

2023 Alaska Scorecard

Key Issues Impacting Alaska Mental
Health Trust Beneficiaries



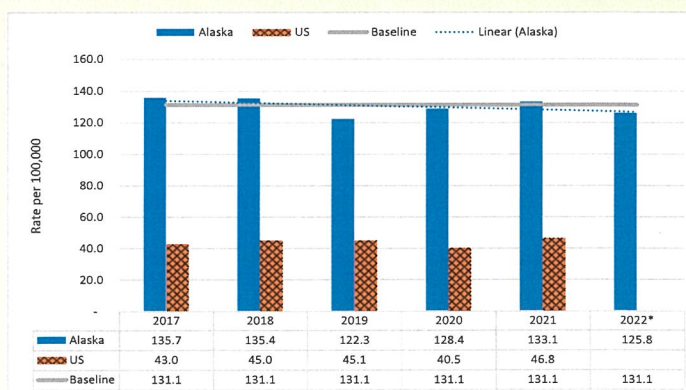
Trust
Alaska Mental Health
Trust Authority

SUICIDE PREVENTION

INDICATOR 14: Rate of intentional self-harm/suicide attempt emergency department visits (rate per 100,000; age-adjusted)

Story Behind the Baseline

Suicide impacts all Alaskans, no matter their age. Suicide is one of the leading causes of death for youth and young adults, and they are attempting suicide at higher rates than any other age group in Alaska. Every year, many more people think about or attempt suicide than die by suicide. In addition to the number of people who are injured or die, suicide also affects the health of others and the community. When people die by suicide, their family and friends can experience shock, trauma, anger, guilt, and depression. The economic toll of suicide on society is also immense. Suicide and suicide attempts cost the nation almost \$70 billion per year in lifetime medical and work-loss costs alone. While the presence of a mental health condition may contribute to increased suicide risk, it is important to note that the majority of people who live with mental health



Population: Alaska and U.S.

Data Sources:

- [Alaska Division of Public Health, Health Analytics and Vital Records Section](#)
- [Center for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC WISQARS](#)

Data Source Contact:

- Research Unit, Health Analytics and Vital Records;
Division of Public Health, Department of Health
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***Note:**


- U.S. data not available at the time of publication.



treatment are key to reducing suicide risk. Staying connected to others and taking care of overall health are all ways to support mental health.

Access to behavioral healthcare services and resources are improving within Alaska. The launch of 988 and crisis services has expanded the crisis continuum of care. Utilizing best practices for crisis care in Alaska has been a collaborative effort involving many state partners. The 1115 Medicaid Demonstration Waiver created new billable crisis services to support this work.

Implementation of the Zero Suicide framework, a systematic framework for comprehensive suicide care in healthcare settings, is an important commitment for patient safety. This framework includes universal screening for suicide risk, collaborative and connected care, and supported transitions through care settings. Zero Suicide work is active in Alaska with initiatives led by the Department of Health and tribal entities aimed at improving suicide care practices in Alaska's healthcare system. Mobile crisis units are active in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau, and the Restore Hope in Linkage to Care Collaboration grant is working to connect individuals to services and treatments. There are active efforts to develop mobile crisis outreach within Alaska, with some teams operating within larger communities in the state.



Both upstream and primary prevention efforts are needed to reduce suicide in Alaska and should have a strong focus on adolescents, young adults, seniors/elders, and American Indian/Alaska Native people. Strong state leadership, dedicated program efforts, collaboration, and long-term sustainable resources are needed to address suicide in Alaska and the “web of causality” that impacts the health and well-being of Alaskans.

Sources:

- [CDC Division of Violence Prevention. Preventing Suicide: A Technical Package of Policy, Programs, and Practices](#)
- [CDC Violence Prevention: Preventing Suicide](#)
- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Statewide Suicide Prevention Council](#)
- [Healthy Alaskans](#)

interventions should be chosen to specifically address the special needs of Alaskans – including homelessness, geographical barriers to accessing healthcare services, stigma, and cultural differences. Use of telemedicine should be encouraged and reimbursed so that Alaskans in rural communities have better access to mental health and substance use disorder treatment services. Clinical intervention should focus on suicide specific psychotherapies, as they have demonstrated greater efficacy in reducing suicide than treatment as usual. Restriction of lethal means and effective postvention supports are also key to reducing suicide.

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- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Statewide Suicide Prevention Council](#)
- [CDC Division of Violence Prevention the Relationship Between Bullying and Suicide: What We Know and What it Means for Schools](#)
- [Healthy Alaskans](#)

What Works?

Programs, services, and opportunities in schools help increase protective factors impacting adolescent depression and suicide. These protective factors include supportive adults and connections, student activities that promote feeling valued, social-emotional competence and self-regulation skills, attending a school with a positive climate, participating in quality after-school activities and structured meaningful activities, a sense of cultural identity and connection, and regular physical activity.

Statewide education on how to talk about and recognize the signs of suicide enables all Alaskans to work together to prevent and mitigate risk factors contributing to suicide. Risk factors include ACEs, easy access to firearms, use of substances (alcohol and/or other drugs), prior suicide attempts, and exposure to violence.

Funding provided through the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council for the Suicide Awareness, Prevention & Postvention (SAPP) program to the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) supports online trainings for Alaskan educators and direct grants to school districts that help implement suicide prevention programming throughout the state.

The Division of Behavioral Health, Prevention & Early Intervention provides grant funding throughout the state, serving both urban and rural service areas. The Comprehensive Behavioral Health Prevention and Early Intervention (CBHPEI) grant focuses on population-based strategies, the prevention of substance misuse and suicide, and the promotion of comprehensive wellness across Alaska, with an “upstream” approach. Prevention efforts are community driven and coalition led, with stakeholders representing the diversity of the community or service area.

DEED also provides statewide support by having staff that can respond to district requests for support during a crisis (for example: mental health, suicide prevention, crisis counseling support, and technical assistance). While DEED offers a collection of professional development resources to all districts, by far the largest and most popular are the online suicide prevention courses created since fiscal year 2016 (FY16) with SAPP funding. To date, 37,000 courses have been completed.

Improving and maintaining access to behavioral healthcare services and resources, including 988, community-based crisis interventions (e.g., 1115 Waiver, Crisis Now model), and safer suicide care practices in all healthcare settings is critical for community intervention. Promoting and expanding Zero Suicide efforts throughout Alaska will improve the