

**ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING  
QUARTERLY MEETING**

**December 2, 2025**

**Location:**  
Zoom Videoconference

**Commissioners Present:**

Bob Sivertsen, Chair; Paula Pawlowski; Bob Pawlowski; Art Delaune; Kori Mateaki; Vivian Stiver; Jennifer Stoehr; Director Anthony Newman, ex-officio

**Commissioners Absent:**

Sara Chambers, ex-officio, excused; Darlene Supplee, excused

**Guests:**

Marge Stoneking, AARP; Michelle Bowlds, Agnew::Beck; Kelda Barstad, AMHTA; Kristen Cox, SDS; Nicole Wery-Tagaban, SDS; Jim McCall, AHFC; Stephanie Wheeler, OLTCO; Arielle Wiggin, Alzheimer's Association Alaska; Marianne Mills, AGenet; Spencer Perry, Ph.D., UAA ISER; Diane Hirshberg, Ph.D., UAA ISER; Theresa Hankins, Alaskan Way; Director Kern McGinley, Pioneer Homes; Nona Safra; John Ruyak, Center for Safe Alaskans; Brenda Shelden, Mat-Su Council on Aging; Lorraine Thomas, APIA

**Staff:**

Martin Lange, Executive Director  
Yasmin Radbod, Program Coordinator 2  
Angela Jackson, UAA Intern

Minutes Prepared by: Paula DiPaolo, Peninsula Reporting

**Tuesday, December 2, 2025**

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL – 9:00 a.m.**

Roll was called, and a quorum was present to conduct business.

**ETHICS DISCLOSURES**

No Commissioners had any conflicts of interest to disclose.

**TELECONFERENCE ETIQUETTE**

Marty Lange welcomed attendees and provided teleconference etiquette.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Bob Pawlowski stated that Director Kern McGinley may appear during the Pioneer Homes report. Jim McCall stated that Agnew::Beck will also be providing public comments this afternoon.

Marty Lange stated that Nona Safra's term with the Commission ended at the end of November. He thanked her for her passion and service. Chair Sivertsen also thanked Nona for her services to the Commission and the state of Alaska.

### **ADOPTION OF THE DECEMBER 2, 2025 AGENDA**

Vivian Stiver **MOVED** to approve the agenda as presented, **SECONDED** by Paula Pawlowski. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

### **ADOPTION OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES, SEPTEMBER 25, 2025**

Paula Pawlowski **MOVED** to adopt the September 25, 2025 minutes as presented, **SECONDED** by Director Anthony Newman. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

### **CHAIR'S REPORT**

Chair Sivertsen stated that Marty Lange has been keeping the Executive Committee informed of his weekly activities. Chair Sivertsen has been working with the PeaceHealth Ketchikan Medical Center long-term care facility and the Pioneer Home in preparation for upcoming holiday events. The Ketchikan community is currently active in grants to local non-profits that provide senior services. He remarked that city councils are good avenues for Commissioners to discover the latest information about local senior and homeless issues.

### **VICE CHAIR REPORT**

Paula Pawlowski shared her utmost respect for the VA and caregivers. She has been working with Marty and Yasmin putting the meeting agenda together as well as getting committees together. It has been a very busy time closing out the end of the year and working on the Snapshot and annual report.

### **PIONEER HOMES REPORT**

Bob Pawlowski noted that Kern McGinley is the new director of the Pioneer Homes. He also shared that the Pioneer Homes Advisory Board has a meeting on Friday, December 5<sup>th</sup>. Action items on the agenda include an e-mail to the Governor that paraphrases the article the board distributed to recognize the importance of the non-profit foundations behind each Pioneer Home. The board will also be discussing last year's recommendations to the Governor and draft this year's recommendations. They plan to hold a meeting in January or February with the six home administrators to vet the recommendations.

The residency is solid, and the recent hiring efforts have been successful. The Fairbanks Pioneer Home is below capacity due to current renovations and staff shortages. Bob Pawlowski noted that every empty bed costs about \$100,000 per year, which is difficult on Homes' budgets. Director Newman inquired about the \$100,000 cost per vacancy. He noted that obviously private assisted living facilities would incur a cost if there were a vacancy, but Pioneer Homes are state run, and he is wondering why there is a loss. Bob Pawlowski explained that the budget that is allocated and the budget that is realized is dependent on revenues from the residents. There is currently a \$1M shortfall they are dealing with, and a big part of that is empty beds.

Bob Pawlowski highlighted the written report by noting that Pioneer Homes have an overall occupancy rate of 89.5%.

