

# Annual Update

October 2019 – September 2020



Creating change that improves the lives of Alaskans with disabilities.

*Alaskans share a vision of a flexible system in which each person directs their own supports, based on their strengths and abilities, toward a meaningful life in their home, their job and their community. Our vision includes supported families, professional staff and services available throughout the state now and into the future.*



GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON  
DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

# COUNCIL STATE 5-YEAR PLAN

## The Council is now in the 5th year of its 5-Year State Plan

<http://alaska.gov/go/UJ04>



### GOAL # 1 - Community Inclusion, Supports, and Services

Improve service delivery to empower individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs) to live and thrive in their communities with formal and informal supports and services that promote independence.

### GOAL # 2 - Employment

Alaskans with disabilities and their families will receive the necessary employment services and supports needed to become competitively employed in an integrated setting.

### GOAL # 3 - Early Intervention

Strengthen policies and programs so that infants and toddlers with disabilities, their families, and caregivers receive appropriate early intervention services and supports.

### GOAL # 4 - Education

Participate in activities that lead to enhanced practices so that children and youth with disabilities have access to appropriate qualified professionals, curriculum, inclusion, support, and resources to ensure they have the skills they need for educational success and future independence.

### GOAL # 5 - Healthcare

Alaskans with disabilities will have greater access to needed health care services that will improve their quality of life.

## COUNCIL COMMITTEES

If you are interested in participating in the day-to-day work of the Council by becoming a public member on one of the Council's committees, please contact us:

<http://alaska.gov/go/LA09>

- Developmental Disabilities Committee
- Legislative Committee
- Education Committee
- Early Intervention Committee
- Employment and Transportation Ad Hoc Committee
- Medicaid Ad Hoc Committee
- Autism Ad Hoc Committee
- FASD Workgroup



# NEW STATE 5-YEAR PLAN DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Every 5 years, the Council seeks statewide public input for developing priorities for the next 5-Year State Plan; the plan which guides advocacy, capacity building, and systemic change work for the Council. The Council authorized the start of data collection for the 5-year plan at the annual Winter Council Meeting, on February 4, 2020. Zoom webinar meetings with providers, educators, DD Act partners, parents and guardians, individuals with disabilities and special interest stakeholders allowed staff to obtain structured feedback. Each webinar included time for open discussion on unmet needs and existing services. Efforts were made to focus on specific remote regions and subpopulations via community forum webinars, focused group emails, and social media sharing on regional organizations' platforms and pages. There were two versions of the online survey available 24/7 on the Council's website, one in Spanish and one in English. Outreach emails with survey links were sent to DD Network partner staff, service provider agencies, organized faith communities, private preschools, regional advocacy and service organizations, and Native Alaskan corporations. Public testimony on areas of significance were also taken from Council meetings at the Spring and Fall meetings of 2020.

At the Spring 2020 meeting, Council members were guided by staff through the discussion of data, barriers, unmet needs, existing services, community forum input, survey results, and outcomes from the work on previous goals and objectives. During that meeting, the Council engaged in a robust discussion and exploration on considerations for establishing priorities among mandatory and optional areas of significance for the Council's work. The Council selected and ranked priority areas from among the mandatory and optional topics described in the DD Act. At the Fall 2020 meeting, the Council discussed proposed draft goals and objectives and approved the final draft on October 30, 2020. The Council then accepted input during the required 45-day public comment period through December 5th, disseminating information about the opportunity to comment widely via email, website, social media, as well as through partner meetings. The Council will consider the survey responses, comments received in public comment through email and public testimony at committee and council meetings in the Winter 2021 Council Meeting. If the proposed goals and objectives are amended, a second public comment period will follow. If there are no changes, the Council will finalize the 5-Year Plan and will begin to align committee structure and work plans with the newly approved 5-Year Plan.

For information on the current State Plan, please visit our website:  
<http://alaska.gov/go/RTB7>



## Development of the State Five-year Plan (2021-2026)

### Step 1 - Progress Review

Staff reviews vision and progress of the last five-year plan

### Step 2 - Comprehensive Review and Analysis (CRA)

Staff does comprehensive data research in categories from the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Act

### Step 3 - Public Input and Analysis (Phase I)

Staff gathers public input on issues of importance, analyzes and develops summaries for Council

### Step 4 - Prioritizes Selected

Council meets to hear public input and staff summaries; determine priorities for Council focus.

### Step 5 - Draft Plan

Staff uses public input on priority areas, develops goal recommendations for Council. Fall Council Meeting: Council selects goals and approves a public review draft of goals, objectives, strategies.

### Step 6 - Open Public Comment

Council announces an open 45-day public comment period.

### Step 7 - Public Comment Review (Phase I)

Council reviews public comments and either approves or modifies the draft Plan. If the draft Plan is modified, a second comment period is set.

### Step 8 - Public Comment Review (Phase II)

*If needed due to amendment after first public comment period. Council reviews public comments. If the draft Plan is modified, another comment period is set.*

### Step 9 - Plan Approval

Council approves final state plan for submission.

### Step 10 - Plan Submission

Staff submits the Plan to AIDD in ACL Reporting System.



# ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP



Advocacy on behalf of Alaskans with disabilities and their families is one of the primary responsibilities of the Council. The Council conducts its advocacy efforts on both state and federal levels due to its multiple roles.

