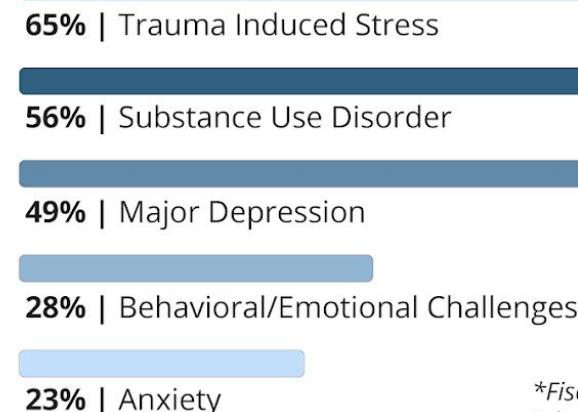
74% of youth and families receiving services were enrolled in **Medicaid**.

Of those not enrolled in Medicaid, 19% utilized one of VOA Alaska's financial assistance options. Learn more about paying for services at voak.org/fees.



5 Most Prevalent Diagnoses of Youth in Treatment

Includes youth with multiple diagnoses, percentages do not equal 100%



**Fiscal year 2023 includes dates July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023*



Solution: System Investment

- ABHA recommendations, BIRCH Model:
 - Investment in community behavioral health, BH as primary care, improvements to school-based Medicaid, strengthening workforce.
- 1115 Demonstration Waiver provides better opportunities for innovation and improvement, BUT providers need additional support to strengthen infrastructure, optimize the foundation necessary to expand services, improve quality, and increase our reach to other areas of the state.

**Make sure to be asking :
What is being done to support our youth?**



Solution: Community-Based Services

- Community based services in Alaska are limited because there is not a sustainable method to provide them.
- Adult & Adolescent rates are the same for community-based services.
- Going where the kids are!



Solution: Promoting Partnerships Between Schools & Providers

“There’s an expectation among some that say, ‘Oh, the schools have these kids; why can’t they provide services?’ ... This is a ‘we’ effort. The school plays one part of it, but it can’t be the only part of the support or the solution.”

A superintendent speaking to a panel of providers at the 2023 Alaska Superintendent Association conference.



Solution: Promoting Partnerships Between Schools & Providers

- Incredible work being done throughout the State through partnerships with BH providers and their local schools
- Alaska lacks a funding mechanism to support and sustain school-based MH services.
 - For each school site, we must identify and secure funding for approximately 70% of total costs.
- Districts and providers need investment to develop and sustain a comprehensive school MH system.
- Every \$1 invested in prevention and early intervention, savings ranging from \$2 to \$10 can be realized in other costs related to health care, legal issues, and educational impacts.

The Value of Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems: Positive Outcomes



Behavioral health providers need expanded 1115 waiver to include school-based services with a reimbursement mechanism to cover cost of care.

- Better academic outcomes
- Access to care
- Early identification and intervention
- Positive school climate and safety
- Youth, family, education, and peer engagement
- A continuum of services
- Better psychosocial outcomes



Solution: Addressing the Disparity Between Adult & Adolescent Services

- Current rates do not consider the unique differences between adolescent and adult behavioral health care.
- Providers operating an adolescent services array often require twice as much stuff as an adult provider, and agencies are shutting down because of it.
- Adolescent providers are additionally required to be licensed residential childcare providers, with a staffing ratio of 6 to 1.
- In 2023, three youth residential facilities closed.



Solution: Addressing the Disparity Between Adult & Adolescent Services

- Adolescent-specific rates
- An option worth exploring is a cost-based reimbursement rate.
- Used for hospitals and our partners in physical healthcare settings.
- Instituting this for more acute behavioral health settings could yield great outcomes.

Adult vs. Adolescent Medicaid Rate Comparison by ASAM SUD Treatment Levels

	Community-Based	Level 1	Level 2/3	Level 3/4
Same	<u>Psychotherapy</u> Ind \$135.75, group \$54 p/hr <u>*CRSS</u> <u>Peer Support</u> \$23.09/15 mins <u>Short-Term Crisis Intervention</u> \$133.41 <u>Crisis Stabilization</u> \$26.84/15 mins	<u>*ASAM 1.0</u> Ind \$26.79/15 mins Group \$8.81/15 mins (Adolescents <5 hrs/week, Adults <8 hrs/week) <u>*TPDR</u> \$141.52 (Adolescent providers required to invite/collaborate with all involved parties)	<u>*ASAM 2.5</u> \$522.50/day (>20 hrs tx/week) <u>*ASAM 2.1</u> Ind \$30.94/15 mins Group \$10.21/15 mins (Adolescents 6-19 hrs/week, Adults 9-19 hrs/week)	<u>*ASAM 3.7</u> \$940.50/day (24-hr professionally directed) <u>*ASAM 3.3</u> does not exist in Alaska. Rates are the same for adolescent and adults.
Adult		<u>*MH RT 2</u> \$501.87/day (> 5 hrs total: >1 hr clinic/week, >1 hr individual MH tx/week, >3 hrs tx/week)	<u>*MH RT 1</u> \$628.68/day (>8 hrs total: >2 hrs clinic/week, >1 hr individual MH tx/week, >5 hrs tx/week)	<u>*ASAM 3.5</u> \$475.78/day (>15 hrs tx/week incl. 10 clinical hrs) <u>*ASAM 3.1</u> \$418.87/day (>5 hrs tx/week)
Adolescent	<u>TBHS</u> \$23.09/15mins	<u>*CRT 1</u> \$319.77/day (>10 hrs tx/week, family therapy & supports)	<u>*CRT 2</u> \$444.51/day (>15 hrs tx/week, >3 hrs clinic/week, family therapy & supports) <u>RPTC V</u> \$802.69/day	<u>*ASAM 3.5</u> \$521.06/day (>15 hrs tx/week incl. 10 clinical hrs, must also coordinate education) <u>*ASAM 3.1</u> \$369.96/day (>5 hrs tx/week, must also coordinate education) <u>*RPTC VI</u> \$807.25/day





Connect with VOA Alaska

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