



From Investment to Impact: Youth Mental Health in Alaska

*Turning legislative investment into real outcomes for
Alaska's youth*



...each ministry through a holistic and relational lens. I'm passionate about community activism and creating spaces where people feel seen and supported—especially youth and young adults. I'm surprised to learn that I'm pursuing commissioning because my approach is less traditional: I prioritize building relationships with people where they are, and honest dialogue about faith. I believe this approach assists with personal spiritual growth and leads to deeper faith.

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 the promotion of healthy communities.

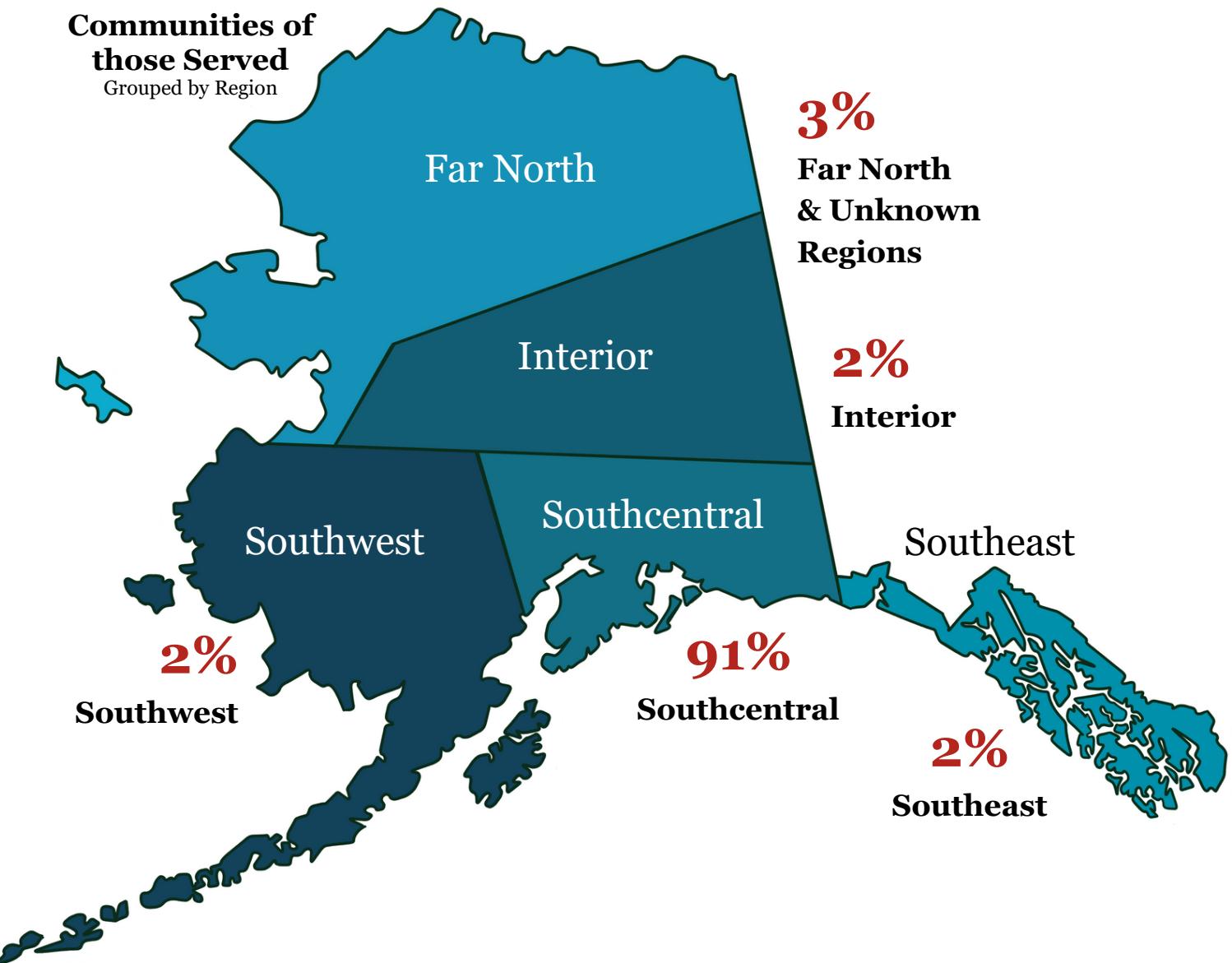
Our Vision: A community that supports the hope, health, and healing of every Alaskan.



