



STRATEGIC PLAN

FISCAL YEARS 2024 - 2027



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, DIVISION OF
SENIOR AND DISABILITIES SERVICES

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Division of Senior and Disabilities Services



I am pleased to present the Alaska Division of Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS) 4-year strategic plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2027.

This plan outlines how our division will prioritize our work to better serve Alaskans. In early 2023, our managers came together for the first time in many years and considered the division's strengths, challenges, opportunities, and future priorities. This planning document is the result of our work between February and June 2023.

As with most organizations, the COVID-19 public health emergency significantly impacted the division's work and relationships during the past few years. Our February 2023 planning retreat provided an opportunity for us to come together with a feeling of hope and an eye toward new possibilities. ***As a result, we reached consensus on a powerful plan intention to become a more person-centered system by increasing awareness and improving departmental processes.***

This plan document begins with our mission and vision and how those support our shared principles. During our planning process, we collectively agreed on six priorities: Quality Improvement, Service Delivery, Enhancing Partnerships, SDS Tech Innovation, Communications, and Internal Improvement. Under each priority, we have identified key strategies to help us organize how we approach our work across all program areas and functions.

The plan spotlights those we serve as a central focus, the services they need, and the most impactful ways we can refine our processes, leverage our skills, support our staff, and use our resources to deliver better results, while still allowing us to be flexible in responding to needs and expectations as they emerge. As we develop our work plans and time frames over the coming months and years, the strategic plan will provide us with a framework for continuous quality improvement.

We are grateful to the Department of Health Commissioner's Office and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority for their support of our plan's development. Now, we are excited to share this plan with agencies, partners, and most importantly those we serve. Together, we can help individuals access high-quality services and supports that promote their independence, personal choices, and dignity.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Newman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tony Newman | Director
Division of Senior and Disabilities Services
Alaska Department of Health

MISSION, VISION, AND SERVICE PRINCIPLES

MISSION

Senior and Disabilities Services promotes health, well being and safety for individuals with disabilities, seniors and vulnerable adults by facilitating access to quality services and supports that foster independence, personal choice and dignity.

VISION

Choice, safety, independence and dignity in home and community-based living.

SERVICE PRINCIPLES

Senior and Disabilities Services is person-centered and incorporates this value into the following service principles:

- We and our partners are responsible and accountable for the efficient and effective management of services.
- We and our partners foster an environment of fairness, equality, integrity and honesty.
- Individuals have a right to choice and self-determination and are treated with respect, dignity and compassion.
- Individuals have knowledge of and access to community services.
- Individuals are safe and served in the least restrictive manner.
- Quality services promote independence and incorporate each individual's culture and value system.
- Quality services are designed and delivered to build communities where all members are included, respected and valued.
- Quality services are delivered through collaboration and community partnerships.
- Quality services are provided by competent, trained caregivers who are chosen by individuals and their families.

PLAN INTENTION

To become a more person-centered system by increasing awareness and improving departmental processes.

PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE

PRIORITIES AT-A-GLANCE



QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Work with providers, tribes, partners, and the community to improve the quality of service through improved evaluation techniques, performance measures, and actionable strategies.



SERVICE DELIVERY

Improve the Department's service delivery by incorporating better technology and support, raising awareness of existing services throughout the Department, increasing flexibility of services, expanding services to rural areas of the state, and improving support for complex care individuals.



ENHANCING PARTNERSHIPS

Build and strengthen partnerships with community members, service providers, and state, local, and federal agencies, through better information sharing, increased opportunities for collaboration, and trainings.



SDS TECH INNOVATION

Work with the Department to expand and update technological capabilities to reduce redundancies and latencies, as well as improve existing databases and internal processes.



COMMUNICATIONS

Improve communication with our partners, tribes, providers, recipients, and the public by collecting their input and feedback, using instructional materials to increase access to information, and using plain language and active voice in all translations and communications.



INTERNAL IMPROVEMENT

Foster a culture of learning and growth. Improve internal functioning of SDS through increased flexibility, transparency, and collaboration; promote employee wellness.