## State Advocacy

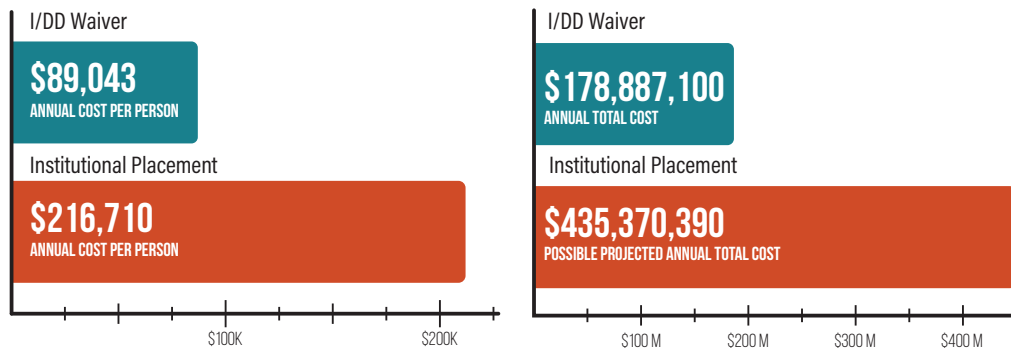
- Annual meetings with Alaska legislators in collaboration with Key Coalition's Key Campaign as part of cost savings efforts
- Presented to the House Health and Social Services Committee
- Presented priorities to members of the Governor's cabinet at the Governor's Mansion

## Key Campaign

The Council and Key Campaign continued to provide information to state legislators on both the importance of Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS), as well as the cost savings when compared with institutional care. The Key Coalition's 2020 Key Campaign included over 200 stakeholders engaged throughout the state.



Currently, **2,009** individuals receive HCBS I/DD waiver services at a total cost of just under **\$179 million annually**. If these 2,009 individuals were in an institution (ICF/IID), at an average cost of \$214,423 per person annually, the total cost for serving these individuals could be around **\$435 million annually**.



Data Source for Graphs: State of Alaska Automated Budget System, Final Auth20 report, Harmony and COGNOs

## 2020 ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

1. Developmental Disabilities Shared Vision
2. Supported Decision-Making Agreements
3. Home and Community Based Services are Cost Saving
4. Home and Community Based Services Efficiencies

*The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE) serves as Alaska's Developmental Disabilities Council, a federally required role of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) which includes a unique responsibility to engage in "advocacy, capacity building, and systemic change activities" without interference by the State (42 USC 15024(c)(5)(L)).*



# ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP (CONT.)

## Federal Advocacy

The Council often serves as a resource to Alaska's U.S. Congressional Delegation regarding data on Alaskans with disabilities as well as providing stakeholder feedback on important issues. Over the past year, this has included sending comment letters educating them on potential impacts of legislation or policy changes regarding Alaskans with disabilities. The Council was pleased to host virtual visits with all three members of Alaska's U.S. Congressional Delegation: Congressman Don Young, Senator Murkowski, and Senator Sullivan. Council members discussed issues important to Alaskans with developmental disabilities including impacts of the pandemic.

## Self-Advocacy Support

### Peer Power Alaska:

The Council has continued to support Alaska's statewide self-advocacy organization for individuals with I/DD.

In 2020, Peer Power held the 4th annual statewide self-advocacy summit. Peer Power held the fourth annual statewide self-advocacy summit. **114 Alaskans** with developmental disabilities as well as supporters across the state registered for the virtual Self-Advocacy Summit. The event was also able to go "live" on Peer Power's Facebook page as well. Monday's speaker had **153 engagements, and 777 views!**



Topics included:

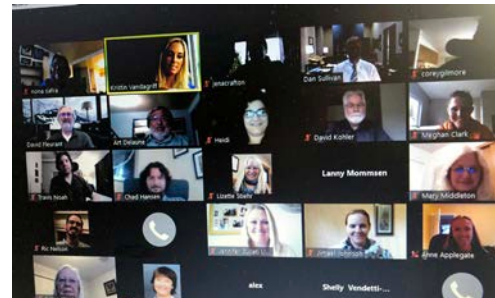
- Disability Confidence
- Disability and Sexuality
- Comedy and Disability
- Social Hours

## Alaska Self Advocates Receive National Recognition



Council members Heidi Lieb-Williams, Sydney Krebsbach, and Corey Gilmore were inducted into the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) National Self-Advocate Leadership Circle.

Council Vice Chair, Heidi Lieb Williams, won the Betty Williams Champions of Equal Opportunity Award. NACDD honored her achievements through a large virtual award ceremony in summer 2020.



## MORE INFORMATION: SELF-ADVOCACY SUMMIT

For information on the next Self-Advocacy Summit, contact Lanny Mommsen (907) 269-8990 or [lanny.mommsen@alaska.gov](mailto:lanny.mommsen@alaska.gov)

Get engaged in self-advocacy through Peer Power's website or Facebook page:

- [www.peerpower907.wixsite.com/peer-power](http://www.peerpower907.wixsite.com/peer-power)
- [www.facebook.com/Peer-Power-of-Alaska-1404232596476441/](https://www.facebook.com/Peer-Power-of-Alaska-1404232596476441/)



# COMMUNITY INCLUSION SUPPORTS & SERVICES

## Federal Living Well Grant Update:

In September of 2018, the Council was awarded a \$1.96 million 5-year federal grant by the Administration on Community Living to develop model approaches to 1) community monitoring, and 2) community capacity building.

The overarching goal of this project is to increase the community integration, health, safety, independence, and well-being of individuals with developmental disabilities through the realization of our DD Shared Vision.

## Grant Year Two Update:

- Alaska Plain Language COVID-19 Toolkit developed by the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services (DSDS) and the Council to provide information and tools to stay healthy, safe, and connected during the pandemic.
- Two statewide self-advocacy webinars were conducted regarding the Alaska Plain Language COVID-19 Toolkit.
- HomeMAP technology/home assessment trainings held with HomeMAP assessments completed/in-progress focused on improving independence, safety, and self-sufficiency.
- Environmental Modification (EMOD) statewide surveys conducted relating to process enhancement.
- Person-Directed Plan of Care trainings (virtual) held focused on making goals more meaningful for employment, emergency preparedness, as well as health and safety.
- Supported Decision-Making (SDM) Symposium held with 71 attendees including lawyers, judges, care coordinators, and direct service professionals.
- Self-advocacy webinar held on voting rights.
- Health Program Manager II hired within DSDS, funded by this grant to support systems alignment with the DD Shared Vision.
- SDMA Guide for Service Agencies and an SDMA brochure widely disseminated throughout the state.
- The second year of data collection was conducted to determine the current system's alignment with the DD Shared Vision.
- Cultural and linguistic competency trainings for service provider staff were held and now include an on-demand option for the four-part training series.
- Person-Centered/Directed trainings for direct support professionals were held, built on the Shared Vision's primary principle: **I Live the Life I Choose with the Support I Direct**. One of the trainings initiated a new model where individuals with developmental disabilities and their direct service providers learn together.
- Community Relationship Building Pilot - saw adaptations to a virtual format on building natural supports and focused on social connection utilizing technology due to the pandemic.
  - All trainings are co-led by self-advocates to ensure full alignment with the DD Shared Vision.

## GRANT OBJECTIVES

1. Improve health, safety, independence, and employment
2. Improve workforce sustainability and training
3. Increase leadership opportunities for self-advocates
4. Improve rights

## COVID-19 RESOURCES TOOLKIT

**Living Well on the Last Frontier**  
A Health & Safety Toolkit for Alaskans with Disabilities

**IN THIS TOOLKIT:**

- Stay Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Stay Connected
- Frequently Asked Questions

**COVID-19 RESOURCE TOOLKIT**  
Information and Resources to Keep You Healthy, Safe, and Connected

The coronavirus disease 2019, or COVID-19, outbreak has left a lot of people in need of new or different resources and clear information. While the situation continues to change all the time, we want you to have access to the information and tools you need to stay healthy, safe, and connected.

We also encourage you to frequently check the State of Alaska and Department of Health and Social Services websites for up-to-date information about COVID-19:

[coronavirus.alaska.gov](https://coronavirus.alaska.gov)  
<https://alaska.gov/oh/COVID-19/Pages/COVID-19/>  
<https://alaska.gov/oh/ohs/Pages/COVID-19-procedures.aspx>

<http://alaska.gov/go/6EW3>



# COMMUNITY INCLUSION SUPPORTS & SERVICES (CONT.)

## Grant Partners:

- Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities (AADD)
- Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (the Trust)
- Disability Law Center of Alaska (DLC)
- Peer Power, Inc. (nonprofit peer advocacy organization)
- Key Coalition of Alaska (nonprofit advocacy organization)
- State of Alaska Senior & Disability Services (SDS)
- Southeast Alaska Independent Living Center (SAIL - nonprofit independent living center)
- Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)
- Center for Human Development, University of Alaska (CHD-UAA)
- The Council also works closely with the Alaska DD Collaborative on this grant work

## Supported Decision Making Agreements (SDMA)

- New section for Older Adults and other new resources on the Council's Supported Decision-Making website!
  - <http://alaska.gov/go/ISA4>
  - The Council's SDMA section of the website has been viewed **1957 times**.
  - In our state, there are now **24 reported SDMAs**.
- The Council held its second annual statewide meeting, the SDMA Professionals Symposium 2019, with presentations by two national experts and a panel of Alaskans who use SDMAs and their supporters. Seventy-one people attended the all-day training. Survey responses were overwhelmingly positive, with most reporters indicating that they were ready to apply what they had learned about SDMAs their work or to their lives.



## NEW RESOURCES



New videos featuring steps to make a Supported Decision Making Agreement were also made as a collaborative effort between the Council, the Trust, AARP, and the Disability Law Center:

<http://alaska.gov/go/C6H8>



## SHARED DD VISION WEBSITE



- <http://alaska.gov/go/D73R>
- Check out the "Welcome to Alaska's Shared Vision" video at:  
<http://alaska.gov/go/0U0E>
- To join the DD Shared Vision Alaska Facebook group which is led by self-advocates, visit  
<https://www.latest.facebook.com/groups/DDSharedVisionAlaska/permalink/468789300386749/>



# COMMUNITY INCLUSION SUPPORTS & SERVICES (CONT.)

## Disability Pride Events Across the State:

Commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act!



The Council was pleased to support the statewide virtual Alaska Disability Pride event in July 2020. This weeklong event included highlights of Alaskan self-advocate stories elevating the DD Shared Vision as well as Alaskan self-advocates interviewing national disability advocates. Self-advocates served on the planning committee for this event as well. Presenters included: Zack Gottsagen - the actor from the movie *Peanut Butter Falcon*, Judy Heumann, Squirmy and Grubs social media influencers, Temple Grandin, Stand Up For Mental Health Comedy Troupe, Lydia XZ Brown, and Micah Fialka-Feldman. The DD Shared Vision was a common theme throughout the event. Facebook live was utilized to broaden the reach with each of the Facebook posts having at least 1,000 views and several over 4,000. This doesn't include the views that will continue with the YouTube channel which can be found on YouTube by searching "2020 Alaska Disability Pride" or going to the [Shared Vision YouTube Channel](#).

The Council developed an [ADA 30th anniversary website \(http://alaska.gov/go/6C19\)](http://alaska.gov/go/6C19) section to celebrate July 2020 and allow for additional outreach of resources regarding self-advocacy. This page has been viewed **832 times**.

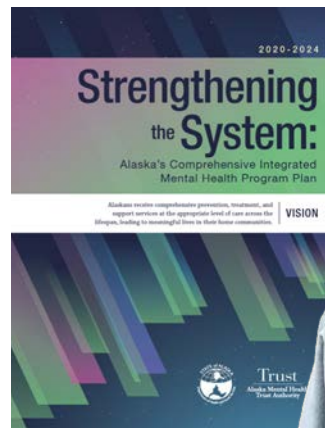
## Strengthening the System:

### Alaska's Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Program Plan 2020 - 2024

Strengthening the System identifies priorities for the next five years to inform planning and funding decisions to meet the needs of Alaska Mental Health Trust beneficiaries. The intent is to strengthen the system of care to allow a comprehensive approach that quickly meets their needs.