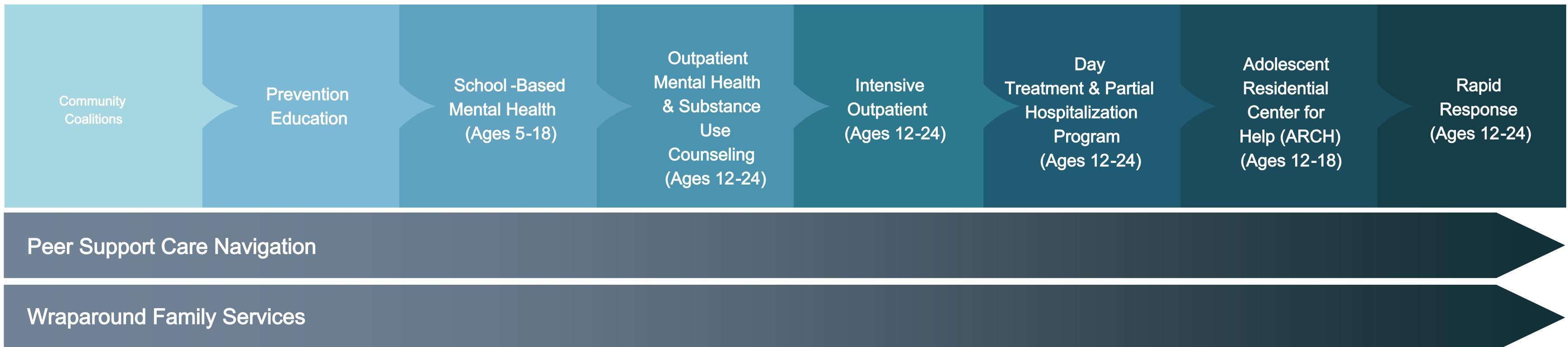
Who We Serve

4,804 youth, young adults, and families were reached directly by VOA Alaska's Continuum of Care in Fiscal Year 2025.

-  **3,359** youth and community members engaged in prevention education, community town halls, and coalition events.
-  **630** youth, young adults, and caregivers received treatment services, such as individual, group, or family therapy.
-  **417** Assessments Conducted
-  **223** caregivers and children received Kinship Care wraparound supports.
-  **123** early intervention services provided
-  **52** transition-age youth received supportive housing assistance