SENIOR AND DISABILITIES SERVICES UNITS

Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS) works to support Alaskans with their long-term service and support needs. SDS administers five Home and Community Based Medicaid Waivers, Personal Care Services, and Community First Choice Services. The Division offers a variety of grant programs that support locally provided services ranging from infant learning to senior living. SDS provides a centralized reporting and response services for incidents involving vulnerable adults, aids those in financial distress and in need of assisted living services and manages a long-term care program for people who need admission to nursing homes. All these services are supported and improved by the work of staff dedicated to effective administration, policy changes, research and analysis, and quality assurance. Here is a summary of the units and the work of SDS:

Adult Protective Services helps to prevent or stop harm from occurring to vulnerable adults.

The Assessment Unit is responsible for the assessment and level of care determinations for the Alaskans Living Independently Waiver, the Adults with Physical and Developmental Disabilities Waiver, Community First Choice and Personal Care Services.

The Review Unit is responsible for the regulatory review and authorization of services for the following programs: Alaskans Living Independently and Adults with Physical and Developmental Disabilities Waiver Programs, Personal Care Services Programs, and Community First Choice.

The Central Application Processing Unit processes initial access requests and applications for the following programs: Personal Care Services, Community First Choice, Alaskans Living Independently, Adults with Physical and Developmental Disabilities, and Children with Complex Medical Conditions.

The Central Intake Unit receives all centralized reports and routes them to the appropriate entity for follow up. This includes reports of harm for Adult Protective Services, critical incidents reports or provider complaints for SDS Quality Assurance and any Assisted Living Home licensing reports that are routed to Residential Licensing.

The Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program is a statewide system of professionals dedicated to serving all Alaskan families with children who are at risk for or experience developmental delay. This program serves qualified children aged 3 and under.

The General Relief Assisted Living Home Program provides temporary financial assistance for assisted living home placement to eligible adults who require the protective oversight of an assisted living home. General Relief services include supportive and protective services in the activities of daily living and in the instrumental activities of daily living but does not include nursing or medical care. The financial assistance provided by the General Relief program includes a financial contribution by the participant towards the care provided based on the participant's countable income.

Grant Services The Division makes grants available to nonprofit, tribal, local government, and other organizational partners across Alaska. The partners use the funds to provide vital community-based supportive services to individuals experiencing developmental and other disabilities, Alzheimer's disease and related disorders, families caregivers of seniors aged 60 and over, grandparents raising grandchildren aged 55 or over, seniors aged 60 and over, and/or frail or disabled seniors who need assistance in the home.

The Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities Unit oversees the following: Developmental Disabilities (DD) eligibility program; DD Registry (also known as the “Waitlist”); Individualized Supports Waiver; Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Waiver.

The Medicare Information Office is funded through three programs provided through the federal Administration for Community Living. State Health Insurance Assistance Programs, Senior Medicare Patrol, and Medicare Improvement for Patients & Providers Act providing education, outreach, and support to Medicare beneficiaries.

The Nursing Unit is responsible for the oversight and management of the following processes: Children with Complex Medical Conditions waiver program assessments and support plan review, facility assessments, and long-term care or nursing home authorization and pre-admission screening and resident review.

The Policy & Program Development Unit facilitates the development, coordination and dissemination of policy and business procedures that guide the provision of quality and cost effective long-term services and supports to eligible seniors and individuals who experience disabilities.

The Project Management Unit is responsible for planning, developing, coordinating, and facilitating all phases and activities to implement Medicaid funded projects in support of the Division’s mission in close collaboration with the Department and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Unit staff specialize in project management and program support ensuring all projects remain within their defined scope, schedule and budget while achieving and maintaining the desired and required outcomes of each project.

The Provider Certification & Compliance Unit serves the function of ensuring that providers of all services are qualified and follow all relevant policies and regulations. To ensure the delivery of quality services, the Provider Certification & Compliance Unit provides technical assistance through the certification process, desk or on-site review process, and during complaint investigation procedures.

