



Monday, February 26, 2024

RE: Support for SB 240 & HB 343: School District Medical Assistance

The Alaska Behavioral Health Association (ABHA) is a membership organization with over eighty statewide mental health and substance abuse treatment providers and affiliates who constitute the core of Medicaid-funded behavioral health treatment services in Alaska. We are committed to advancing access to quality, cost effective behavioral health treatment services to all people in need across the state, whether in remote, rural, or urban areas. **The Alaska Behavioral Health Association is reaching out to offer our support for SB 240 and HB 343.** These bills increase access to health care services for children and allow parents and schools the ability to work together so all Alaska children can thrive. These bills will increase flexibility for schools to seek Medicaid reimbursement for eligible children and leverage federal funding opportunities.

ABHA believes that these bills promote early intervention and prevention for whole person health without interrupting the choice of parents to pursue care for their children in community settings. Strengthening our school's ability to meet the needs of our youth allows for our community providers to be a resource for parents and schools at the appropriate time. The behavioral health association sees the value of expanded opportunities for schools to design the services their parents want.

Currently, for Medicaid to cover services provided in schools, the child must have a disability and the services must be included in the child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). As behavioral health providers, we know that not all children that would benefit from services delivered in school settings need an IEP or would be diagnosed with a disability. With early interventions, a parent can ensure their children are happy and healthy within their school setting so that they may thrive in the community. This bill presents an opportunity to further leverage federal dollars and ensure that Alaska is ready to meet the needs of our youth.

Sincerely,


CEO
Alaska Behavioral Health Association