Bob Pawlowski complimented Chair Sivertsen for his continued dedication to the Pioneer Homes system and to the residents for ensuring their continued quality of life.

Bob Pawlowski introduced Director Kern McGinley who shared that he joined the division as director in June of this year. He stated that Pioneer Homes is in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Palmer, Juneau, Sitka, and Ketchikan, and each home is uniquely different. They pride themselves in a philosophy which seeks to eliminate loneliness, boredom, and helplessness. The Homes offer lots of plants, animals, and children so elders have a sense of home. The mission is to provide Alaskan elders a home and community celebrating life through its final breath.

Alaska Pioneer Homes are licensed to serve 497 elders. They currently have a waiting list of over 400. He encouraged everyone over age 60 who is planning ahead that they might need some assistance in the future to get on the waiting list.

58% of Pioneer Homes elders experience some form of dementia. Memory care is built into all of the homes. They offer five levels of services. Levels I through IV are based on the unique needs of residents, and Level V care includes seniors with complex behaviors, dementia that requires a more intensive approach to care. Anchorage contains a complex care unit with eight beds.

Many Alaskan elders are deciding to age in place, but youth are leaving in droves, and schools are starting to see empty classrooms. The problem for the future is a workforce shortage, particularly in healthcare. Pioneer Homes are working to educate youth about career pathways available within the Pioneer Homes. Director McGinley is proud to say that despite some of the workforce gaps they are experiencing, they do have a committed staff who are highly trained and focused on the mission.

Director McGinley concluded that the State is experiencing budget shortfalls, and Pioneer Homes is not immune to this. They work carefully to try to maintain their budget and work with their residents who experience financial hardship.

## **STAFF REPORTS**

Martin Lange reported on the following activities over the last two months:

### *Planning*

- ACL/federal government on next State Plan. Since they lost Louise Ryan at Region 10, the federal government has been silent.
- Senior Summit Ad Hoc Committee launched.
- Monthly budget meetings with SDS Finance.

### *Advocacy*

- Preparations underway for the February meeting – held a joint meeting with AARP, AGEnet, and Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) to discuss priorities.

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- Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education/ACoA joint reception in February.
- Legislative Committee working on five priorities.

### *Education*

- Statewide Independent Living Council presentation – Overview of ACoA
- Trust presentation – Incarcerated seniors and dementia
- Annual report
- Senior Snapshot
- Ethics training
- Podcast status – working on finishing the Senior Falls Prevention episode. They have decided it will be released as three separate episodes because there is a lot of interesting information.

### *Interagency Cooperation*

- Department of Corrections (DOC) – Senior inmate population. DOC currently has 235 inmates who are 65 and older, 22 of whom have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, and 13 more are being evaluated and monitored to see if they have Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia. DOC is very concerned and is looking for ways to treat them. Great meeting.
- Department of Labor and Workforce Development – Discussed the number of workers leaving the state and how to attract more people to work in senior services. Labor is aware the current model is unsustainable. They discussed recruiting every Alaskan to help recruit from the Lower 48. They also discussed bringing people in from other countries. The current visa cost is a barrier.
- Initial meeting with Johns Hopkins AI; Alaska Council on the Arts; Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (CCED) about senior fraud; and others.

### *Looking Ahead*

- Out of office – December 16 – 26
- Finalize and print annual report and Senior Snapshot
- Preparations for February 9 – 12, 2026 Juneau quarterly meeting and Hill visits.

## **ACoA Program Coordinator Updates**

Yasmin Radbod reported to the Commission as follows:

- Given out approximately 6,000 "Need Help?" magnets.

### *Elders & Youth, AFN Convention - #1 Questions: Medicaid and Medicare*

- People want a Trust presentation.
- Need education on long-term care eligibility process and what it means to spend down for assisted living homes.
- Suddenly unqualifying for Medicaid with notice in the mail right before a scheduled surgery.
- Rural transportation deemed recreational by Medicaid affecting income eligibility.
- Long appeal process.

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- Lack of Medicare education – which part?
- Unaware of potential penalties for not applying for Medicare when turning 65.
- Need for guardianship education.
- Several elder abuse questions.

### *AFN Activities*

- Directed individuals to EPLC (legal clinic) Thursday to complete the will questionnaire for the Elder Appreciation and Wills Clinic (EAWC) on Friday.
- 24 elders completed their will, advance health care directive, and power of attorney with Alaska Legal Services and the Alaska Bar Association.
  - Partners included:
    - Food Bank of Alaska
    - Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska
    - Aging and Disability Resource Center
- Next year's aim: Sponsors, more resource table marketing, secure room closer to elevator, and a larger room.

