







Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education

2021-22 Annual Update



State of Alaska • Department of Health • Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education Robert B. Atwood Building, 550 W 7th Ave, Suite 1220 • Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Phone: 907-269-8990 • FAX: 907-269-8995 • Toll Free: 888-269-8990

 $health.alaska.gov/gcdse \bullet www.facebook.com/gcdse \bullet www.twitter.com/gcdse$

Creating change that improves the lives of

Alaskans with disabilities

Community Inclusion, Supports, & Services

People with developmental disabilities will have increased access to a flexible system of meaningful supports and services in their homes and communities to increase the number of people with developmental disabilities living the lives they choose.

Self-Advocacy & Leadership

People with developmental disabilities

will have increased access to education, tools, and opportunities for self-advocacy across the lifespan to increase the number of people with developmental disabilities expressing their vision for their lives in local, state, and national forums.

Employment

People with developmental disabilities will have access to supports, services, programs, and training necessary for successful transitions to adulthood, meaningful work experiences, integrated and competitive employment, as well as career development, across their lifespan.

Developmental Disabilities Shared Vision

"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."



Executive Summary



Patrick Reinhart
Executive Director

The Council experienced some very significant changes in 2022. First, there were two changes of leadership ending with Patrick Reinhart, former and retired Executive Director, returning to take the helm in mid-May, for which the Council is thankful. There were also many changes in staff and council members last winter/spring, which was a challenge, but with good recruitment we have a solid and experienced staff supporting a 25-member board. This was followed by a revitalization of all six committees over the summer and fall of 2022. The Council also moved offices, albeit only down the hall in the Atwood building on the 12th floor.

The Council spent a significant amount of time untangling a federal finding the Council was out of compliance with federal law, specifically as it relates to our role as the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) under the Developmental

Disabilities and Bill of Rights Act. The assumption made by our federal compliance officers was other roles adopted by the Council, such as being the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) for the State Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), and a beneficiary advisory board to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, were duties the State assigned to the Council, and therefore was viewed as a potential violation of federal law. The Council was able to show that these were not "assigned" to the Council, but rather they were duties we asked to take on over thirty years ago because they made sense in terms of our holistic approach to improving lives of Alaskans with disabilities. Showing this historical context coupled with assistance from both our U.S. Senator's Sullivan and Murkowski elevating our argument to higher levels of the Department of Health and Human Services, proved to be the right solution and the non-compliance finding was dropped by the federal government last summer.

Lastly, all the staff and members of the Council were saddened for the loss of our disability champion in Congress, Rep. Don Young, who co-chaired the House Disability Caucus at the request of Council many years ago. It was a role he relished and was good at, often being the first person to cross the aisle to co-sponsor disability related legislation in Congress. Our own Chair, Heidi Lieb-Williams, was able to deliver a very heartfelt eulogy for Congressman Young at the national Disability Policy Seminar a week after his sudden passing. Our hearts and thanks go out to his family for his decades of service to Alaskans, especially Alaskans with disabilities.

Council Role

State Interagency Coordinating Council

IDEA (Part C Infants & Toddlers with Disabilities)

State Special Education **Advisory Panel**

IDEA (Part B — Special Education)

Governing Board of Special Education Services Agency

(SESA)

State Council on Developmental Disabilities

(DD Act)

Beneficiary Advisory Board

Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority

Creating Change that Improves the Lives of Alaskans with disabilities

Executive Committee

Heidi Lieb-Williams, Chair Jena Crafton, Vice Chair Patrick Reinhart, Executive Director



Committees

(Standing committees conducting daily operations)

Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) Self-Advocacy and Leadership **Employment**

Community Inclusion, Supports, and Services

Legislative

Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP)

Introduction

The Council was first established in the 1970s through the Alaska Legislature to meet the requirements of several state and federal laws.

It combines the expertise and experience of many stakeholders throughout the state into one unique Council and serves five distinct roles.

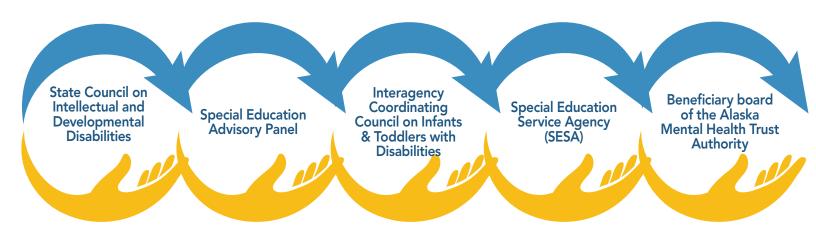
As the State Council on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, the Council works with the Department of Health, Senior and Disabilities Services and other state agencies to ensure that people with disabilities and their families receive the services they need and participate in the design of those services.