The Council is part of the core team which continued efforts this year focused on identifying data points to include on the yearly scorecard as well as strategic planning.

To view the plan, visit: <http://alaska.gov/go/4XSJ>



*Strengthening the System  
VISION – Alaskans receive  
comprehensive prevention,  
treatment, and support services  
at the appropriate level of care  
across the lifespan, leading to  
meaningful lives in their home  
communities.*





# COMMUNITY INCLUSION SUPPORTS & SERVICES (CONT.)

## Autism Ad Hoc Committee



**Neurodevelopmental Partners Workgroup:** The Neurodevelopmental Partners is a group borne out of the screening and diagnosis group from the Council. Members of this group include Child and Family Developmental Services at ANMC, the Providence Pediatric Neurosciences, Ptarmigan Connections, the State of Alaska Neurodevelopmental Outreach Clinic, and other partners. The workgroup continued developing a tiered diagnosis approach to autism spectrum disorder. This tiered approach hopes to provide a more coordinated statewide effort to efficiently come to an unambiguous diagnosis for suspected cases of autism. The first tier is the pediatrician, for the straightforward cases (including Autism and FASD); the second tier is referral to specialists, e.g., speech therapy, occupational therapy, etc. to assess more complicated cases; the third tier is the interdisciplinary team consultation for the most complex cases.

**The state funded neurodevelopmental outreach clinic:** has been working with primary care as well as the Alaska Native Medical Center and Providence Clinic. The spring clinic was cancelled due to COVID and the travel restrictions; the two pediatric neurodevelopmental specialists they contract with are outside of Alaska. They transitioned the fall neurodevelopmental clinic to telehealth and are working with their contractor and Center for Human Development on clinics for this upcoming year. The Outreach Clinics bring Pediatric Neurodevelopmental Specialists, and their teams, travel to Alaskan communities for problem-focused medical assessments, evaluations, and diagnoses of infants and children (10 months - 9 years) who may have a range of neurodevelopmental conditions. They have a specialized focus on autism and provide impressions, treatment considerations, recommendations, and follow up services.

**Autism Awareness proclamation:** To promote autism awareness, inclusion, and self-determination for all, the ad hoc initiated the proclamation for Autism Awareness Month that was issued by the Mayor of Anchorage. Heidi Lieb-Williams, ad hoc chair, read the proclamation proposed by the ad hoc and the Council to the ad hoc members at a virtual meeting April 14.



## Autism Ad Hoc Committee

**Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (ECHO):** An ECHO is a virtual learning network for medical providers to learn best practice care through real-time access to medical experts including physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, and peer advocates. A Family ECHO has been running for a year every other week to provide support and share resources and best practices among the families; this year the family ECHO focused on advocacy, how to leverage telemedicine, and developmental milestones. A Neurodevelopmental (formerly Autism) ECHO started in September and runs weekly. The discussions with, and mentoring from, specialists help equip participants to support individuals and their families with health and disabilities related needs in their home communities. The Center for Human Development (CHD) will be resuming the Behavioral Interventions for Early Childhood ECHO. This ECHO is geared toward providers who work with children age seven and under or are working with their families; this ECHO started in October and will run through March. CHD also launched a Caregiver COVID Schooling ECHO weekly for parents and caregivers who were supporting learners in alternate education settings to equip parents and caregivers with strategies to help their learners be successful during this current fall school situation as it continues to change.

**Autism ad hoc and FASD workgroup merging efforts:** Autism ad hoc and FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) workgroup have been looking for ways to increase their efficiency and to explore the possibility of combining these efforts in the future. The leaders of the Autism ad hoc and the FASD workgroup met twice this year to discuss the possible merger of both groups into one Neurodevelopmental ad hoc committee. The benefits and detriments of this merger were discussed and the group decided to continue focusing on the overlapping priorities for the ad hoc and the workgroup at this time. The Council facilitated the planning "merger" activities that potentially would lead to setting up a summer "Summit" meeting where the priorities of the neurodevelopmental group will be lined up for the next five-year cycle.

## Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD):

**5-Year Plan on FASD:** Over 50 stakeholders from around the state continue to work on the FASD 5-year Strategic plan with the following priority areas: Primary Prevention of FASDs, Screening for and Diagnosis of FASD, Early Childhood and Education, System Transformation and Navigation: Youth and Adults, and Community Outreach and Engagement. The FASD 5-year strategic plan was updated in September 2019, with the group having concluded the 3rd year of 5 year plan. Workgroups have continued to meet regularly and to work on the 2019-20 activities.



## FASD DAY AWARENESS (9/9)

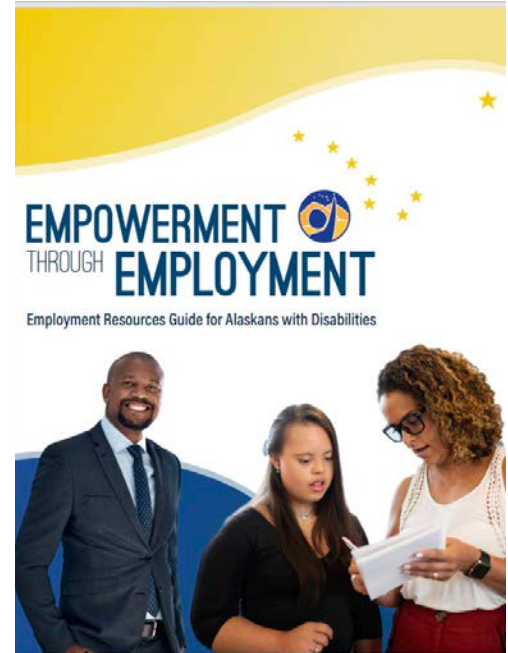


Find FASD Awareness activities and social media toolkits / campaigns at: <http://alaska.gov/go/27D1>

# EMPLOYMENT

## Employer Engagement Efforts

- The Council continued to lead the Business Employment Services Team (BEST) which is a collaboration between the Departments of Health and Social Services and Labor and Workforce Development with the mission of meeting the workforce needs of Alaska businesses and improve hiring outcomes for individuals with disabilities and veterans.
- While, the Council and its DOL partners had everything set for a 5th Annual BEST Employment First Job Fair, this event had to be canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic as it was set for late March 2020. The Council is working with partners to explore transitioning this event to a virtual job fair platform for 2021.