In trying to promote the EAWC, ACoA spent \$100 on a Facebook ad statewide for people 30 years or older. It had 193 shares, 43 comments, 20 followers, and 547 reactions. For non-followers, they reached 97% of people outside of their usual network. Comments included:

- Estate planning support in other regions is needed
- Hold the event during Elders & Youth Conference instead.

### *Proclamations*

Every November ACoA marks Family Caregivers Month and Alzheimer's Awareness Month. Thank you to Governor Dunleavy for publishing these proclamations. This year ACoA shared copies with AGEnet, Alzheimer's Association, Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska, GCDSE, AARP Alaska, Division of Public Health Chronic Disease Prevention, and Alaska Long-Term Care Ombudsman.

ACoA did a social media campaign all November covering both topics and spoke on Family Caregivers Month at Bear Tooth in Anchorage for the premier of "Eleanor the Great."

### *Social Media Update*

- Alaska senior population projections was the most popular post of the month and received a number of reshares. They reached over 1,000 people.
- 70% of those people non-followers.
- The second most popular post was a photo about the dementia mini-grant.

### *Snapshot Inspirations*

- AARP Long-Term Support Services study by AARP in 2023:
  - Nursing home cost – Alaska rated as the worst
  - Alaska also rated the worst for long-term care insurance.
- Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska data shows care costs with projections out to 2030.

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- SDS annual report to the federal government on senior center grantees.

### *Other Events:*

- November is Native American Heritage Month. This was highlighted during a weekly E-Blast.
- Attended the Alaska Palliative Care Conference and made a lot of connections with ANTHC and Southcentral Foundation.
  - Met Kris Green who works in senior suicide. Need to invite her to ACoA's Senior Summit.
  - Yasmin will share her notes from the conference as well as the state policy recommendations for Alaska.
- Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) Meeting:
  - Office of Management and Budget (OMB) director acknowledged receiving the home modifications letter to reinstate funding to 100%; have to wait for the Governor's budget to see if it makes it back in.
  - Impressed with SILC and Maggie Winston's advocacy for self-directed care.
  - Denice Gilroy with Arctic Access serves 37 villages in the Bering Strait and Northwest Arctic. She facilitates home modifications in her area.
- Kinship Family Support webinar December 11, 2025.
- Social Security webinar scheduled for January 15, 2026.

### *Grant News*

- Kodiak Area Native Association secured the Administration on Community Living's Tribal Protective Services Grant.
- Alaska State Council on the Arts applied for States Leading Creative Aging grant, which provides up to \$77,500 to support emerging and established creative aging initiatives 2026 through 2028.
- Alaska will be represented in USAging's Strengthening Social Connection in Communities grant application.

### *Standing Together Against Rape, Inc. (STAR) Elder Abuse and Prevention*

The rate of elder physical abuse in Alaska is 2.4 times the national rate. STAR's presentations bring awareness to this sensitive topic, give information on prevention, and provide tools on how to respond to multiple forms of elder abuse. All STAR's services are free and confidential. ACoA's MASST volunteer will be working with STAR to translate the materials into Yupik.

### *John's Hopkins Artificial Intelligence and Technology Collaboratory for Aging Research*

Staff were able to meet with them as well as the UAA AI Consortium. The engineer for the AI Consortium for Alaska will be attending the Hopkins Aging AI Tech Summit in March. John's Hopkins is interested in staying in touch and seeing how they can fund some unique tech projects to help Alaskans age in place.

### *Workforce Development*

ACoA is leading the way for the state in building relationships for UAA students to have a pathway into filling important positions at the State level.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Marty Lange stated that ACoA has the following committees:

- **Executive Committee** – Chair Sivertsen, Paula Pawlowski, Darlene Supplee, and there is currently a vacancy with Nona Safra’s term expiring.
- **Legislative Committee** – Paula Pawlowski, Vivian Stiver, Darlene Supplee, and Chair Sivertsen
- **Bylaws Committee** – Paula Pawlowski, Sara Chambers, Art Delaune, Director Anthony Newman
- **Older Alaskans Committee** – No members. This committee recognizes older Alaskans in the state who have made a significant contribution to the state. They also do the centenarian project each year.
- **Nominating Committee** – Darlene Supplee, vacancy left by Nona Safra.
- **Planning Committee** – Chair Sivertsen, Darlene Supplee, Paula Pawlowski, Director Anthony Newman
- **Senior Summit Ad Hoc Committee** – Jennifer Stoehr, Stephanie Wheeler, Nona Safra, Kori Mateaki, Paula Pawlowski, Yasmin Radbod, Brenda Shelden, AARP, Riki Chapman, Carol Anthony, Jim McCall, Kelda Barstad.