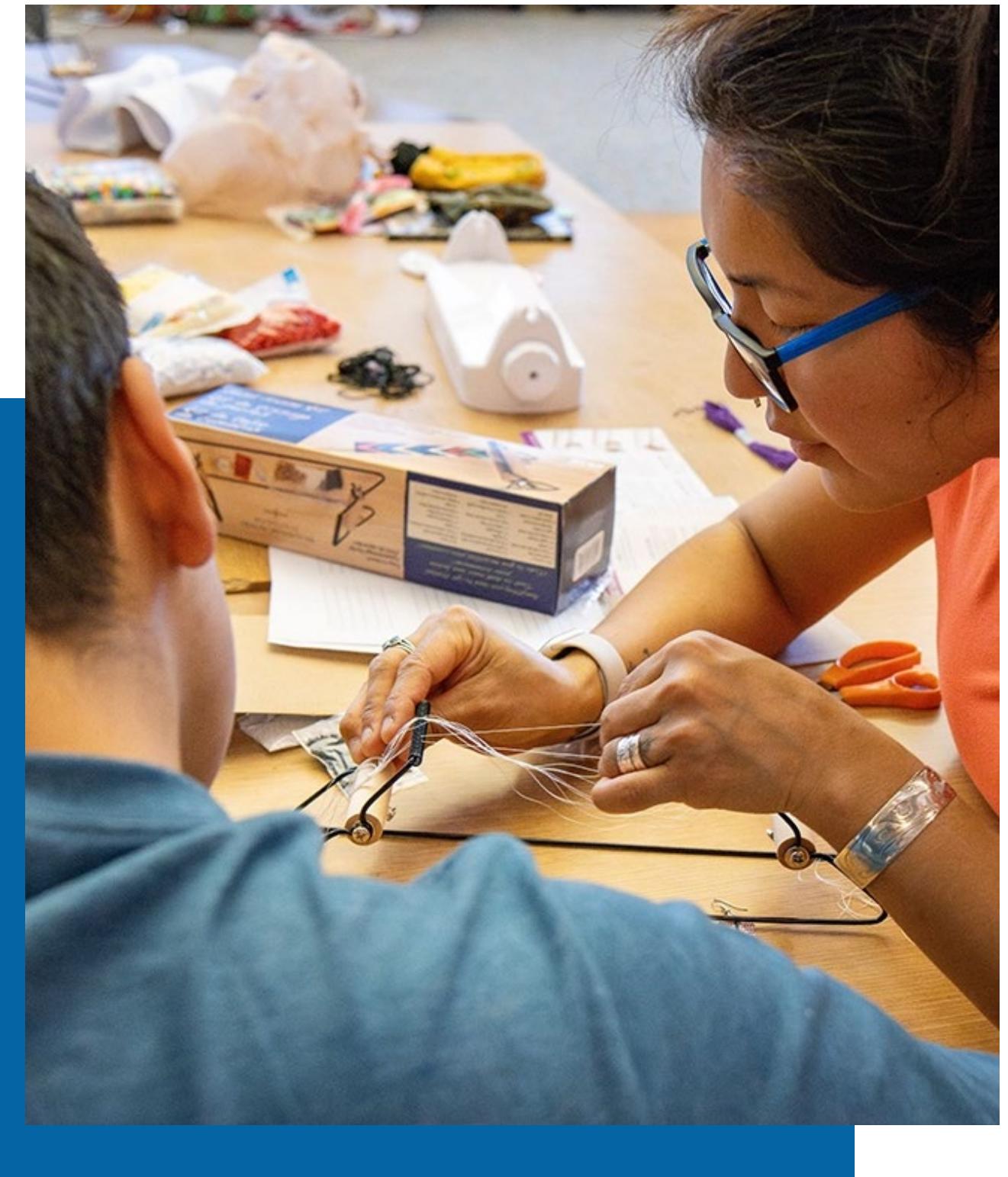


Our Continuum of Care: Providing the Right Level of Care at the Right Time



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

- Alaska's suicide death rate remains among the highest in the U.S. (CDC data).
- Suicide attempt-related emergency visits are highest among youth ages 11-14 and 15-19 in Alaska.
- Suicide is the leading cause of death for children 10-19 years old
- 19 % of Alaska students reported attempting suicide in the past year (2023 YRBS).
- 23 % of Alaska students seriously considered suicide, per 2023 survey.
- 43 % of Alaska students reported prolonged sadness/hopelessness in the past year, per 2023 survey.



System Gaps After Crisis: Children Leaving Care Without Ongoing Support

Children discharged from psychiatric hospitalization (ages 6–17):

