



Affiliates in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, and North Slope  
Serving all of Alaska

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*NAMI Alaska is a peer-led education, support, and advocacy organization serving all of Alaska and an umbrella organization for NAMI affiliates in the communities of Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, and Utqiagvik. Together, we work to improve the lives of Alaskans affected by mental illnesses.*

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## 2019 ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

1. **Protect the MEDICAID Program.** Medicaid is a lifeline for low-income Alaskans and individuals with disabilities, including children and adults with mental illnesses. The Medicaid program provides essential access to health coverage and care, helping individuals with mental illnesses get on a path to recovery. Therefore we:
  - Oppose funding reductions to the Medicaid program in the Governor's FY20 budget recommendations. Proposed cuts to Medicaid threaten the entire health care system and will decrease access to quality and affordable healthcare for Alaskans, including children and adults with mental health conditions. Oppose the elimination of Medicaid Adult Preventative Dental.
  - Oppose SB7/HB13 Medical Assistance Work Requirements. Work requirements do not promote improved care or help individuals find and keep a job. Work requirements could result in unintended consequences such as individuals with mental illnesses losing health coverage.
  - Support Medicaid expansion which has expanded health insurance coverage to more than 35,000 Alaskans since 2015.
2. **Improve Mental Health Crisis Services Statewide.** Timely access to quality and affordable mental health services are essential. Alaska's mental health crisis services are not adequate to meet the needs of individuals experiencing a psychiatric emergency. When individuals with mental illnesses cannot access treatment and support services and undergo crisis, they often cycle through emergency rooms and jails, with their mental health needs unmet. Therefore, we:
  - Support further investment in the financial and human resources necessary to improve the safety and quality of care provided at Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API) and resume operations at capacity.

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- Support increased transparency & accountability of API, including improved systems for all stakeholders to provide meaningful input, including Alaskans directly affected by mental illnesses.
- Support immediate alternative solutions for holding individuals with no criminal charges awaiting a psychiatric evaluation in the Department of Corrections. Alaskans under civil court orders need timely access to a psychiatric evaluation in an appropriate setting.

**3. Improve Community Mental Health Support Services.** Effective treatment, rehabilitation, and support services are essential for individuals with mental health conditions to recover. When services are available in the community, individuals are less likely to rely on expensive institutional care. Community support services should be easy to find, affordable, and available. Therefore, we:

- Support preserving and enhancing community support services that help Alaskans live productively in their communities.
- Support expanding prevention and early intervention programs to ensure children and youth experiencing the onset of mental health conditions have timely access to effective services and support that continue into adulthood.
- Support efforts to address Alaska's healthcare workforce shortage and support SB 93, an act relating to a workforce enhancement program for health care professionals employed in the state.

**4. Protect Funding for Housing Programs and Safety Net Services.** Alaska's continuum of housing programs and safety net services help individuals and families access and maintain housing and afford basic needs. Individuals with persistent mental health conditions are at greater risk for housing insecurity and homelessness. Therefore, we:

- Oppose funding reductions to the Homeless Assistance Program (HAP), the Special Needs Housing Grant (SNHG), and the Human Services Community Matching Grant in the Governor's FY20 budget recommendations. Reductions to these programs will immediately increase homelessness in Alaska and reduce public safety.
- Oppose funding reductions to Adult Public Assistance in the Governor's FY20 budget recommendations. This program provides financial assistance to help vulnerable Alaskans cover basic living expenses, food, rent, transportation, and basic needs.