



Upcoming Events and Celebrating Disability Pride Month



Hello from the Alaska Mental Health Board and Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse,

June and July offer us an opportunity to reflect on the critical importance of disability rights. These months encourage us to acknowledge and understand that mental health is an integral part of disability, often intertwined with physical and cognitive aspects. By recognizing this connection, we can foster a more inclusive and compassionate society that addresses the diverse needs of all individuals. This also serves as a reminder of our collective responsibility to advocate for and uphold the rights of those with disabilities, ensuring they receive the support and accommodations necessary to lead fulfilling lives. As we commemorate key milestones in the history of disability rights during these months, let us renew our commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable society for everyone.

June marks two significant milestones in the history of disability rights: the anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court decision, *Olmstead v. L.C.*, and the significant Alaska case, *State v. Weiss*. Both the *Olmstead* and *Weiss* decisions underscore the necessity of including mental health services in community-based supports. Individuals with mental health conditions deserve the same opportunities for community integration and independence as those with physical disabilities.

The *Olmstead* decision, made on June 22, 1999, affirmed the rights of individuals with disabilities to live in their community rather than being unnecessarily institutionalized. This ruling recognized that unjustified segregation of persons with disabilities constitutes discrimination in violation of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Since then, it has paved the way for countless individuals to live more inclusive and fulfilling lives, participating fully in their communities.

In Alaska, the *Weiss v. State* case underscored the importance of upholding mental health and disability rights. In this landmark case, *Weiss et al.* filed a class action suit alleging that the state violated the Alaska Mental Health Enabling Act (AMHEA) of 1956, which transferred the

responsibility to care for vulnerable Alaskans from the federal government to the then Territory of Alaska and provided a land grant to generate funds to do so. The plaintiffs alleged that the State's redesignation and redistribution of lands granted to fund mental health services violated the AMHEA, resulting in Alaskans being institutionalized out of state. The 12 year long settlement restored funds generated from all lands selected by the State of Alaska under the aforesaid mental health land grant, and established the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, which is advised by four volunteer boards representing each party of the Settlement: Alaskans with mental health, substance use, intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, Alzheimer's Disease or related dementias, and Alaskans with traumatic brain injuries.

July is Disability Pride Month, a time to celebrate the achievements, culture, and contributions of the disability community. During this month, we honor the diversity and strength of individuals with disabilities and reflect on the progress made towards a more inclusive society.

In recognition of the Olmstead decision, Weiss v. State, and Disability Pride Month, AMHB/ABADA reaffirm our commitment to upholding the rights of individuals with disabilities and promoting their inclusion in all aspects of life. Here are some ways we can continue to support and advance these efforts:

1. **Advocacy and Awareness:** Educate others about the importance of the Olmstead decision, the impact of Weiss v. State, Disability Pride Month, and the ongoing need for community-based services and supports, including mental health services.
2. **Support Community Integration:** Encourage and support policies and programs that promote the integration of individuals with disabilities, including those with mental health conditions, into all aspects of community life.
3. **Promote Accessibility:** Work towards making all community spaces, services, and resources accessible to vulnerable Alaskans.
4. **Foster Inclusion:** Create and support inclusive environments in schools, workplaces, and social settings.
5. **Nothing About Us Without Us:** Actively incorporate the voices of those with lived experience in policy development, program design, and decision-making processes to ensure that behavioral health services are truly responsive to their needs.

As we celebrate these anniversaries and Disability Pride Month, let us also remember that the fight for equality and inclusion is ongoing. Together, we can continue to build a society that values and includes everyone.

Thank you for your dedication to this important cause.



Who we are: The Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHB) and the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA) are the state agencies charged with planning and coordinating behavioral health services funded by the State of Alaska. The two boards are comprised of behavioral health consumers, family members, state employees, behavioral health professionals and other dedicated community members and stakeholders. The Boards advise the Governor, the Legislature, and State of Alaska agencies on statewide behavioral health services and programs.

2024 AMHB-ABADA Priority Focus Areas

Empathy and Understanding

All Alaskans are provided with dignity and respect and are viewed as valued members of their families and communities.

Engagement

The Boards will amplify the voices of individuals and families with behavioral health conditions, as well as service providers and communities.

Evaluation

Alaska's behavioral health services are routinely evaluated for efficacy through a comprehensive process which includes input from persons who have lived experience.

Empowering Youth

Alaskan Youth are actively engaged in shaping policies, programs and interventions that meet their unique needs and promote their mental and emotional well-being.

To learn more visit <https://health.alaska.gov/amhb/Pages/default.aspx>

Opportunities for Public Comment:

The Boards strongly believe that Alaska's behavioral health system should be informed by the voices of Alaskans directly impacted by mental health and substance use. AMHB/ABADA gathers public comment on Alaska's state funded behavioral health services throughout the year to inform their planning and advocacy efforts. There are multiple upcoming opportunities to provide public comment to AMHB/ABADA including virtual and in-person meetings, as well as ongoing online public comment submission portals.