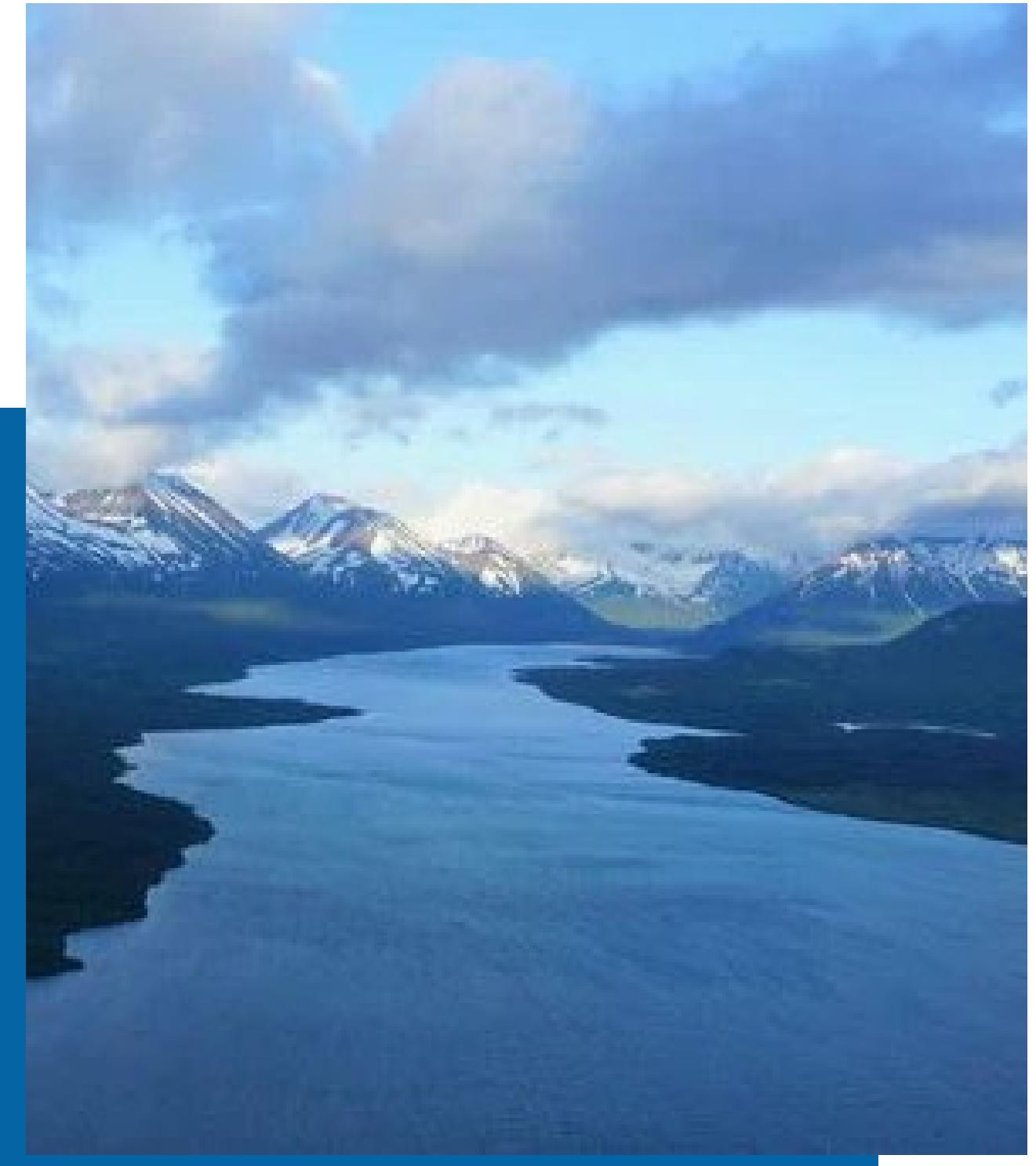
- 74.1% did not receive a follow-up mental health visit within 7 days
- 56% did not receive a follow-up visit within 30 days

Source: Alaska Department of Health, FollowUp After Hospitalization for Mental Illness

Children in Office of Children's Services (OCS) custody:

- A recent report published identified that 1 in 4 children in OCS custody did not have their behavioral health needs addressed in FY2023.
- 25% of children's behavioral health needs are not being met, underscoring the lack of adequate community-based behavioral health services to address the most vulnerable population.

