



## State of Alaska's Public Safety Action Plan January 17, 2018 Update

### Frequently Asked Questions

**What's the difference between short-term and long-term actions in the Plan? When will the state complete the Plan?** Agencies are aiming to complete or make substantial progress on “short-term” or “ongoing” initiatives within a year; long-term actions are anticipated to take more time or require additional evaluation to determine the best path forward. Initiatives that are completed will be identified in progress updates; but, new action items will also continue to be added on an ongoing basis.

**Where can I get updated information on the plan? How will we know if the plan is working?** The Plan and periodic status updates are available on the Department of Law and Governor's Office websites (posted under Resources & Links at <http://www.law.state.ak.us/> and under Safer Alaska at <http://gov.alaska.gov>). Crime rates will not change overnight. But with help from our law enforcement partners and Alaskans, we will continue to work in big and small ways to respond to crime and prevent it before it occurs with the goal of making our state a safer place.

**How is the plan going to make sure that criminals are held accountable since I keep hearing there aren't enough police and prosecutors to follow-through when a crime has happened?** The plan identifies specific actions for agencies to take as well as requests to the legislature to improve the State's ability to respond to crime, including:

- Filling trooper vacancies (PSAP Item # 21c);
- Adding prosecutors (PSAP Items #14 and 26);
- Improving recruitment and retention across public safety agencies (PSAP Item #35); and
- Making targeted statutory changes to help ensure that police, prosecutors, and judges have resources and tools to hold criminals accountable – such as
  - [SB 54 \(2017\)](#) (refining classification and sentencing in statutes, PSAP Item #1);
  - [HB 291/SB 146](#) (authorizing the AG to schedule dangerous new drugs by regulation, PSAP Item #68), and
  - [HB 295/SB 150](#) (allowing judges to consider out-of-state criminal histories in evaluating pre-trial release for defendants, PSAP Item #3).

**Anchorage keeps breaking its own record for homicides. How is the State going to bring down the rates of violent crime so the largest city in Alaska is safer?**

- Leveraging our partnerships with federal law enforcement agencies, particularly through the [Anti-Violent Crime Strategy](#), will provide federal resources to support state and local agencies efforts particularly in Anchorage (PSAP Item #29 and 67a-c).
- Requesting funding from the legislature for two additional prosecutors in Anchorage (PSAP Item #14).
- Getting ahead of crime before it happens by improving access to mental health and substance abuse treatment (PSAP Part III, Items #45-59) and fighting drug trafficking (PSAP Part IV, Items #60-68).

**I live in community with no local law enforcement presence and the troopers only come out if something terrible has happened. How will the Plan improve rural public safety?** The plan aims to address public safety statewide and has a particular focus on the urgent needs in rural areas for more resources and improved law enforcement presence.

- Most immediately, the Commissioner of Public Safety has lifted travel restrictions and encouraged troopers to be more proactive about visiting communities (PSAP Item #21a).
- DPS has also removed certain restrictions on VPSO funds so they can be used for recruiting new officers (in addition to paying salaries of existing officers) (PSAP Item #22a).
- Going forward, the agencies are also looking to add resources – including troopers, prosecutors, VPSOs – that serve rural areas and are working to improve retention and recruitment (PSAP Items #21c, 33, 35).
- The Plan also identifies ways to better utilize existing resources so rural areas can be better served; for example, videoconferencing more court hearings can reduce the amount of time that troopers spend transporting prisoners from jails to courts and free up their time to respond to calls and investigate crimes (PSAP Item # 23).

**How will the actions in the Governor’s plan stop people from bringing drugs into our community?**

Stemming illegal drug trafficking is a top priority for state agencies in the Public Safety Action Plan. Specific efforts targeting drug trafficking include:

- Hiring a statewide drug prosecutor and requesting funds in the budget to maintain the position for ongoing efforts (PSAP Item #64a);
- Submitting a petition to the U.S. Department of Justice to designate Alaska as a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, which will increase the amount of federal funds available to address drug trafficking (PSAP Item #66);
- Adding drug dogs to the law enforcement teams (PSAP Item #64b); and
- Submitting legislation to increase penalties on those selling illegal drugs and to give the Attorney General authority to designate new controlled substances as illegal (PSAP Item #68).

**How does the plan keep people from stealing my stuff?**

- To help deter thefts and to hold people accountable when they do steal, SB 54 reduced the threshold for a felony level property crime from \$1,000 to \$750 and increased the sanctions for repeat theft offenders among other measures (PSAP Item #1).
- Adding law enforcement capacity – filling trooper vacancies and restoring previously cut prosecutor positions – will also help improve our ability to respond to and prosecute crimes (PSAP Items # 21c, 14, 26, and 64a).
- Also, where theft is driven by drug addiction, stepping up our effort to stem drug trafficking (PSAP Part IV, Items #60-68) and improving access to substance abuse treatment (PSAP Items #48, 51, 54, and others) will also serve to protect Alaskan’s property.

**Our jails are filled with people who have mental health problems. How does the plan address this?**

- The Departments of Corrections and Health and Social Services will continue to coordinate to improve access to mental health treatment to inmates, including through the allocation of reinvestment funds (PSAP Item #45).
- The plan also aims to improve access to treatment services outside of the correctional system, including through the civil commitment process, to get people help before they enter the criminal justice system (PSAP Item #47 and 48).
- These efforts include DHSS’s action to grant certificates of need to medical facilities in the Mat-



Su Valley and Anchorage to open 60 beds for treatment over the next few years (PSAP Item #48).

**Where is the focus on the victims and their rights?**

- First and foremost we are working to prevent crime before it happens by improving access to mental health and substance abuse treatment and taking steps to reduce the risk that people will re-offend once released from jail (PSAP Part III, Items #45-59, and 4).
- Specific action items in the plan, including the statewide DVSA hotline and expanding shelters, aim to improve services for victims and help ensure their needs are met (PSAP Items #17 and 24).
- Finally, ensuring agencies have resources– including troopers, VPSOs, and prosecutors – to respond to crime will also help ensure that victims will be better represented and protected (PSAP Items #14, 16, 21c,26, and 35).

**How can I help improve public safety in my community?** Public safety is a group effort. From ensuring crimes are reported to offering help to those in need, there are opportunities for everyone to help. Specific opportunities to contribute that are reflected in the Plan include:

- Neighborhood Watch programs (PSAP Item #11) and
- Serving as a VPSO or Alaska State Trooper (PSAP Item #35).

We also continue to invite Alaskans to offer feedback on the plan and ideas for what more can be done to improve safety. For more, go to the Safer Alaska website available at <https://gov.alaska.gov> (under Administration Focus).

