

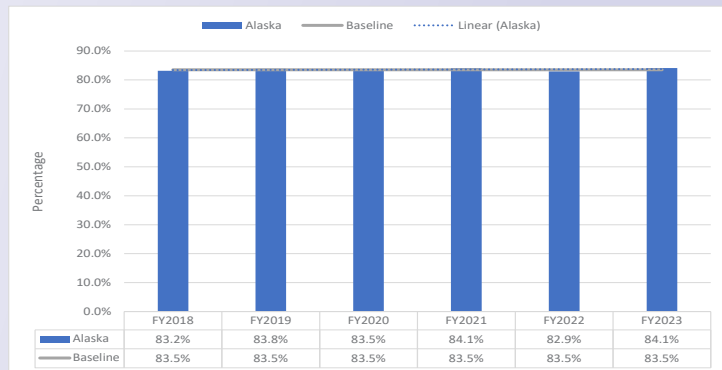
SERVICES IN THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT

INDICATOR 20: Percentage of Alaskans who meet criteria for an institutional level of care who were served by a home and community based waiver

Story Behind the Baseline

Least restrictive practices in home communities are paramount for Trust beneficiaries to be able to live meaningfully as contributing members of such communities. Receiving local services preserves existing natural supports and allows for the development of additional supports, making it the desired first choice. Long-term services and supports offer a wide range of services to help people with disabilities who need support to live more independently by assisting with personal and healthcare needs and activities of daily living, such as eating, bathing, grooming, and other related activities.

Medicaid home and community-based waivers (HCBW) allow Alaskans with disabilities to avoid institutional care, such as nursing homes, by contracting with HCBW provider agencies. The Division of Senior and Disabilities Services (DSDS) reported on the FY22 Continuum of Care report: individuals who receive HCBW and Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (IDD) waiver services cost an average of \$87,744 per person receiving services. By comparison,



Population: Alaska Statewide

Data Source:

- Medicaid Management Information System via COGNOS

Data Source Contacts:

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if these individuals with an intellectual disability were in an intermediate care facility, at the average cost of \$116,181 per person annually, it would cost \$28,437 more per year for each individual. If these individuals were in a nursing home, at the average cost of \$159,367 per person annually, it would cost \$71,623 more per year for per each individual. Currently, the costs of home and community-based services (HCBS) are much lower because they can serve more people with the same amount of money, ensuring sustainability of services. Services provided in a least restrictive environment ultimately leads to more meaningful lives for beneficiaries, as well as cost efficiencies for state government.

What Works?

Increased access to enhanced and timely treatment options within a robust continuum of care is necessary. To increase statewide service access and capacity, more providers, including care coordinators, service providers (such as direct service professionals), and rural providers of all types, would help reduce waitlists for services that have already been approved. Furthermore, additional providers and resources are necessary to review eligibility for individuals on an intellectual and developmental disabilities waitlist.

Ensuring that person-centered planning is taking place allows individuals to choose where they would like their care delivered, so they may remain in their home community and maintain as much independence as possible. Supporting a beneficiary's caregivers, family, and/or friends with services such as transportation, respite, and chore services utilization allows the beneficiary and their support people to remain in their home communities.

Source:

- [State of Alaska Home and Community-Based Waiver Programs](#)

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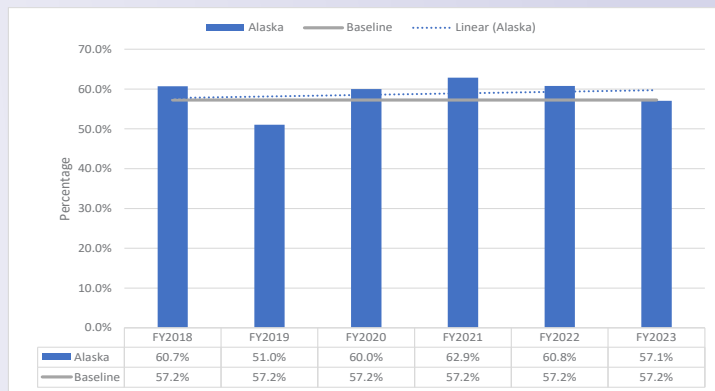
INDICATOR 21: Percentage of criminal defendant referrals admitted to a therapeutic court