Source: Alaska 20252029 Child and Family Services Plan; DOJ findings

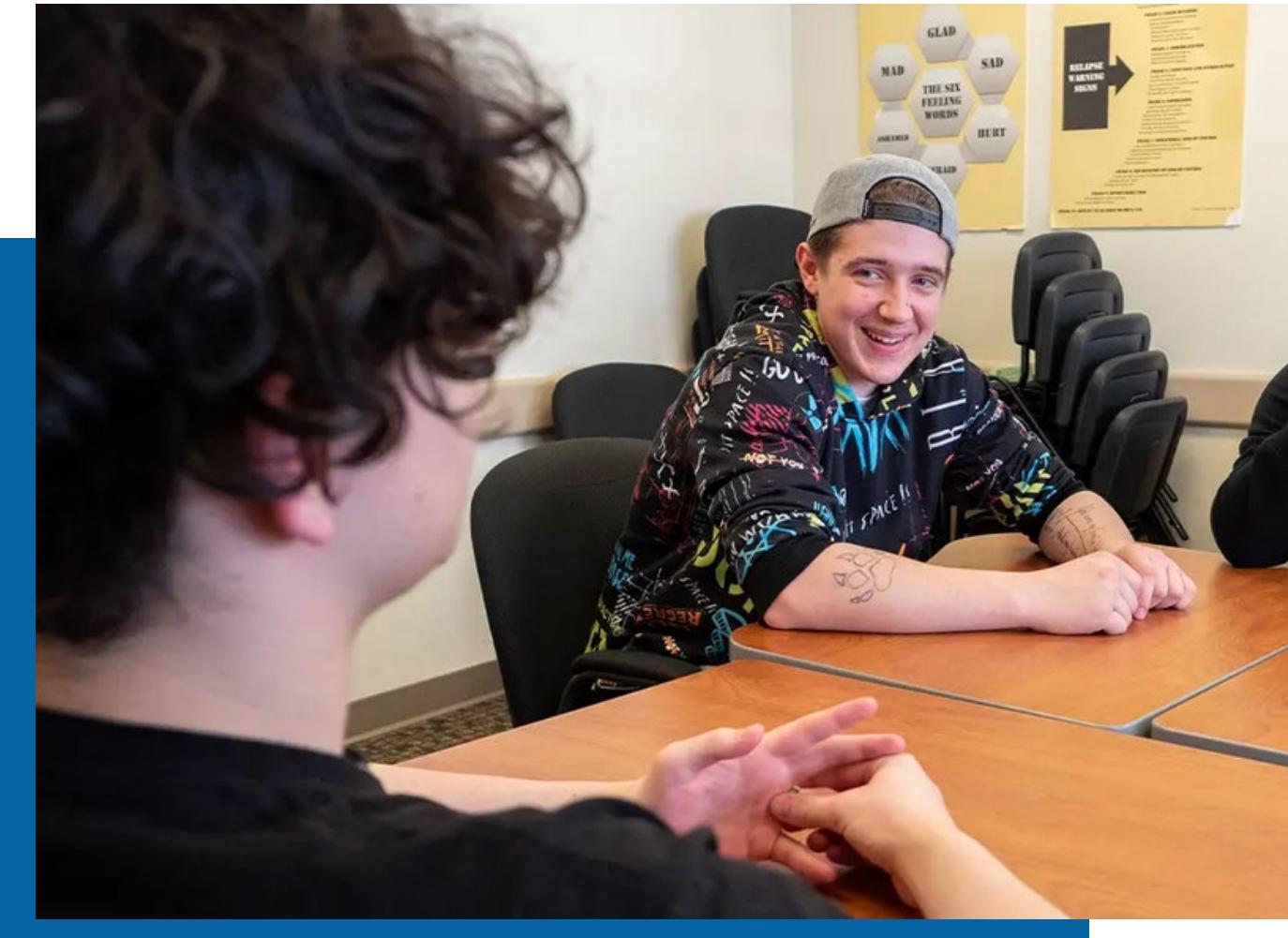


Alaska Lacks Youth - Appropriate Residential Behavioral Health Care

Alaska's only adolescent co -occurring residential program. ARCH meets the critical statewide need by serving youth from rural communities across Alaska.

- Alaska's behavioral health system is fragmented and underfunded, delaying timely access to care for youth and families.
- Critical levels of youth residential care are limited or unavailable, pushing adolescents into higher-acuity or out-of-state treatment.
- Youth SUD residential programs are reimbursed at rates similar to adult services, despite higher staffing ratios, clinical oversight, and safety requirements.