The Quality Assurance Unit works to ensure the health and welfare of recipients through the monitoring and oversight of services to participants and their families. Unit staff prior authorize services, oversee critical incident reporting, review mortalities, conduct complaint investigations, participate in mediations, and monitor and report on data.

The Research & Analysis Unit provides information and research to state and national stakeholders including representatives of the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services and the Department of Health. The unit specializes in business process development and diagramming, data maintenance, statistical analysis, report writing and publishing, account management for Harmony (division’s database) and training associated with the use of SDS data systems and processes.

The Training Unit works to provide training to over 1,000 service providers, service recipients and families as well as internal division staff.

The Administrative Services Team provides support and assistance to the Department and Division with budgeting, grant, contractual, and procurement oversight, personnel and human resources, payroll, operational needs, and a variety of other services to ensure all the Division’s units can perform their work efficiently and effectively.

STRATEGIC PLAN

PRIORITY: QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Work with providers, tribes, partners, and the community to improve the quality of service through improved systemic evaluation techniques, performance measures, and actionable strategies.

STRATEGIES:

- **EVALUATION:** Expand systemic evaluation techniques for service delivery that are meaningful and actionable for individuals we serve, via outcome-based performance measures, National Core Indicators (NCI) and recipient experience surveys.
- **PUBLIC REPORTING:** Develop a system (dashboard, quarterly meetings, 372 reports) for regularly scheduled public information sharing on our performance measures.

PRIORITY: SERVICE DELIVERY

Improve the Department's service delivery by incorporating better technology and support, increasing flexibility of services, expanding services to rural areas of the state, and improving support for complex care individuals.

STRATEGIES:

- **ANALYZE SYSTEMS:** Conduct analysis of systems before implementing changes.
- **FLEXIBLE SERVICES:** Research ways to increase flexibilities in home and community-based services.
- **TECHNOLOGY:** Build infrastructure and capacity for technology to improve service delivery.
- **RURAL ALASKA:** Increase access of services to more rural areas of Alaska.
- **COMPLEX CARE:** Improve service delivery for individuals served by more than one division.

PRIORITY: ENHANCING PARTNERSHIPS

Build and strengthen partnerships with community members, service providers, and state, local, and federal agencies, through better information sharing, increased opportunities for collaboration, and trainings.

STRATEGIES

- **COLLABORATION:** Improve collaboration among multiple state, local, and federal agencies to respond more efficiently to urgent needs around Alaska.
- **INFORMATION SHARING:** Understand what information needs to be shared based on needs of agencies.
- **PROCUREMENT TRAINING:** Develop and implement procurement training. Identify barriers in procurement and establish improved communication through meetings and a clear escalation path toward resolution.
- **STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS:** Identify opportunities for sharing information with all stakeholders, including tribal entities, families, providers, and care coordinators.

PRIORITY: SDS TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION

Work with the Department to expand and update technological capabilities to reduce redundancies and latencies, as well as improve existing databases and internal processes.

STRATEGIES

- **REDUCE AND PREVENT LATENCY IN SYSTEMS:** Improve the user experience through continuous improvement of databases and systems.
- **REDUCE AND PREVENT REDUNDANCY IN SYSTEMS:** Improve user experience by reducing redundancies and manual processes.
- **RESEARCH AND PILOT USER-FRIENDLY "APPS"** that enable direct and prompt feedback from recipients.
- **ASSESS NEEDS:** Partner with state Office of Information Technology (OIT) to assess SDS technology needs and recommend improvements.
- **SYSTEM INTERFACE:** Explore ways that the different SDS systems can communicate so that there is coordination and transparency moving forward.
- **SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT:** Ensure new software development includes a detailed contractual agreement with milestones, deliverables, and user-based outcome measures.