## Empowerment Through Employment Guide

- This resource was developed due to the support of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and in collaboration with many partners to help realize the vision of "Empowerment through Employment" for Alaskans with disabilities. This resource includes information to support becoming employed and maintaining employment, with web links to more information, as well as resources relevant to employment during the pandemic. <http://alaska.gov/go/EZ0Y>

## Alaska Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) :

- Becoming law in 2016, this act allows qualified individuals with disabilities the opportunity to save without jeopardizing vital public benefits (such as SSI and Medicaid).
- As of June 15th, 2020, there were 469 open ABLE accounts, and 448 of them contain funds. Of these 448 accounts, the combined assets are \$2,965,112.64
- The Council led the #ABLEtoSave campaign for Alaska in the month of August and gave numerous presentations: <https://savewithable.com/ak/home/plan-benefits.html>
- The Council worked with the Department of Revenue and the Disability Law Center to create an FAQs document regarding COVID-19 stimulus payments and ABLE accounts: <http://alaska.gov/go/RGD3>



## Continued Trust Collaboration

- The Council has continued to partner with the Trust on the Microenterprise grant program, the Beneficiary Employment Engagement Initiative, the DD mini-grants, and many other projects related to services for individuals with a developmental disability. <http://alaska.gov/go/7LJH>



## INTERESTED IN BEING YOUR OWN BOSS?



Interested in self-employment and being your own boss? Check out the Trust Microenterprise Grant!

To learn more about this exciting self-employment resource for Trust beneficiaries, visit:

<http://alaska.gov/go/7LJH>

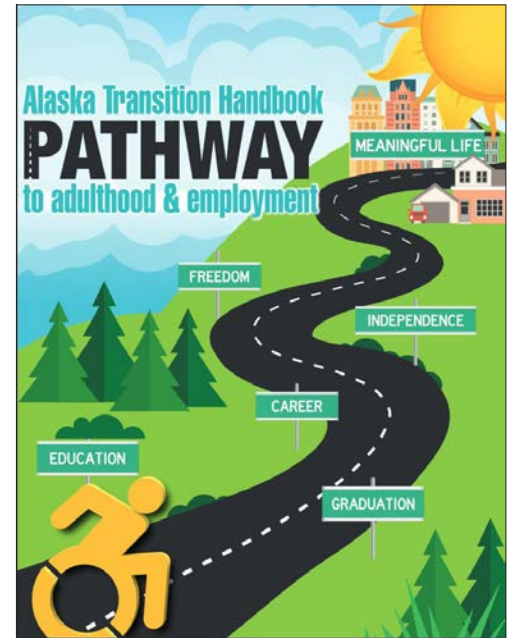
# EMPLOYMENT (CONT.)

## Transition Efforts:

Virtual Transition Fair: In July 2020, the Council led its first Statewide Virtual Transition Fair intended to reach transition-age Alaskans with disabilities and their families. This event focused on filling some of the gaps created by the pandemic and included collaboration with many partners: the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, the Department of Education and Early Development, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, et al.

## Alaska Transition Handbook Pathway to Adulthood

The Council continued to widely disseminate this Alaska specific resource statewide to assist individuals with disabilities and those who support them in successful transitions. It includes success stories, information on state agency resources, benefits and work, savings, and employment support services. The resource was provided to all Alaskan school districts as well as widely disseminated to service providers, individuals with disabilities, families, and service providers. Find it online: <http://alaska.gov/go/9M28>.

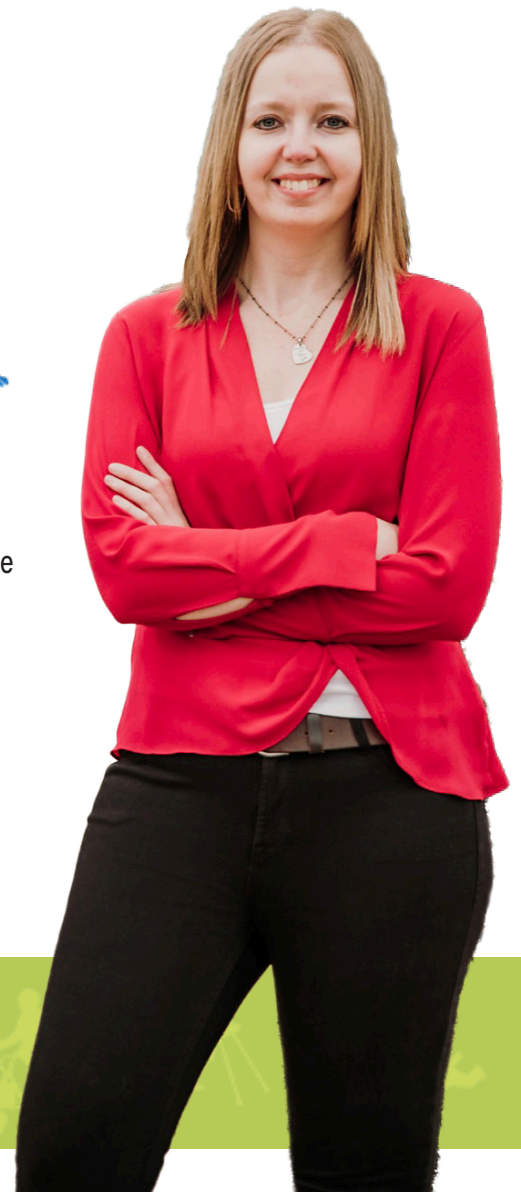


## Alaska Project SEARCH

The Council continues to support 3 Alaska Project SEARCH sites, serving as the Statewide Coordinator for Project SEARCH, allowing youth with disabilities the opportunity to gain transferable employability skills in hospitals in Anchorage (Providence Alaska Medical Center), Fairbanks (Fairbanks Memorial Hospital), and Mat-Su (Mat-Su Regional Medical Center). To learn more, visit: <http://alaska.gov/go/F4VS>.