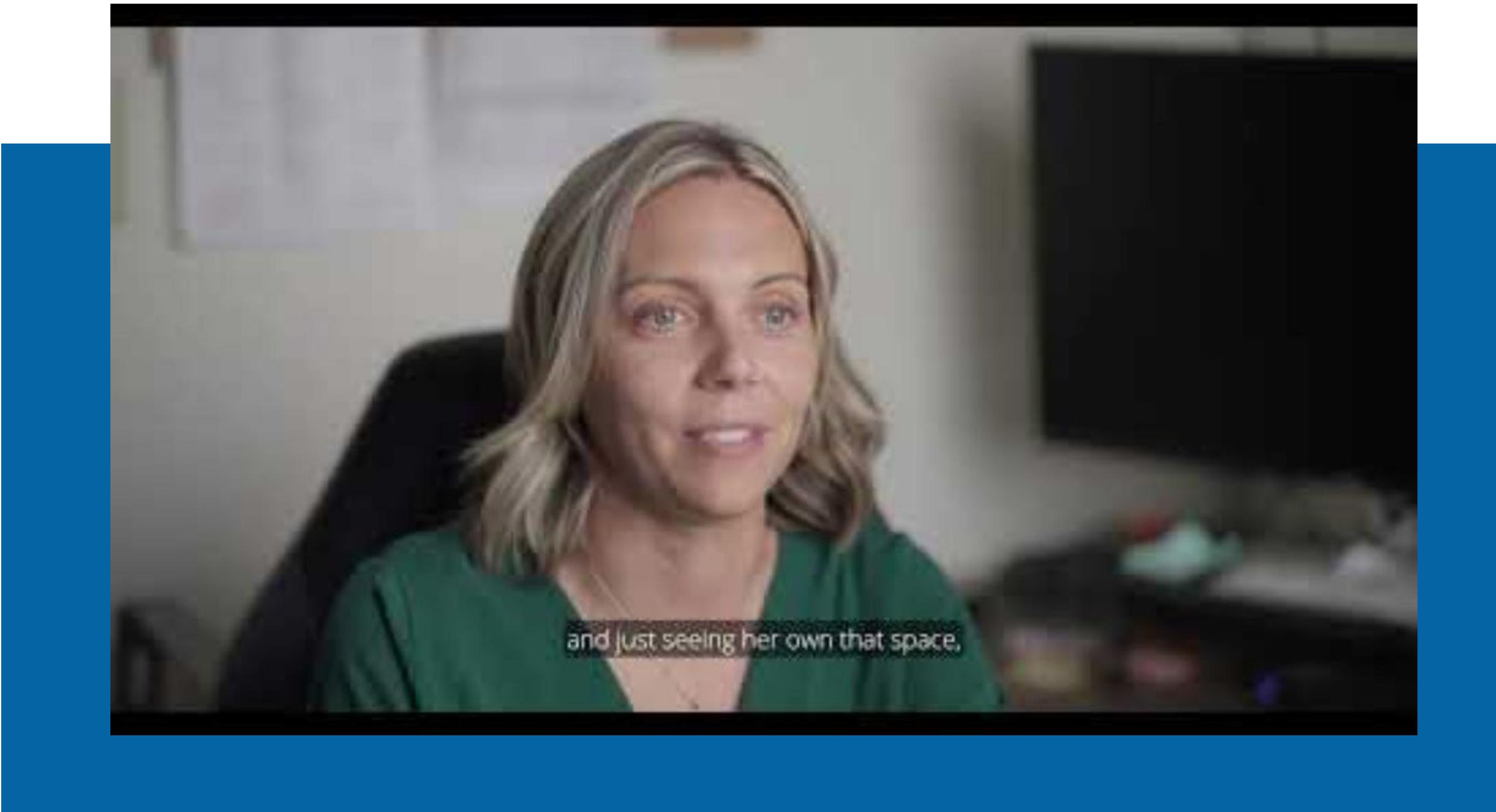
Without youth -appropriate reimbursement, Alaska cannot sustain residential care for adolescents with complex needs.



**Medicaid Residential Reimbursement
(Adult vs. Adolescent)**

Category	Adult	Adolescent	Guidehouse Proposed Adult	Guidehouse Proposed Adolescent
ASAM 3.1 - Daily	\$437.72	\$386.61	\$398.07	\$398.07
ASAM 3.5 - Daily	\$497.19	\$544.01	\$497.19	\$531.16
ASAM 3.7 - Daily	\$982.82	\$982.82	\$1,074.09	\$1,074.09

ARCH in Practice: Residential Treatment for Alaska's Youth



This video highlights VOA Alaska's Adolescent Residential Center for Help (ARCH), a residential treatment program for youth ages 12–18 with substance use and co-occurring mental health needs. ARCH provides structured, clinically intensive care, education, and family support as part of VOA Alaska's continuum of care.

ARCH Outcomes: What Works When Youth Have Access to the Right Level of Care

ARCH delivers measurable clinical outcomes for adolescents with complex substance use and co-occurring mental health needs when care is properly resourced.

- **Expanded access to the highest level of youth residential care:** The addition of ASAM 3.7 expanded access to medically necessary, high-acuity treatment for Alaska's most vulnerable adolescents.
- **Improved safety and engagement:** Integrating ASAM 3.7 and a dedicated medical team reduced unfavorable outcomes by 53%, reflecting stronger stabilization and continuity of care in CY25.
- **More youth successfully completing treatment:** ARCH saw a 91.6% increase in clients successfully completing the program following ASAM 3.7 expansion.
- **Stronger overall client outcomes:** Favorable outcomes increased by 112%, demonstrating improved engagement, progress, and treatment completion for youth served.



