

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



SENATOR ELVI GRAY-JACKSON  
SENATE DISTRICT G

## **Sponsor Statement: Senate Bill 103**

### **Certified Nurse Aide Training Enhancement Act**

Access to quality healthcare is fundamental for all Alaskans, particularly as our state faces increasing demands for skilled caregiving in hospitals, assisted living facilities, and home health settings. Certified Nurse Aides (CNAs) play a critical role in delivering hands-on patient care, often serving as the frontline providers of essential daily assistance to individuals with varying levels of medical and cognitive needs.

Currently, CNA training programs in Alaska are required to meet federal and state certification standards, but there is a growing recognition that these standards need to evolve to reflect the increasing complexity of patient care. Alaskans are aging and rely on CNAs who must be well-trained not only in physical care but also in emotional and cognitive support.

There is a particular need for improved training in areas such as dementia and Alzheimer care, client communication, and recognizing the psychosocial and emotional needs of patients. Many CNAs enter the workforce without sufficient preparation to recognize and handle the effects of dementia and other forms of declining cognition. Patients can miss timely and appropriate care because these symptoms are being overlooked by the CNAs who work most closely with them.

Senate Bill 103 strengthens CNA training requirements to ensure that all certified nurse aides in Alaska are equipped with the necessary skills to provide high-quality, compassionate care. This legislation enhances training standards by emphasizing competency in patient interaction, communication, and emotional support.

It also requires CNA programs to incorporate best practices for dementia care, ensuring that caregivers are equipped with techniques to assist individuals with Alzheimer's disease and cognitive impairments. Additionally, SB 103 improves training on client observation and assessment, enabling CNAs to effectively monitor and report changes in a patient's condition. The bill further reinforces the importance of preserving client dignity, autonomy, and rights in caregiving settings.

By modernizing CNA training requirements, SB 103 will help build a more skilled healthcare workforce, improve patient outcomes, and ensure that Alaskans receive the highest level of care. This legislation is a necessary step in strengthening our healthcare system and supporting both caregivers and those they serve.

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