As the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP), the Council advises the Department of Education and Early Development on the provision of special education and related services for children with disabilities from age 3 through age 21.

As the Interagency Coordinating Council on Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (ICC), the Council advises the state's early intervention program on the coordination and provision of quality early intervention services for children with disabilities from birth to age 3.

The Council also serves as the governing board for the Special Education Service Agency (SESA) which provides training and consultation to Alaska school districts serving children with low incidence disabilities. SESA is an educational service agency comprised of a low incidence disability service inclusive of a statewide lending library. Low incidence disabilities include autism, deaf and hard of hearing (DHOH), vision impairment, emotional disabilities, and multiple disabilities.

Additionally, the Council serves as a beneficiary board of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority advising the Trust on the status, conditions and needs of Alaskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.



The Council's work falls into three broad categories: advocacy, capacity building, and systems change. The term "advocacy activities" means active support of policies and practices that promote systems change efforts and other activities that further advance self-determination and inclusion in all aspects of community living (including housing, education, employment, and other aspects) for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

The term "capacity building activities" means activities (such as training and technical assistance) that expand and/or improve the ability of individuals with developmental disabilities, families, supports, services, and/or systems to promote, support, and enhance self-determination, independence, productivity, and inclusion in community life.

The term "systemic change activities" means a sustainable, transferable, and replicable change in some aspect of service or support availability, design, or delivery that promotes positive or meaningful outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

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: https://health.alaska. gov/gcdse/Pages/contacts

Council Committees/Workgroups









Council State Five-Year Plan





Council State Five-Year Plan

The Council has approved its Five-Year State Plan that runs from Federal Fiscal Years 2022 through 2026.

Goal 1 - Community Inclusion, Supports, & Services

People with developmental disabilities will have increased access to a flexible system of meaningful supports and services in their homes and communities to increase the number of people with developmental disabilities living the lives they choose.

Choice of Independence in Long-Term Supports and Services People will have information, training, tools, and programs for systems change, supported decision-making, strategies and technology for independence, community-building, and more to increase the number of adults with developmental disabilities who choose and direct their longterm supports and services.

Housing

People with developmental disabilities and their families will have information, training, tools, and programs for housing accessibility, housing availability, housing rights, landlordtenant relations, cohabitation strategies, and more to increase the number of people with developmental disabilities who live where and with whom they choose.

Health & Healthcare

People will have information, training, tools, and programs about Medicaid services, homeand-community-based services, health and well-being, community events and activities, and more to increase the number of people with developmental disabilities across their lifespan who are living full and meaningful lives.

Education & Early Development

People with developmental disabilities across their lifespan and their families will have information, training, tools, and programs to increase the number of people with disabilities included with non-disabled age peers in infant daycare, preschools, K-12, and post-secondary education.

Emerging Needs People with developmental disabilities and their families will have information, training, and tools to prepare for them for personal emergencies, natural disasters, and/or other emergent circumstances to increase personal safety and the security of services, supports, and self-determined choices.

Goal 2 – Self-Advocacy & Leadership

People with developmental disabilities will have increased access to education, tools, and opportunities for self-advocacy across the lifespan to increase the number of people with developmental disabilities expressing their vision for their lives in local, state, and national forums.

Developmental Disabilities (DD) Shared Vision **Implementation**

People with developmental disabilities will have information on the Shared Vision and will have opportunities to actively participate in planning and implementation of the Shared Vision to increase the number of people who understand the Shared Vision and the number who live the life they choose with the supports they direct.

Support Self-Advocacy Organization

A self-advocacy organization will have direct funding support; and information, training, and tools for success to increase its membership, sustainability, and organizational outreach.

Goal 3 - Employment

People with developmental disabilities will have access to supports, services, programs, and training necessary for successful transitions to adulthood, meaningful work experiences, integrated and competitive employment, as well as career development, across their lifespan.

Each goal contains multiple objectives which support the activities and day to day work the council undertakes to implement the plan and move closer to achieving our goals.

Employment First Transition

People will have information, training, tools, and programs on telework, the state as a model employer, employment rights, and universally designed work environments to increase the percentage of people with disabilities with meaningful, integrated, competitive employment in typical work settings.