Chair Sivertsen appointed Vivian Stiver as chair of the Legislative Committee and Kori Mateaki as chair to the Senior Summit Ad Hoc Committee.

### Bylaws Committee Update

Marty Lange stated that the bylaws are updated every two to three years. The current update is to reflect the new statute numbers as a result of the bifurcation of Department of Health and Social Services as well as to reflect the current operations of the Commission. He reviewed the changes to the bylaws with meeting attendees.

Marty noted that they don’t have a self-direction statement in the bylaws or vision, and the committee will continue to work on this section. By early January, the Bylaws Committee should have a draft ready for the full Commission to review.

Paula Pawlowski suggested they attach their statutes at the end of the bylaws so they are easily accessible to the public.

### Legislative Committee

Paula Pawlowski stated that the Legislative Committee met with AGEnet, LTCO, and AARP for Advocacy Day to determine the legislative focus for this year. Without access to the Governor’s budget and pre-filed bills, they reviewed where things ended last year and where they think they will be going this year.

### Older Alaskans Committee

Marty Lange asked for volunteers to serve on this committee.

### Planning Committee

Marty Lange asked if the Planning Committee can be the venue to determine the contents of the Senior Snapshot each year. Staff want to ensure that Commissioners



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have a say in the information contained in the Snapshot and that it's not just staff driven. Chair Sivertsen feels this could go to either the Planning or the Executive Committee.

### **Nominating Committee**

This committee needs a volunteer to replace Nona Safra. Paula Pawlowski explained that the duties of this committee are to interview Commissioners for nominations for the seats of chair and vice chair. Anyone interested in serving should contact Chair Sivertsen.

### **Senior Summit Ad Hoc Committee**

The Trust provided seed funding to ACoA to hold a Senior Summit. The ad hoc committee was formed, and Kori Mateaki was appointed as chair. Marty noted that he sent out a summary of the November 26<sup>th</sup> meeting to Commissioners but hasn't received comments back, and he asked that Commissioners take the time to read the summary.

In the last meeting, Riki Chapman suggested to combine ACoA's Senior Summit with the Disability and Aging Summit that has been going on for 10 years. As the group discussed it, people realized it made sense to combine them. The concern is that the Disability and Aging Summit has been going on for 10 years and has its own brand and traction. The committee discussed adding senior-related modules such as veteran, rural, and cultural issues; housing; transportation; healthcare; scams; healthy living; emergency prep; keeping homes safe through trusts; senior suicide; veterans who don't trust anyone; as well as a plenary and breakout sessions. The audience would be seniors, providers, and caregivers. They would also like to set up satellite meetings in rural hubs to invite seniors to come to a central point and participate virtually at the conference.

The Disability and Aging Summit is scheduled for October, so they have about 10 months to prepare. Riki said that she will explore additional funding.

Paula Pawlowski stated that Marty contacted her after the meeting and was somewhat surprised that the meeting took such a drastic turn, but Paula was thrilled that the group took charge and ran with their ideas. She advised everyone to read the notes and also noted that the Senior Summit is part of their State Plan in terms of outreach to seniors.

### **Other**

Marty Lange stated that he and Yasmin feel they have a lot of information to share, and the Commission getting together four times a year is not adequate. He proposed a monthly one-hour meeting to catch up on the issues. Chair Sivertsen felt it was a good idea, and Paula Pawlowski suggested making attendance voluntary, not mandatory.

## **ALASKA HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION**

*Jim McCall, Senior Housing Program Officer*

Jim McCall reported to the Commission as follows:



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### AHFC Capital Budget, FY'27 – Board Approved

Capital projects of importance to seniors include:

- Senior Citizens Housing Development Program - \$4,000,000
- HUD Federal HOME Grant Program - \$4,750,000
- AHFC's Energy Programs – Weatherization - \$6,000,000
- Statewide Housing Development Fund - \$4,000,000
- Senior Citizen Housing Development Program – FY'27 requested \$4,000,000
  - Projected outcomes: Fund two development projects with 80 units; perform accessibility modifications on approximately 27 units.

