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Alaska Department of Health Launches “Next Move” Campaign during Mental Health Awareness Month

New campaign connects young adults with support for mental health and substance use

May 20, 2026, ANCHORAGE, AK —The Alaska Department of Health’s Office of Substance Misuse and Addiction Prevention is launching *Next Move* to recognize Mental Health Awareness Month. The new public health campaign supports young adults ages 18–25 in Alaska by building healthy coping strategies and connecting them to mental health and substance use resources.

According to the *National Survey on Drug Use and Health 2023*, alcohol and marijuana use often begins at younger ages, while other illegal substances such as opioids, stimulants, and hallucinogens typically begin around age 21. Self-reported use of these substances increases after age 25. This makes young adulthood a critical window to prevent substance use from escalating. Young adulthood is a time of major life change, and factors like stress, peer influence, and increased independence can increase risk for substance use.

Next Move connects young adults with tools, resources, and real stories to help them navigate stress, address mental health challenges, and reduce substance use. The campaign emphasizes a simple message: No pressure, just options. Support for mental health and substance use meets young adults where they are.

The campaign was informed by input from young adults and community partners across Alaska to ensure it reflects real experiences and needs.

“Young adulthood is a time of major transition, and many people are figuring out how to cope with stress, emotions, and new responsibilities,” said Lindsey Kato, Alaska Department of Health, Director, Division of Public Health, “*Next Move* is about meeting people where they are and offering practical, non-judgmental support to help them take their next step.”

Addressing Mental Health and Substance Use Together

Research shows a strong connection between mental health and substance use. *Next Move* aims to increase awareness of that connection and help young adults recognize early signs of risk while promoting healthier ways to cope.

By addressing mental health and substance use together, the campaign encourages young adults to seek support earlier and make informed choices about their well-being.

Encouraging Healthy Coping and Connection

Next Move encourages young adults to use healthy coping strategies and connect with behavioral health resources when they need support.

The campaign highlights simple, accessible strategies, like connecting with others, practicing mindfulness, or seeking professional support. *Next Move* connects young adults to local and statewide resources.

“Coping looks different for everyone,” said Kato. “This campaign helps young adults explore what works for them and reminds them that support is always within reach.”

Where to Learn More

Young adults can explore resources, stories, and tools by visiting:
NextMove.alaska.gov

About OSMAP

The Office of Substance Misuse and Addiction Prevention, within the Alaska Department of Health, works to reduce the impact of substance misuse and addiction across Alaska through prevention, education, and community-based public health strategies.

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