

**OVERVIEW  
GOVERNOR'S  
COUNCIL ON  
DISABILITIES  
& SPECIAL  
EDUCATION,  
1/19/05**



### Mission

To create change that improves the lives of Alaskans with disabilities

### Roles

- State Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Special Education Advisory Panel
- Interagency Coordinating Council on Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities
- Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Beneficiary Board
- Governing Board of the Special Education Service Agency (SESA)

### Major Accomplishments towards Securing Alaska's Future

Working collaboratively with the legislature, administration and other stakeholders:

- Reduced high cost institutional services and enabled individuals to stay in their local communities using Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Waivers
- Contained costs and increased the number of persons served through the closure of Harborview Developmental Center and de-certification of Hope Cottages' ICF/MR facilities
- Leveraged a variety of resources to increase the employment rate of Alaskans with severe disabilities and reduce dependence on State services
- Increased cost-efficiencies and savings to the State of Alaska by conducting an examination of the two waiver programs administered by Developmental Disabilities
- Leveraged a variety of funds to increase availability of coordinated, accessible transportation for people with disabilities and low-income individuals to get to work

### Current Collaborative Activities to Secure Alaska's Future

- Improving special education so youth with disabilities leave school with the skills needed to secure jobs and reduce their dependence on State government
- Implementing recommendations for cost savings, regulatory processes and provider reimbursement
- Redesigning the early intervention/infant learning program to maximize dollars from a variety of sources while increasing the number of children served in a timely manner
- Continuing efforts to increase employment opportunities for Alaskans with disabilities
- Implementing recommendations from the **November 2004 Disability Policy Summit**
- Producing a **State of the State Report** on the quality of lives of Alaskans with developmental disabilities compared to the general population
- Developing the capacity to better serve unserved, underserved and hard to serve individuals (i.e., people with autism, people with traumatic brain injury)
- Increasing the recruitment, retention and quality of the direct service workforce
- Designing a cost-neutral service system to increase choice and control by individuals and families
- Identifying Medicaid services that can be used more effectively to meet individual needs
- Redesigning the process for maintaining the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Wait List so the right services get to individuals and families at the right time

### Council Legislative Recommendations

- Invest general fund grant dollars for DD services, which saves the state money; grant-funded services are generally low-cost services and if provided at the right time, help keep families together and avert high-cost crisis situations. Although some services were one-time services or did not completely meet people's needs, in FY02 the average cost of grant-funded services was \$6,683 compared to the State's share (\$32,500) of a waiver.
- Introduce **Universal Newborn Hearing Screening** legislation. Each year, approximately 30 of the 10,000 Alaskan newborns have congenital hearing loss. With early diagnosis and appropriate intervention, they can learn and progress at a rate similar to children with normal hearing at an average lifetime cost in current of dollars of \$417,000 (CDC 2004).
- Support legislation to expand adult dental services for Medicaid recipients. Governor Murkowski plans to introduce legislation to expand Medicaid coverage for preventive and restorative care and dentures at a capped rate of \$1,150 annually. In FY03, costs of emergency dental care and dental-related services provided by outpatient hospitals, physicians and all other providers totaled \$2.197 million. FY06 and FY07 State expenditures are estimated at \$1.159 million and 3.864 million due to pent up demand for newly covered care. These costs are projected to decrease over time as dental needs are met and preventative and maintenance care becomes more prevalent. The Alaska Mental Health Trust has agreed to contribute \$5.375 million through FY2011 if this legislation is passed.
- Support the Governor's Bring the Kids Home Initiative; at any given time approximately 400-500 children are served in expensive out-of-state placements. State expenditures will decrease as children are moved to appropriate levels of care and/or their length of stay in the most restrictive setting is decreased. However, the Council strongly recommends that all cost savings resulting from a more efficient, effective service delivery system be used to maintain or enhance this system and *not* as budget savings.
- Solidify in statute the work done to create a sustainable, comprehensive strategy that brings Alaskans with disabilities into gainful employment at a rate that is as close as possible to the general adult population and makes State government a model employer of individuals with disabilities.
- Introduce legislation that would provide wage incentives for direct service staff based on completion of approved education/training programs.
- Amend the Domestic Violence Statute to cover care providers who DO NOT live with vulnerable people but spend a lot of time in their homes. The effect of this change would be to bring attention to and prosecution of care providers who commit interpersonal violence against those for whom they provide care. As it stands now, they are reported to Adult Protective Services and nothing much happens.
- Approve a long-range fiscal plan that includes the adoption of Percent of Market Value structure for management of the Alaska Permanent Fund. Home and community-based services funded by Medicaid and state grants enable Alaskans with severe disabilities to live independently and become productive, gainful members of their communities. In an economy where the source of revenues is unpredictable, Alaskans with severe disabilities, whose independence and productivity is linked to government supports, are at risk for negative, unpredictable life changes.