Story Behind the Baseline

Therapeutic courts in Alaska support participants' abstinence from drugs and alcohol and promote self-sufficiency while beneficiaries remain in the community and rebuild their lives. Mental health courts are specialized therapeutic courts that employ a problem-solving approach to criminal case processing for eligible beneficiaries with the goal of reducing the high numbers of beneficiaries in Alaska's criminal justice system.

Therapeutic courts have been working since 1998 to reduce recidivism and provide ready access to treatment for offenders with substance use and mental

health disorders. Their mission is to have a positive impact on the community by increasing public safety and reducing the cost associated with rearrest, criminal case processing, confinement, and jail overcrowding. On an individual level, therapeutic courts aim to break the cycle of criminality of people who experience drug and alcohol addiction and enhance their long-term reintegration into the community. All therapeutic courts carry out a self-evaluation every year to measure their performance against goals and objectives aligned with national best practice standards. Additionally, court teams and stakeholders meet regularly to discuss issues that are barriers to meeting these goals.



Population: Alaska Statewide

Data Source:

- [Alaska's Automated Information Management System \(AKAIMS\)-Therapeutic Court Module](#)

Data Source Contacts:

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Prior to fiscal year 2020 (FY20), therapeutic courts revised eligibility criteria so that referral numbers could be maintained despite the criminal justice reforms contained in Senate Bill 91 (SB 91) – a lower legal exposure meant fewer people were interested in an intensive 12 to 18-month program. The repeal of SB 91 came into effect at the beginning of FY20 and this, combined with the previous push for referrals, led to a higher percentage of people being admitted into therapeutic courts in FY20 despite complications caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Much of FY20 was impacted by COVID-19. As the pandemic intensified, therapeutic courts made a concerted effort to keep up the number of referrals and, via social media and virtual meeting platforms, kept participants engaged in treatment to ensure continued program progress. FY22 saw a slight drop in the percentage of admissions relative to FY21, with the court backlog in cases and holding no trials because of the pandemic. There was also a high turnover in state prosecuting and defense attorneys. Newer attorneys were still learning about eligibility criteria, and the plea agreements being negotiated did not always meet therapeutic court program requirements, leading to fewer admissions to the courts.

The number of referrals substantially increased in FY23, signifying that project coordinators have been identifying potential applicants to try and increase court utilization. However, the percentage of referrals following through to admission decreased relative to FY22. Therapeutic court administration is exploring the multiple reasons for the reduction in admissions which vary among court types (drug/DUI, mental health, family, Veterans) as well as from location to location. Staff are working with individual courts to address the various factors involved.

What Works?

Therapeutic court participants require robust and readily available behavioral health services. The therapeutic court administration has developed contractual relationships with local substance use disorder treatment providers to support ready access; however, mental health services within the communities remain limited and beneficiaries do not always have immediate access to mental health services.

Access to the behavioral health continuum of care in Alaska continues to be problematic

for beneficiaries due to a workforce shortage. The Alaska Medicaid 1115 Behavioral Health Demonstration Waiver (1115 Waiver) has helped local behavioral health service providers to increase capacity and coordination through the use of the Administrative Services Organization.