PRIORITY: COMMUNICATIONS

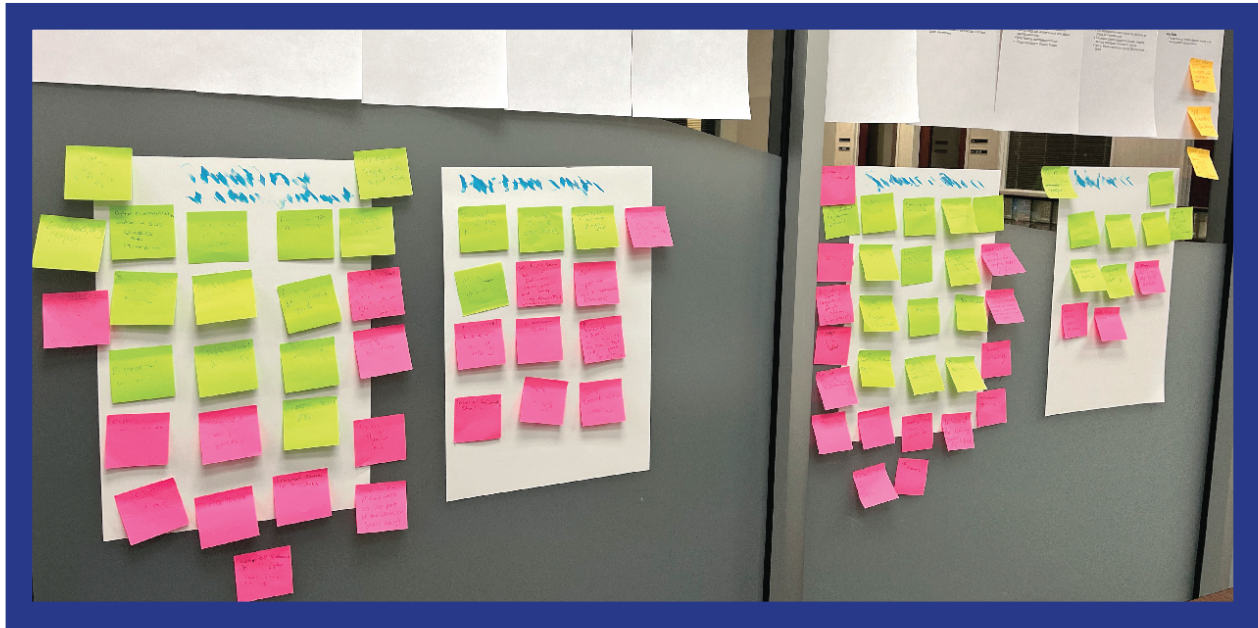
Improve communication with our partners, tribes, providers, clients, and the public by collecting their input and feedback, using instructional materials to increase access to information, and using plain language and active voice in all communications.

STRATEGIES

- **PUBLIC INFORMATION:** Improve access to information about services through the development of instructional materials for the public.
- **EXIT INTERVIEWS:** Implement an exit interview with providers to determine the reason they are ending Medicaid services and needed areas of improvement.
- **SURVEY RECIPIENTS:** Conduct surveys with recipients to collect input and feedback.
- **CONDUCT GAP ANALYSIS:** Determine what gaps in services there are in communities to inform decision-making.
- **PARTNER WITH TRIBAL LIAISONS:** Partner with tribal liaisons to maximize knowledge and resources within tribal entities.
- **LANGUAGE AND VOICE:** Commitment to plain language and active voice.
- **TRANSLATION:** Identify and prioritize written materials to be translated for publication.



NEXT STEPS



The Division of Senior and Disabilities Services begins FY2024 with a variety of tasks before us, brought to our doorstep from sources ranging from leadership of the Department of Health to legislators; from federal mandates to requests by providers and advocacy groups; from other state agencies to beneficiaries and their families. The strategic plan you have just reviewed will guide us in determining where these tasks fit into our overall vision, the steps we will take to get them done; how we will select responsible parties to bring them to completion, and the timeframes under which the work will be performed. We also hope the plan can serve as a conversation starter to help explain the work of our complex agency better, and generate dialogue with all our stakeholders that will make it easier for the next generation of leaders and constituents to lay the groundwork for a senior and disabilities services system that is ever more responsive and effective in providing choice, safety, independence and dignity in home and community-based living in Alaska.