



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Shirley Sakaye, DOH, 907-269-4996, Shirley.Sakaye@alaska.gov

DPA Launches Pilot Program to Strengthen Provider and Community Support

June 26, 2025, ANCHORAGE, AK — The Alaska Department of Health's Division of Public Assistance (DPA) has launched a new pilot program, *DPA in-a-Box*, designed to improve access to public assistance services in some of Alaska's more rural communities.

Through this initiative, small teams of eligibility technicians and outreach staff travel to areas with a local DPA office, providing in-person support for residents and service providers. The first visit took place June 9-12 in partnership with Maniilaq Health Center in Kotzebue.

DPA in-a-Box aims to streamline the application and documentation process, troubleshoot barriers to services, and ensure residents can access critical programs like Medicaid, SNAP, and other public assistance benefits.

"Strong communities start with strong connections - to each other and to the services people may need," said Department of Health Commissioner Heidi Hedberg. "This pilot is a creative way to build those connections and bring real, hands-on support where it's needed most."

During the Kotzebue visit, the DPA team met in person with 84 clients, helping process applications and offering training on the department's online platforms. They also held training sessions with Maniilaq Health Center staff, covering tools like the Medicaid Provider Portal and the Alaska Connect client platform—resources that make it easier for both providers and clients to navigate the public assistance system.

These visits offer lasting benefits. Clients leave with a better understanding of how to submit complete applications, renew benefits, and receive timely eligibility determinations. DPA staff, in turn, gain valuable insight into the unique needs of each community.

“We've seen success with similar outreach efforts, in partnership with the Division of Public Health and other service organizations,” said DPA Director, Deb Etheridge. “This first visit confirmed the value of the approach. We're excited to apply what we've learned to upcoming visits and to continue identifying and addressing access barriers.”

The next *DPA in-a-Box* trip is scheduled for Delta Junction from June 23–26. Four additional visits are planned for the upcoming fiscal year.

#