

Trust

Alaska Mental Health
Trust Authority

Alaskan Seniors
Living Longer Growing Stronger
from the Alaska Commission on Aging



Maintain Safety Net Services

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and Partner Advisory boards support maintaining health care services for people with mental illness, intellectual-developmental disabilities, substance use disorders, Alzheimer's disease and related dementia, traumatic brain injury, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, etc.

When community-based services are reduced or eliminated because of budget cuts, Alaska's most vulnerable citizens are more likely to end up in emergency room care, psychiatric hospitals, nursing homes, jail, or prison—most often at state expense. There will always be public costs serving Trust beneficiaries—either on the front end with community supports or on the back end with expensive institutional care.

For example, community behavioral health treatment and rehabilitative services cost 20-50% less than a psychiatric hospital for people with severe mental illness.¹ Community support services for seniors can cost half to one-fourth less than nursing home care.² For a person not on Medicaid, the cost of nursing home care can be over three times the cost of being served at home and in the community.³

Examples of community-based services include housing assistance, assisted living, family caregiver and natural supports, case management, education and training for providers and caregivers, peer support, transportation, mental health and substance abuse treatment.

Community services provide jobs for health care professionals and paraprofessionals, all of whom contribute to a healthy workforce and strong Alaskan economy. Reducing safety net services not only affects citizens with disabilities and their families who struggle to support family members living at home, but affects jobs in the community for service providers.

Trust beneficiaries are more likely to live meaningful and productive lives when given adequate community support, and this support helps people remain stable and safe in community—and out of expensive emergency or institutional care.

What are Community Based Services?

- Community based services for people experiencing **Mental Illness** (schizophrenia, bipolar disorder) and/or **Substance Use Disorders** include treatment services, supportive housing, case management, employment supports, and peer support.
- Support services for people with **Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities** (Down's syndrome, autism) might include life skills assistance, a service animal, drop-in day center, and/or job coaching.

- Support services for seniors with ***Alzheimer's Disease*** or ***Related Dementia*** might mean assistance with chores and meals, respite for family caregivers, adult day programs, personal care assistance, care coordination/case management, and home-delivered meals.
- Support services for people with ***other Brain-Based Disabilities*** (traumatic brain injury, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders) might include ongoing case management, job coaching/mentorship, life skills training, supported housing, and respite for caregivers.

Consequences of reduced community based services

- Without community supports, a family can lose their ability to care for their senior or disabled family members at home.
- Seniors and Alaskans with disabilities who do not receive support services are more likely to move into institutional care.
- Without support services, Alaskans transitioning from corrections, juvenile justice, or therapeutic court programs are more likely to recidivate and return to jail or prison.
- By reducing community supports, the state will spend more for institutional services, such as corrections, juvenile justice, psychiatric hospitals, and nursing homes.

ASK: Please support community-based health care services so people can live safely in the community, with their families, and out of expensive institutional care.

¹ Comparing outpatient mental health services (average 2010 annual cost of \$8,712/person) to inpatient psychiatric treatment (average 2010 annual cost of \$21,674/person) and residential psychiatric/behavioral rehabilitation services (average 2010 annual cost of \$48,766/person). **Source:** Long-Term Forecast for Medicaid Enrollment and Spending, Supplements 2008, 2009, and 2010, Department of Health and Social Services

² Comparing home and community-based services like personal care attendants (average 2010 annual cost \$23,387/person) and Medicaid waiver services (average 2010 annual cost ranging from \$23,299 to \$43,662/person) to skilled nursing facility costs (average 2010 annual cost \$91,988/person is the state's cost, but the total cost with all funding sources). **Source:** Long-Term Forecast for Medicaid Enrollment and Spending, Supplements 2008, 2009, and 2010, Department of Health and Social Services; Division of Senior and Disability Services waiver data.

³ According to the Genworth 2016 Cost of Care Survey, the median annual cost of a semi-private room in a nursing home in Alaska is \$292,000.