## Alaska Disability Benefits 101 Website (AK DB 101):

- AK DB 101 is a free website that assists individuals with disabilities and those supporting them to navigate through questions around how benefits are impacted by work.
- To learn more and use this website which includes plain language articles with interactive tools in addition to a benefits to work calculator, visit: [ak.db101.org](http://ak.db101.org)
- For videos and additional tools on how to best use this exciting employment tool, visit the Council's resources page: <http://alaska.gov/go/9VVA>
- The Alaska DB 101 website had 3,057 users from July 1st, 2019 to June 30th, 2020, and many were new users to the site. There were 3,814 sessions conducted. This website's reach has included many different regions of Alaska: Anchorage, Wasilla, Juneau, Fairbanks, Kenai, Ketchikan, College, Soldotna, Homer, Palmer, North Pole, Kodiak, Seward, Cordova, Sitka, Kotzebue, Haines, Bethel, Delta Junction, Petersburg, Valdez, Yakutat, Utiagvik, Glennallen, Metlakatla, Skagway, Nikiski, Nome, Tok, Craig, Dillingham, and Wrangell (32 Alaskan communities in all).



# EARLY INTERVENTION

## Universal Developmental Screening:

The Council continued to collaborate with partners on early identification to advance universal developmental screening using a standardized (Ages and Stages Questionnaire) tool. At the end of 2019, the Council distributed a survey to evaluate the activities conducted by the statewide Universal Developmental Screening Task Force during the previous three years. The self-evaluation survey sought input on the effectiveness and the efficiency of the task force. Feedback from 18 members was received in support of continuing this work although moving towards a different format and leadership. Following the outcomes of the survey, the Council staff provided recommendations. The Section of Women's, Children's and Family Health within the Department of Health and Social Services will now be leading task force activities and has elevated the status of the group to an Advisory Committee. The Council participated in transitioning the task force and will continue to participate in activities. The new Advisory Committee already had its first introductory meeting in September.



## Strategic Direction for Early Childhood in Alaska (2020-2025):

Early Childhood Alaska: A Strategic Direction for 2020-2025 was developed in June 2020, based on a collaborative needs assessment completed in 2019 (A Needs Assessment of Alaska's Mixed-Delivery System of Early Childhood Care and Education). The activities were funded by a Preschool Development Grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Early Childhood Alaska project was supported by three grants: The Preschool Development Grant, funded by the federal Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care; The Impact Project with the State Capacity Building Center, a project of the Office of Child Care; and Indigenous Project LAUNCH through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The Council reviewed the draft documents, participated in a virtual strategic planning session, and submitted feedback for the strategic plan survey in April. The DRAFT Strategic Plan Report recapped in more detail the stakeholder engagement presentation including individual meeting reports and provided a summary of plan development activities as they have evolved. The Leadership Team, including a Council member, took the foundational work completed by the Joint Task Force workgroups in January and incorporated content based on the input from stakeholders.



# EARLY INTERVENTION (CONT.)

## ILP Recruitment and Retention Study:

The Association of Infant Learning Providers (AILPA) and the Council's Early Intervention Committee (EIC) conducted an Infant Learning Program (ILP) Recruitment and Retention Study to advance the knowledge base respective of current recruitment and retention challenges in the ILP programs to better support not only the stability of ILPs but also the families they serve. The survey responses appear to indicate that smaller, more rural programs are having challenges hiring highly qualified staff and it is taking a long time - more than a year (some reported 2-3 years) - to fill vacant positions. The response also found that salaries and benefits for EI/ILP providers are not competitive with other businesses in the community, and if the ILPs are not able to grow their own highly qualified providers, they need to be able to attract them from the lower 48 with incentives to bring them to the state. Utilizing reflective supervision was suggested as an idea to prevent burn out and create a support network within organizations. The outcomes of the ILP study are posted on the Council's website.

## Early Childhood Environmental Scan:

In parallel, a Council member, one Council staff, and some of the Early Intervention Committee attendees participated in qualitative interviews conducted by Prentice Consulting for developing a new Early Childhood Environmental Scan report commissioned by the All Alaska Pediatric Partnership. The report became available in June -- it covered the History of Early Childhood Programs & Initiatives, Alaska's Early Childhood System, Status of Young Children & Families in Alaska, and Regional Profiles. This report is meant to be a resource for policymakers, program managers, service providers, and to help guide early childhood stakeholder efforts to build a better and more comprehensive early childhood system in our state.

## State Interagency Coordinating Council on Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (ICC):

Several members educated themselves on this Council role during the annual orientation of the new ICC members; reviewed the performance report indicators and the outcomes of the parent satisfaction survey, and a letter with comments and recommendations to be included with the report to the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the Governor.



# EDUCATION

## Inclusive Practice Award 2020:

The 2020 Inclusive Practice Award 2020 went to Joy Bartko, Affective Education teacher from the Wendler Middle School, Anchorage School District. Ms. Bartko goes above and beyond to meet each student's specific need by continuously creating tailored and unique solutions that improve students' academic, social, and emotional learning. The Paraeducator of the Year Award 2020 was given to Janelle Caspersen, with the Annette Island School District. Because of Ms. Caspersen's successful modeling of inclusive practices in her work, teachers look up to her in developing safe and trustful relationships with students that allow learning to happen. Knowing each child and family combined with Janelle's unique professional expertise and true passion for creating an ideal learning environment where all children are included is why Ms. Caspersen is an essential member of the staff.