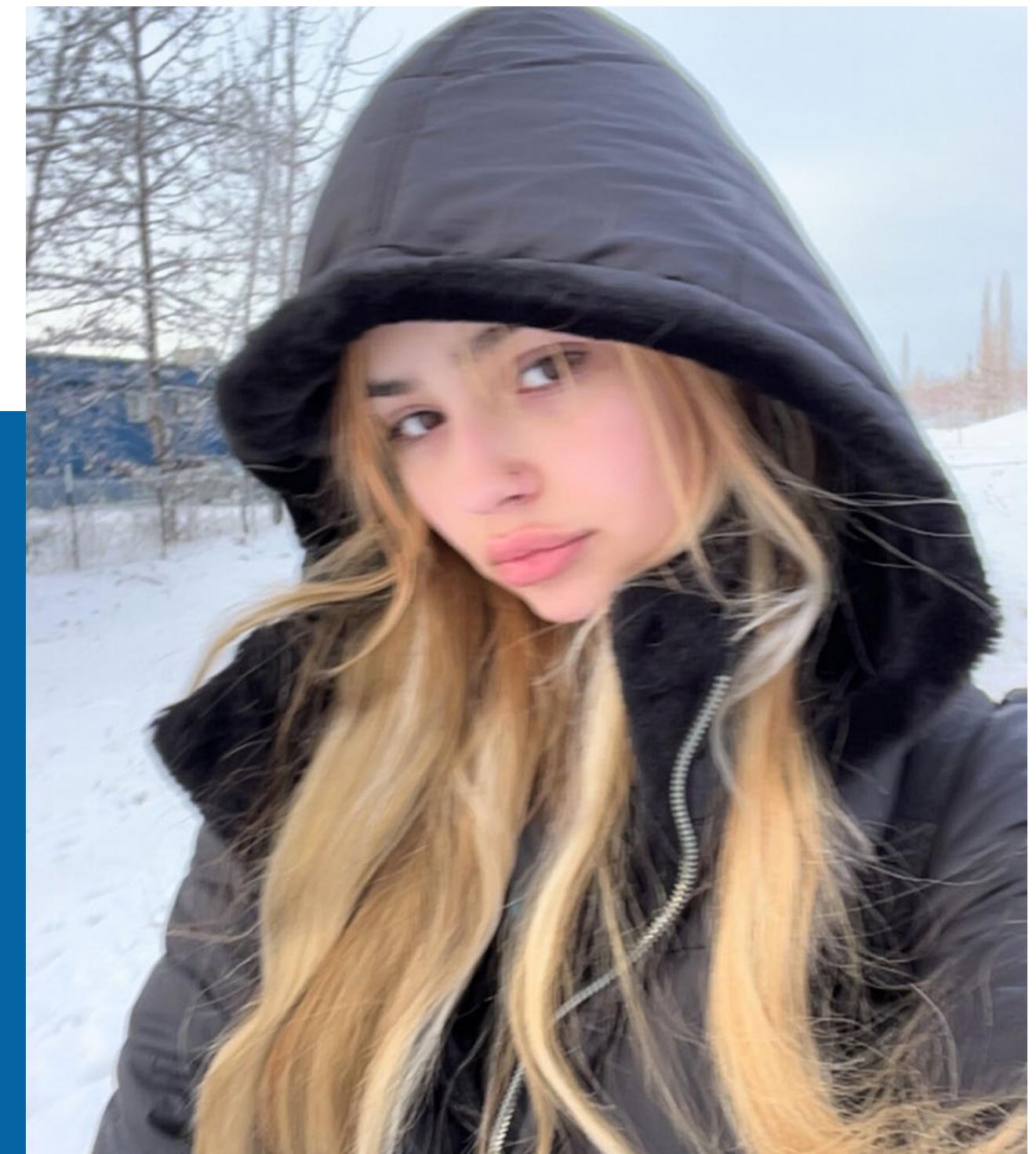
Why this matters to the system

- Youth served at the appropriate level of care are less likely to cycle through emergency departments, hospitals, or justice involvement.
- ARCH provides a cost-effective, clinically appropriate alternative to out-of-state placement while keeping youth connected to family and community.

These outcomes reflect the impact of targeted legislative and partner investments in youth residential care.

ARCH 2025 Alum: Breanna Worden

Breanna Wroden is a 2025 ARCH alumna from the Mat-Su Valley. She is a sophomore at Mat-Su Central School, 15 years old. Breanna is passionate about making the world a happier place and shares her story to highlight how access to youth-appropriate behavioral health care can transform young people and their families.



QUESTIONS?

Visit our website to learn more voaak.org