Traditional Transition

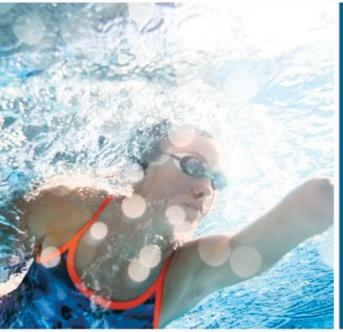
GOAL 3#

Transition-aged youth (14-22 years old) with developmental disabilities will have increased information, education services, training, and tools that are regionally, culturally, and linguistically relevant to them to increase the number of young adults in rural communities with skills for meaningful, place-based adulthood.









Advocacy and Leadership



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.

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)).

State Advocacy

Annual meetings with Alaska legislators presented priorities to members of the Governor's cabinet and Governor's office.

The Council's 2022 Advocacy Priorities

- 1. Supporting Executive Order 122
- 2. Repeal of the Sub-Minimum Wage Statute

GCDSE identified two advocacy items for 2022 legislative session, supporting Executive Order 122 and the Repeal of the Sub-Minimum Wage Statute and created position papers for these. GCDSE council members met with legislatures in Juneau and advocated for these two issues. The Executive Order 122 would separate the department of health and social services into 2 departments.

The Council was instrumental in advocacy for passage of SB 185, a bill that would permanently ban sub-minimum wage exemptions for persons with disabilities. It should be noted that the state had administratively banned this practice four years ago but codified it in statute only this year. At the bill signing in July, 2022, the President of the Alaska Senate (and member of the Council) and Governor thanked the Council for bringing this issue to their attention and Chair Lieb-Williams gave a great advocacy speech during this very public and newsworthy event.

Federal Advocacy and Disability Policy Seminar

In March 2022, three Council staff, three Council members, along with three Peer Power members attended the hybrid Disability Policy Seminar (DPS) meeting with Alaska's U.S. Congressional Delegation virtually and in person for Hill Day Visits. Council staff served as Captain, providing logistics and technical assistance to facilitate the virtual meetings with Senators Dan Sullivan and Lisa Murkowski. Advocates presented commentary on community living, education, social security, and criminal justice. Download fact sheets on the web: https://disabilitypolicyseminar.org/fact-sheets.

Self-Advocacy Support

Peer Power Alaska



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

Peer Power's 5th Annual Statewide Self-Advocacy Summit took place in person from April 29th – May 1st in Anchorage. Sixty five Alaskans with developmental disabilities and / or their supporters from across the state

attended the Summit. Topics included: Identifying needs and wants, systems advocacy, advocacy skill building, and voting. Check out this video on the Summit: https://www.facebook.com/PeerPower907/videos/755586612114696

For information on the next Self-Advocacy Summit, contact Lanny Mommsen 907-269-8990 or lanny.mommsen@alaska.gov









Community Inclusion Supports & Services





Community Inclusion Supports & Services

Council's Federal Living Well Grant Update

In September of 2018, the Council was awarded a \$1.96 million dollar 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 realization of our DD Shared Vision.

Grant Objectives

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

Early Intervention and Education

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

The Council, in its role as the ICC, advises and assists the State Office of the Infant Learning Program (ILP) regarding the arrangement of appropriate Early Interventions Services (EIS) for children with disabilities age birth through 3. In their duties, required by the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the ICC works with the ILP and numerous stakeholders across the State to set goals, develop plans and review the progress of EIS. The ICC and ILP certified and submitted their Annual Progress Report to the Office of Special Education (OSEP). OSEP has informed the ICC that, once again, Alaska received the highest determination rating, "Meets Requirements." Over the last several years the ILP has focused on improving the social/emotional development for young children. With the data showing a strong upward trend, we can definitively say they have "moved the bar" in this area. Additionally, they are implementing a new 6 year plan that will continue this momentum.

Special Education Services Agency (SESA)

SESA provides training and technical assistance to school personnel who have students with low-incidence disabilities, especially those in remote or rural regions of Alaska and the Council serves as their governing board. SESA's former Executive Director, Patrick Pillai, retired in July, 2022. The Council would like to thank him for his over 28 years of service to SESA and also welcome their new Executive Director, Olivia Yancey. Congratulations to Patrick, and welcome, Olivia!

One of the many invaluable services SESA provides is a lending library that supports all of the programs and grants housed at SESA. The library provides materials, assistive technology and information to SESA staff, Alaskan school personnel, and anyone in the state of Alaska to help individuals with special needs, or to develop a better understanding of special needs. In 2022, the library was officially renamed The Anne Freitag Lending Library in honor of their recently retired Librarian of 32 years, Anne Freitag. Anne had been the only librarian SESA had known since its establishment in 1989 so this honor is richly deserved!

Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP)

The Council, in its role as the SEAP advises and assists the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) to improve special education services for children with disabilities from age 3 through 21. Having sorted out any Federal non-compliance issues, the SEAP was able to get back to business in 2022. The Panel's membership has been entirely rebuilt and is filled with dedicated professionals and parents from across the state. The new SEAP held its first meeting in October, 2022 followed by an illuminating training session outlining the important duties and responsibilities of the SEAP.

Alaska Rural Transitions Program

The Council continued to support the development and promotion of the Alaska Traditional Transition Skills Curriculum. Targeted Disparity is a goal in the Council's five-year-plan, which includes specific activities supporting rural transitions to enhance awareness and utilization of rural transitions across the state. Author, Rain Van Den Berg, completed the final units of the curriculum in September 2022, and presented at the September 2022 Alaska Mental Health Trust (AMHT) Conference, and to a national group (AUCD subcommittee) in December 2022.

The curriculum can be found at: https://sesa.org/resources/educational/alaska-traditionaltransition-skills/

Inclusive Practice and Paraeducator of the Year Awards 2023

The Council has established annual awards to be given at the Annual Statewide Special Education Conference each February. The Inclusive Practice Awards honor outstanding educators and paraeducators who work to ensure students with disabilities have the opportunity for inclusive education with their general education peers. Whereas numerous educators deserve recognition for a multitude of reasons, the focus of this award is exclusively on exemplary inclusive practices.

Three awards were presented this year: Inclusive Practice Team, Inclusive Practice Individual, and Paraeducator of the Year. Help us congratulation the 2023 winners!

2023 Inclusive Practice Award Winners

Each of this year's winners truly embody the Council's mission of "creating change that improves the lives of Alaskans with disabilities."



Inclusive Practice Team

Skagway Special Education Team: Cody Burnham, Special Education Director/Teacher, Amy MacPherson, Special Education Teacher/Preschool Director (pictured here), and paraprofessionals Victoria Jacobson, Andrew Nadon, Peyton Rodig, Haley Whiteman, Benjamin Woolard, and Peggy Hoff.



Inclusive Practice Individual

Dana Blackwell, Juneau



Paraeducator of the Year

Amy Russell, Homer



Health





Health

Emergency Preparedness

GetReady! Toolkits: Over the past year, Alaska's emergency preparedness toolkit for individuals with disabilities continued to be distributed on-line.

To access the GetReady Toolkit, visit: https://health.alaska.gov/dph/wcfh/Documents/disability/GetReadyWebaccessible.pdf

Health Promotion

Annual Disability and Aging Summit: The Council supported the eighth annual (October 4 & 5, 2022) event by having staff on the steering committee, assisting with mail outs and completing evaluation of the event. Over 100 individuals registered this year with over 50 agencies/groups represented from across the state.

Alaska Disability Advisory Group: Council staff organized and facilitated monthly Alaska Disability Advisory Group (ADAG) on Emergency Preparedness meetings. These meeting bring together emergency managers and the disability community to address concerns.

Expanding Disabilities Network's (DD Councils) Access to COVID 19 Vaccines: GCDSE, other members of ADAG as well as other community partners were also involved in the a Expanding Disabilities Network's (DD Councils) Access to COVID 19 Vaccines grant. Disability Law Center produced these videos:

- Corey Gilmore and Ric Nelson were both council members at the time the PSA was
 produced and disseminated. They spoke about variants and recommendations may
 change, but we know it's still important to be up-to-date on your COVID vaccines and to
 wear well-fitted, multi-layered masks to protect yourself and those around you.
- Parent, Megan Kelley, talks about why it is important for children to get the COVID-19 vaccine and were to look for up to date information on vaccinations.

Watch both videos: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLR1RAJIc_3fBrhH0yKHsaq7bDXODuLJRD





Employment





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 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.

GCDSE continued to collaborate with the Business Employment Services Team (BEST) Team. The event took place over an on-line virtual platform for five days during the first week of April 2022.

Alaska Project SEARCH

The Council continued 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: https://health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Pages/committees/et/SEARCH.aspx

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.

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: https://health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Pages/microenterprise.aspx





Resources





RESOURCES

Developmental Disabilities Shared Vision

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.



Shared DD Vision website hosted by the

Council. 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.

Website: https://ddsharedvision.dhss.alaska.gov

"Welcome to Alaska's Shared Vision" video:

https://health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Pages/ddsharedvision/family.aspx

Join the DD Shared Vision Alaska Facebook group led by self-advocates:

https://www.facebook.com/groups/DDSharedVisionAlaska/permalink/468789300386749

Supported Decision-Making (SDM)

Supported Decision-Making Agreements are written agreements giving people the help they need to make choices about their lives. These choices could be about where to live, what to do during the day, how to spend money, or when to see a doctor.