Virtual AMHB and ABADA Meeting July 17th 9:00am-3:00pm

The Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHB) and Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA) invites all members of the public and those with lived experience to attend their board meeting online or by phone. AMHB and ABADA are seeking input from the community to help shape the future of behavioral health services in Alaska. We believe that the voices of our community members are essential in creating effective, responsive, and comprehensive behavioral health services.

This meeting will be an opportunity to hear about the Combined Community Mental Health Services Block Grant and the Substance Use, Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services Block Grant. These funds are awarded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to the Alaska Department of Health. AMHB and ABADA are the designated behavioral health planning council responsible for reviewing the Department of Health Combined Block Grant application and evaluating behavioral health services within Alaska.

This meeting will have a public comment period at 2:00pm-2:30pm. Public comment is an opportunity to share your story related to issues in your community such as children's and adult mental health, crisis services, alcohol, opioids, and other drugs. **Please join us** online or by phone. AMHB and ABADA believe that public comment is a crucial component in shaping policies, programs, and services that are effective and inclusive. Our board members are providers, attorneys, and individuals and family members of individuals with lived experience.

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9399690927?omn=81026728284>

Phone: 1-669-444-9171

Meeting ID: 939 969 0927

Enter *6 to mute and unmute, *9 to raise hand

Ketchikan October 1-3, 2024



The next in-person meeting of AMHB/ABADA will be held October 1-3, 2024 in Ketchikan, AK. The agenda and meeting materials will be available via <https://health.alaska.gov/amhb/Pages/default.aspx> or by emailing amhb.abada@alaska.gov

Ongoing Public Comment Opportunity:

The Boards receive feedback from the public throughout the year, in addition to hosting in-person public comment in Alaskan communities twice per year.

Feedback can be submitted at any time by following the below link
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ABADA124>

Or via email to amhb.abada@alaska.gov



AMHB/ABADA members and staff in Action!

Dually appointed AMHB and ABADA member Bobby Dorton



AMHB/ABADA and SSPC staff



ABADA Chair-Elect Kara Nelson and AMHB member Sam Garcia attending the DOC sponsored Second Chance Connections Reentry Resource Fair.



The Mat-Su Crisis Response Team, including AMHB Chair James Savage and ABADA Chair-Elect Kara Nelson, received the 2024 Bert Hall Award for their work in improving the health of the community.



AMHB member Sam Garcia at the Annual Peer Support BBQ at Mountain View Lions Community Park.

OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

EVENTS FOR JULY

Disability Pride Events:



CITY	FAIRBANKS, AK	KENAI, AK	ANCHORAGE, AK
DATE	July 20	July 20	July 27
LOCATION	Carlson Center	Soldotna Creek Park	Park Strip

Conferences/Public Meetings:



July 17
Virtual



July 25-26
Boise, ID and
Virtual

EVENTS FOR AUGUST

July 31-
August 2

ALL Alaska Medical Conference
Hotel Captain Cook, Anchorage, AK



August 13,
3pm-4:30pm

Combined Community Mental Health
Block Grant and Substance Use Prevention
Treatment and Recovery Services Block
Grant Application Review
Virtual



August 31

International Overdose Awareness Day



EVENTS FOR SEPTEMBER

Awareness Months



September is Suicide Prevention Month!
Spend the month engaging in community events to raise awareness, foster understanding, and promote help seeking behavior



September is National Recovery Month!
This month is a time to honor resiliency, support individuals on their recovery journey, and promote accessible resources for all.

September has many conferences for the behavioral health field:

Conference	Improving Lives Conference	Alaska School Safety and Well-Being Summit	Alaska Behavioral Health Association Member and Affiliates Conference	2024 Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Conference	Alaska Conference on Child Maltreatment
Date	September 17-18	September 25-26	September 25-26	September 10-12	September 24-27
Location	Dena'ina Convention Center, Anchorage, AK	Egan Convention Center, Anchorage, AK	Lakefront Hotel, Anchorage, AK	Virtual	Marriot Downtown, Anchorage, AK

Other Notable Events:

Digital Drugs Summit

- City: Ketchikan, AK
- Date: September 6-7
- Location: Ted Ferry Civic Center

Stomp the Stigma

- City: Ketchikan, AK
- There will be multiple different Stomp the Stigma activities in Ketchikan throughout the month of September. To learn more visit:<https://www.akstompthestigma.org/>

Out of the Darkness Walk

- City: Anchorage, AK
- Date: September 7
- Location: Starts at West Anchorage High School

Juneau Suicide Prevention Coalition Community BBQ

- City: Juneau, AK
- Date: September 14



Thank you for your continued engagement and support in shaping Alaska's behavioral health landscape. Together, we are committed to amplifying the voices of lived experience and advancing inclusive, effective services for all Alaskans. Stay informed and involved as we strive to create a community where every voice matters in behavioral health care.

Sincerely,

Alaska Mental Health Board and Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse

