

OVERVIEW

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ACMHSA Overview  
Before House HESS Committee  
Tuesday, March 20, 2001

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## ALASKA COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ASSOCIATION

### Introduction

Hello, I am the President of the Alaska Community Mental Health Services Association (ACMHSA), commonly referred to as the Mental Health Director's Association. The purpose of my visit before your Committee is to provide you with a general overview of ACMHSA; information regarding our statewide membership; 2001 Legislative Priorities; and particular areas of concern where we see possible improvement in the delivery of services.

ACMHSA is comprised of the Community Mental Health Centers in the State of Alaska which provide an array of services to children, adults, and senior citizens. Enclosed for your review is a complete listing of those agencies which the association represents. You will notice that we cover the entire state, with members in urban, suburban, and remote locations. The CMHC's are for the most part non-profit corporations.

ACMHSA provides efficient, cost-effective mental health services to beneficiaries designated by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority. Due to the quality of services provided, many consumers chose to utilize mental health services provided the ACMHSA members, dispelling the myth that only the poor and indigent seek treatment at a community mental health center.

### 2001 Legislative Priorities

ACMHSA established the following objectives for the current legislative session:

**Education:** Provide the necessary information to state legislators about ACMHSA, uncompromised quality of care, and value added components to the overall mental health delivery system; discuss financial viability issues regarding the mental health delivery system.

**Funding:** Monitor DHSS departmental budget; advocate for maintenance funding; monitor DFYS departmental budget; track supplemental funding request.

**Key issues:** (1) Support increase in base grant funding for Rural Mental Health Providers; (2) monitor Alaskan youth in out of state placement for treatment services and track funding issues related to expansion of in state capacity and infrastructure to meet the cost effective service demands of this population.

### Providers are NON-PROFIT CORPORATIONS

With the knowledge and demonstrated results of positive audits in Quality of Care standards, ACMHSA members have turned attention towards business operations. In today's business environment, with increased operating costs, particularly in health insurance premiums, to remain the foundation of Alaska's mental health delivery system, we must insure the financial viability of our business entities.

To this extent, ACMHSA members are focusing on internal operations, and our interface with various divisions within the Department of Health and Social Services. We have established workgroups to resolve pended claims issues; facilitated technical assistance support to providers on claims submission and reimbursement issues; and will work earnestly with DMHDD to insure ACMHSA providers meet the reporting requirements established by the department. Several ACMHSA member firms have moved forward to develop comprehensive corporate compliance plans for their respective businesses.

ACMHSA has taken under consideration planning a two day financial management workshop for non-profit corporations in Alaska. In addition to general financial management, the workshop will focus on issues relevant to the unique challenges to the Alaska service delivery system. We are currently seeking co-sponsorship for such an event.

### Key Issues

ACMHSA continues to be concerned with the number of children and youth in out of state placement for residential treatment. The cost of such care is a financial burden to the state; the cost to families in terms of family unification and preservation is far greater. Furthermore, the planning process to develop infrastructure and capacity within the state excludes the delivery system that can that can alleviate this problem.

The treatment planning process for youth in state custody is often cumbersome and fragmented. Coordination of care between key stakeholders (DFYS, DOE, DMHDD) is inefficient and offsets unnecessary costs to system participants.

The tacit approval of out of state residential placement of Alaskan children and youth inadvertently condones a policy of institutionalization vs. community care. This is a questionable standard when compared to the community based efforts to de-institutionalize API; provide community support programs to the chronically mentally ill adults; and provide a comprehensive continuum of care of community based services to developmentally disabled persons.

ACMHSA favors immediate, long term planning of an integrated management information system to manage data within Juvenile Justice, DFYS, DMA, DADA and DMHDD. Failure to move forward on this issue will impact Alaska's ability to attract federal grant funding that requires advanced integrated data management. There does not appear to be a consistent vision or operational plan to manage comprehensive data, methodology and treatment outcomes within the department.

### Innovative Programs in Alaska

**In conclusion, ACMHSA members have asked me to thank you for you continued support to consumers, family members, and the non-profit community.**