## Expulsion & Suspension in Early Childhood:

A new working group on Early Childhood (3-8) expulsions and seclusions was formed in the Council's Education Committee with the purpose of reducing the use of exclusionary discipline within this age group. According to research, children with disabilities, including developmental disabilities and delays, are more prone to being expelled and secluded in early childhood and preschool settings than older students. The results of a parent/caregiver survey conducted this year to which 54 individuals responded reveal inconsistent and ineffective disciplinary measures practiced in early childhood and preschool settings and lack of staff knowledge in handling challenging behaviors of young children with developmental disabilities. Now that the parent feedback is available, the work group has prepared two draft guidance documents for families and schools (legal guidance and training recommendations). Once finalized, these documents will be disseminated to schools, parent groups, and other stakeholders.



## DD Awareness Month (March):

In recognition of the Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month (March), students in grades K-6 in Alaska were invited to create posters using the theme We're Better Together. The student winner's artwork was shown in schools across Alaska and the winner's school and district were featured on social media and on the GCDSE website. 6th Grade students from (Lower Kuskokwim School District) in Bethel were selected as winners in the category "Highest Classroom Participation." An individual winner of the contest was selected from the same school.



# EDUCATION (CONT.)

## SESA Reauthorization:

The Special Education Service Agency (SESA) is scheduled to sunset June 30, 2021 unless reauthorized. The Council supports the reauthorization of SESA to June 30, 2029, to meet critical needs for educational services in rural Alaska. The agency's outreach services help improve outcomes for students with disabilities, provide staff with customized professional development, promote retention of teachers through provision of much needed training, create networks and communities for teachers in rural environments, and assist districts in maintaining compliance and building local capacity in areas of need.

## COVID-19 Education Resources:

Two COVID-19 related resources were developed:

1. [The Compensatory Education and Extended School Year Services FAQ](#)
2. [Your Child's Rights to Special Education Services During COVID-19](#)

These resources were created by the Council and two of its partners, the Alaska Disability Law Center and the Stone Soup Group. These resources are for informational purposes only and are not legal advice or the formation of a lawyer/client relationship.

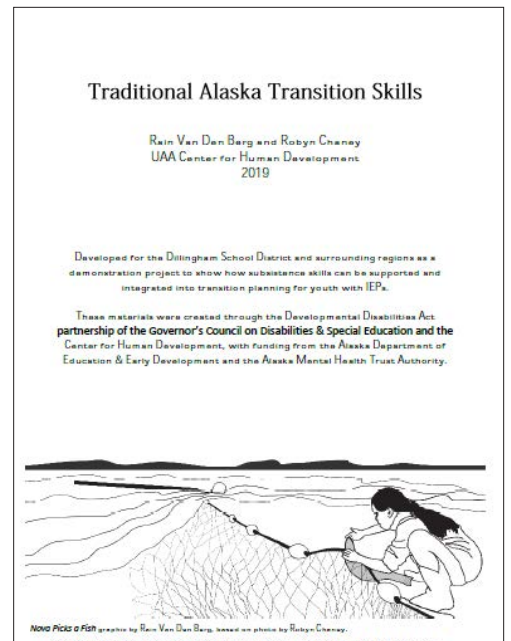
## COVID-19 DEED Website:

Newly developed [Department of Education and Early Development \(DEED\) COVID-19 website](#) provides schools with information and resources relative to the rapidly evolving COVID-19 situation and launched the [Teaching & Learning Support site](#) to offer information, resources, and leadership to teachers and school leaders across Alaska. The resources include guidance to support planning and strategies for reopening schools such as [Alaska Smart Start 2020](#) built on the recommendations of health officials and collaborative conversations with education stakeholders. It utilizes a tiered approach based on the pandemic risk levels per community. School districts and communities have been working together to develop clear, actionable steps that are necessary for teaching and learning to continue throughout the 2020-2021 school year.

## Traditional Alaskan Transition Skills Curriculum:

The Council, through the initiative, planning, and guidance of its Rural Transitions Workgroup; with funding from the Trust, and with the help of its DD Act partner, the UAA Center for Human Development (CHD) continued its efforts to further develop rural transition curriculum. Council partners for this project also include the Dillingham City School District, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the network of Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation offices, and the Alaska Council on the Arts. Partners and staff worked on recruiting local teams of educators, families, and subject matter experts for the next two units of rural and traditional transition curriculum. The Winter Survival/Outdoor Skills and Self-Employment/Creative Industries units were finalized in November 2020 (electronic repositories for curriculum are with SESA and Dillingham City School District). This Traditional Alaskan Transition Skills Curriculum can be located at:

[www.dlgdsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/traditional\\_alaskan\\_transition\\_skills\\_curriculum\\_2019\\_final.pdf](http://www.dlgdsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/traditional_alaskan_transition_skills_curriculum_2019_final.pdf) and at <https://sesa.org/resources/educational/>





# EDUCATION (CONT.)

## Alaska State Special Education Conference (ASSEC) 2020:

The Council had a resource table with tools, information, and Safety Kept in Place kits at the 2020 ASSEC. Council Staff and the Special Education Advisory Panel members presented five training sessions, which were attended by more than 109 professional educator attendees. Sessions included discussion of: supported decision-making, civil rights curriculum for self-advocacy skills, and authentic transition planning for rural and Native Alaskan students. Council staff also co-presented with a USC Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) specialist on rural transitions curriculum to educators and parents at the EPICS Conference in New Mexico.

## Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) duties:

The Council, in its role as the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP), submitted a comprehensive annual report to the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) as part of its responsibility under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The report and recommendations were shared with the commissioner of the Department of Education and Early Development and the Governor. Staff attended monthly DEED leadership calls with DEED's Commissioner.