Sources:

- [Alaska Therapeutic Courts](#)
- [Therapeutic Courts in the Alaska Court System](#)

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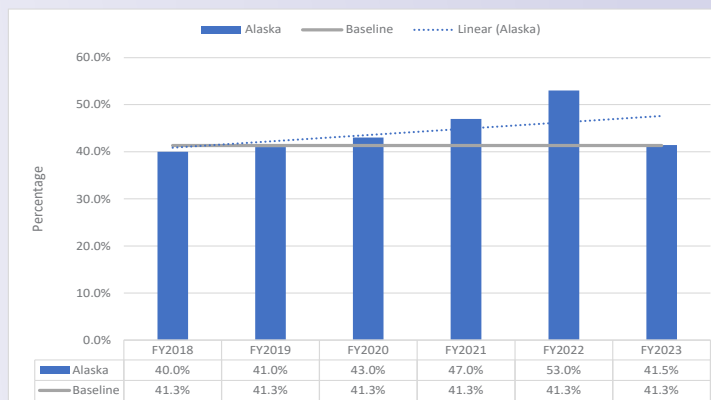
INDICATOR 22: Percentage of all juvenile justice referrals that were diverted from formal court action

Story Behind the Baseline

Research has demonstrated that introducing low-risk youth into formal interventions with the juvenile justice system can unintentionally increase the likelihood of continued delinquent behavior due to the exposure to higher-risk youth; therefore, it is important that youth are diverted from the formal juvenile justice system and are provided less restrictive interventions when appropriate. It is also important that appropriate behavioral and neurobehavioral interventions are provided to youth and families as a part of the diversion process.

For a number of years, the

Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) has consistently diverted anywhere between 30% to 35% of all cases referred from law enforcement. Probation officers receiving these referrals have the discretion to work with youth, parents, victims, and communities to identify appropriate alternative sanctions other than formal court intervention, detention, and/or institutional treatment. Probation officers can recommend community work service, restitution, letters of apology, victim/offender mediation, behavioral health assessments, and other informal interventions to both hold youth accountable for their actions and provide interventions to increase competency development. The DJJ also uses more formal mechanisms for diversion such as informal probation, youth courts, tribal diversion, and other structured interventions available in communities throughout Alaska. The DJJ continues to utilize such interventions to appropriately divert youth from formal court intervention.



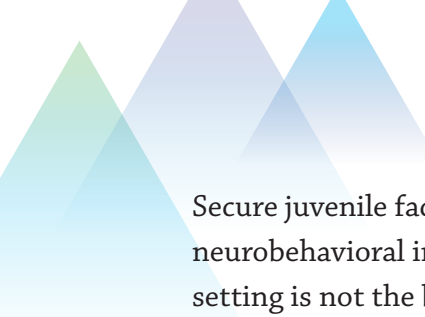
Population: Alaska Statewide

Data Source:

- Division of Juvenile Justice, Department of Health

Data Source Contacts:

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Secure juvenile facilities in Alaska are often a default system for ensuring behavioral and neurobehavioral interventions are provided to youth Trust beneficiaries. A correctional setting is not the best environment for youth to receive these services. To ensure adequate services are available and provided in a less restrictive manner, the cooperation of community providers is essential.

What Works?

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the most recent data collected from the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention shows that 41% of juveniles involved with the juvenile justice system nationwide were diverted. The purposes of diversion programs are numerous and include cost-savings, reductions in recidivism and re-offending, avoidance of labeling, least-restrictive intervention, an increase in outcomes for youth, and an attempt to reduce disproportionality. Studies have shown that low-risk youth are 45% less likely to re-offend when diverted from formal court; this also accounts for a reduction in recidivism rates. The cost-savings to the community, DJJ, victims, and the youths' families are sizable.

A 2014 study by the McDowell group, specific to the Youth Court Division programs of Alaska, reported that: “Excluding the benefit to the State of Alaska and to individuals who move away from Anchorage, the quantifiable average annual benefit to the Anchorage community alone from youth court operations is \$198,800 in savings in the cost of crime plus \$80,450 in the value of adult and youth volunteer time and defendant community-service time, for a total annual benefit of \$279,250.” Tribal diversion programs also account for cost-savings and better outcomes for youth. In Alaska, there are currently 25 tribes participating in the tribal diversion programs.

Sources:

- Alaska Department of Health – Division of Juvenile Justice System Change Summary; January 2021
- Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators Community-Based Mental Health Services; August 2017
- Alaska Department of Health- Division of Juvenile Justice System Improvement Summary For 2015 State of Alaska Crime Summit; February 2015