If you have an agreement, supporters can help you find out what choices you have and help you learn more about the choices you have made. They can find ways for you to try out different choices, to see how you feel and which ones you like. If you want them to, supporters can remind you of important dates and come with you to meetings or appointments

Website: https://health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Pages/projects/SDMA

Empowerment Through Employment Guide



Employment Resources Guide for Alaskans with Disabilities. Helping individuals with disabilities who would like to know more about their employment related options and resources in the state of Alaska.

Webinar: https://health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Pages/committees/et

Handbook: https://health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Documents/

EmpowermentThroughEmployment.pdf

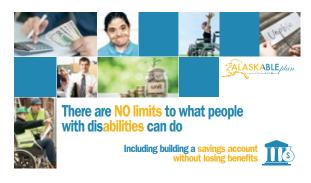
Alaska Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act



Becoming law in 2016, this act allows qualified individuals ALASKABLE plan with disabilities the opportunity to save for qualified disability expenses without jeopardizing vital public benefits (such as SSI and Medicaid).

Website: https://savewithable.com/ak/home/plan-benefits.html

Alaska Disability Benefits 101 Website (AK DB 101)

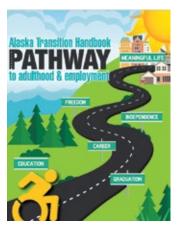


AK DB 101 is a free website that assists individuals with disabilities and those supporting them to navigate through questions around how benefits are impacted by work.

To learn more and use this website which includes plain language articles with interactive tools in addition to a benefits to work calculator, visit: https://ak.db101.org

For videos and additional tools on how to best use this exciting employment tool, visit the Council's resources page: https://health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Pages/db101.aspx

Alaska Transition Handbook: Pathway to Adulthood and Employment



This Alaska specific resource statewide is here 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. To view a PDF copy of the handbook, please visit https://health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Documents/TransitionsHandbook.pdf

Alaska Self-Advocacy & Leadership Opportunities Guide



Get engaged in self advocacy through one of the many Alaskan self-advocacy groups. To view the recorded webinar on Alaska Advocacy &Leadership Opportunities and access a PDF copy of the guide:

Introductory Webinar: https://vimeo.com/650469937

Website: https://health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Documents/AlaskaAdvocacy--August2021.pdf

Alaska Work Matters!



In early 2021, Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy initiated the formation of the Alaska Work Matters Task Force to review and analyze existing policies, practices, and procedures, barriers, and workforce utilization data regarding the employment of people with disabilities in the State of Alaska, and prepare a report that includes recommendations that should be adopted by the Governor and applicable departments, agencies, and commissions of the executive branch, and policy options for consideration by the legislative branch to expand and improve employment opportunities and outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Twenty-two recommendations and sixty-eight action steps were identified by the Task Force and are described in detail in the full report.

Website: https://health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Pages/committees/et/ AlaskaWorkMatters.aspx

25 Council Members

Laura Allen – Anchorage Anna Attla – Anchorage Jena Crafton - Eagle River Art Delaune - Fairbanks Lyle Downing – Palmer Donald Enoch - Juneau Margaret Evans – Anchorage David Fleurant - Chugiak Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus – Kiana Corey Gilmore – Anchorage Ken Hemrick – Anchorage Elizabeth Joseph – Kongiganak Heidi Lieb-Williams – Anchorage Duane Mayes - Anchorage Charles McAnally - Kaasan Caitlin Poindexter - Anchorage Sabrina Richmond – Juneau Nona Safra – Anchor Point Charlene Tautfest - Soldotna Fred Villa – Wasilla Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich – Anchorage Jennifer Zucati-Pirtle – Palmer Tony Newman - Juneau Senator Peter Micciche – Soldotna Charisse Millett – Anchorage

Council Staff

Patrick Reinhart, Executive Director Vacant, Planner III Lanny Mommsen, Research Analyst III Rich Saville, Program Coordinator II Jamie Kokoszka, Program Coordinator II Vacant, Program Coordinator I Michael Stevenson, Business Services Program Manager lan Miner, Administrative Assistant



State of Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy

Department of Health

Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education

Patrick Reinhart, Executive Director

Robert B. Atwood Building 550 W 7th Ave, Suite 1220, Anchorage, AK 99501

Toll Free: 1-888-269-8990 | Phone: 907-269-8990 | Fax: 907-269-8995

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