# HEALTH

## Emergency Preparedness

### GetReady! Toolkits:

This past year, Alaska's emergency preparedness toolkit for individuals with disabilities continued to be distributed online and council staff continued to do presentation on the toolkit. To access the GetReady Toolkit, visit: <http://alaska.gov/go/CG77>

## Health Promotion

### Annual Aging and Disability Summit:

The Council supported the sixth annual event (October 5-9, 2020) by setting up a virtual event, as well as facilitating a legislative panel. Over 100 individuals were in attendance each year with over 50 agencies/groups represented from across the state with over 50 agencies/groups represented from all across the state.

### Inclusive Play Dates:

The Council again partnered with inclusive play champions Anchorage Park Foundation and was part of the Inclusive Play initiative. This year due to COVID-19 inclusive "playdates" were suspended. However, the Council continued with social media marketing to promote the initiative and to educate stakeholders on inclusive play in Anchorage. More information can be found at: <http://anchorageparkfoundation.org/programs/inclusiveplay/>.

### Messaging Campaigns:

The Council worked with the Department of Health and Social Services on several messaging campaigns focused on health and safety during this pandemic as well as ensuring that individuals with disabilities know their rights and options. This work was highlighted nationally. A few examples of this are (note these messages are outdated but examples of work done):

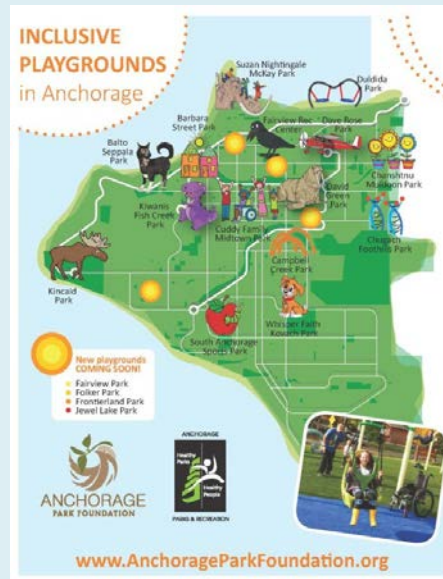
- Everyone Has A Story - <http://alaska.gov/go/KU0G>
- Family Support -
- Face Coverings - <http://alaska.gov/go/12P7>

### Alaska Disability Advisory Group:

Council staff organized and facilitated biweekly Alaska Disability Advisory Group (ADAG) on Emergency Preparedness meetings. These meeting bring together emergency managers and the disability community to address concerns. This year since March has been focused on the COVID-19 pandemic, examples of topics included: PPE, messaging (see above for examples), mask usage, education of emergency managers, and other disability concerns. Council staff/ADAG members also served as representatives at Mass Care, Vaccine Workgroup, Vulnerable Children Task Force. Products that came out of the Vulnerable Children Task Force included the *Circle of Support* (<http://alaska.gov/go/H0Q4>) and *additional information for children with disabilities* (<http://alaska.gov/go/X38G>).



## FIND AN INCLUSIVE PARK IN ANCHORAGE!



Visit <http://anchorageparkfoundation.org/programs/inclusiveplay/> to find a park near you!

# COVID-19

## COVID-19 and Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities:

It's important to note that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are often in the "high risk" category for COVID-19, with recent studies showing significant risks of death for those with intellectual/developmental disabilities. (New FAIR Health Study Uncovers Relationship between COVID-19 Comorbidities and Mortality: *"Top Three Comorbidity Risk Factors for COVID-19 Mortality across All Age Groups Are Developmental Disorders, Lung Cancer, and Intellectual Disabilities and Related Conditions."*)

Per the New York Times, "People with intellectual disabilities and developmental disorders are three times more likely to die of Covid-19, compared with patients without the conditions, a new analysis found." (New York Times, 11/10/20, Developmental Disabilities Heighten Risk of Covid Death: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/10/health/covid-developmental-disabilities.html>)

Home and Community Based Services are especially critical for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities during the pandemic, allowing individuals to remain in their home communities, avoiding higher cost congregate settings which increase the risk of contracting COVID-19.

## COVID-19 Resources

- Alaska COVID-19 Website: [covid19.alaska.gov](https://covid19.alaska.gov)
- Alaska Department of Health and Social Services COVID-19 Website: [dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/ COVID-19/default.aspx](https://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/COVID-19/default.aspx)
- New Alaska Resource COVID-19 Toolkit – Your simple guide to resources: [dhss.alaska.gov/dsds/Documents/ covid-19/Alaska-COVID-19-Toolkit.pdf](https://dhss.alaska.gov/dsds/Documents/covid-19/Alaska-COVID-19-Toolkit.pdf)
- You may call the Alaska COVID-19 Care Line Phone Number at (844) 985-8275. They may offer resources and mental health support during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- More Resources for well-being: [dhss.alaska.gov/dbh/Pages/Well-Being- Alaska.aspx](https://dhss.alaska.gov/dbh/Pages/Well-Being-Alaska.aspx)





## Council Members

1. Art Delaune - Fairbanks
2. Donald Enoch - Juneau
3. David Fleurant - Anchorage
4. Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus - Kiana
5. John Lee - Anchorage
6. Elizabeth Joseph - Kongiganak
7. David Kohler - Anchorage
8. Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich - Anchorage
9. Anna Attla - Anchorage
10. Meghan Clark - Anchorage
11. Corey Gilmore - Juneau
12. Margaret Evans - Anchorage
13. Heidi Lieb-Williams - Anchorage
14. Sydney Krebsbach - Juneau
15. Molly McManamin - Anchorage
16. Lyle Downing - Palmer
17. Joshua Gill - Bethel
18. Alex Gimarc - Anchorage
19. Senator Peter Micciche - Kenai
20. Nona Safra - Anchor Point
21. Charlene Tautfest - Soldotna
22. Duane Mayes - Anchorage
23. Jena Crafton - Eagle River
24. Charley McAnally - Kaasan
25. Travis Noah - Anchorage
26. Jennifer Zucati-Pirtle - Palmer

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