### Corporate Dividend

The AHFC dividend to the State, according to the established Transfer Plan, is calculated at \$54,270,000. This is the highest dividend that AHFC has paid to the State since 2016.

### Senior Housing Survey/Housing Assessment

Agnew::Beck is doing a two-fold approach for a housing study. One is the housing assessment, and then there will be a separate statewide senior survey. Questions are almost finalized, and the survey should be released in January/February. This survey will primarily focus on housing-type issues. The survey will be available on the senior housing section of the AHFC website, and they will utilize urban and rural partners to spread awareness. Jim is hoping ACoA can use some of the results of the survey in their next State Plan as housing typically rises to one of the top issues for seniors. They hope to have the final data compiled by May or June.

Jim noted that because of the federal Fair Housing Act, seniors start at age 55 or older for this survey.

### Multi-Family Regulation Changes

The AHFC board granted a request to hold public hearings regarding the loan amount for each of the following regulatory items:

- a) 15 AAC 151.440 – Senior Housing Loan Program
- b) 15 AAC 151.542 – Multi-Family Loan Purchase Program
- c) 15 AAC 151.545 – Multi-Family, Special Needs, and Congregate Housing
- d) 15 AAC 152.090 – Multi-Family Housing; Conditions
- e) 15 AAC 155.635 – Energy Efficiency Loan Program

There is a current proposal before AHFC to increase loan approval thresholds requiring board approval from either \$500,000 or \$1,500,000 to a new loan amount of \$2,500,000. The loan limits have not been updated for 32 years. A public hearing was held, and no members of the public participated in the oral testimony. AHFC received one written comment suggesting they elevate the threshold to \$2,500,000.

If the board approves everything at their December 3, 2025 meeting, the changes take effect immediately.

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**New Senior Assisted Living Facility**

Carel Assisted Living Home, LLC, Anchorage. AHFC closed this loan November 26, 2025. It is a 16-bed assisted living home serving adults age 18 and older who have a physical disability, are elderly or suffer from dementia, and/or have a mental or developmental disability under State of Alaska licensing provisions.

Paula Pawlowski stated that in last year's budget, there was \$1,150,000 for home modifications, and the Governor cut it to \$575,000. She asked Jim McCall to follow up for the Commission on where they are at with that this year. Jim believes the funding was reinstated, if he remembers correctly.

**SENIOR SERVICES PFD RAFFLE**

Vivian Stiver discussed the second draft of the legislation from 10/27/25 and highlighted that the bill's sponsor is Representative Will Stapp. She stated that the language is similar to the education raffle language. She highlighted in the legislation that of the donations received, the legislature shall appropriate 25 percent to the senior citizen grants endowment fund and shall appropriate 25 percent to the senior citizen grants dividend raffle fund. The legislature shall appropriate the remaining 50 percent of the donations to the Department of Health for distributions as grants as follows:

- 1) 50% to organizations that deliver meals to the homes of seniors
- 2) 25% to organizations that provide transportation services to seniors
- 3) 25% to organizations that provide supportive housing services to seniors.

During the Legislative Committee meeting, they discussed possible opposition from education in that it would pull from their pool. Vivian believes they should consider other opposing points of view so they can develop a strategy to address them. She suggested the Commission authorize this bill for pre-file so they can hear what people have to say about it. She also noted that they also need to get letters of support from partner agencies and community members and need to explore a co-sponsor on the Senate side.

Marge Stoneking asked where the idea for this raffle came from, and Vivian stated that Jim McCall had mentioned that this idea had come up in years past. She was in a meeting with Darlene Supplee and Rep. Strapp, and when she asked if he was interested, he agreed. Marge Stoneking cautioned that if this legislation passes, it might become more difficult to get increases to senior services through the Governor or legislature. She wondered if the Commission had explored that. Vivian believes they can incorporate language into the bill that this fund is not to supplant other funding sources.

Vivian Stiver **MOVED** to prefile the legislation, **SECONDED** by Paula Pawlowski. Hearing no further discussion and no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

Director Anthony Newman announced on the record his abstention from voting.

**ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION ALASKA**

*Arielle Wigger, Public Policy Director*

Arielle reintroduced herself to the Commission by stating that she has previously worked in the legislature including being chief of staff for Senator Dunbar and aide to the Health Committee.

Arielle Wiggen stated that Alaska has an estimated 11,000 people currently living with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia (ADRD). 13 million hours of unpaid care are estimated to be provided annually by family caregivers. The population over 85 is expected to quadruple by 2050.

She shared the Alzheimer's Association's legislative priorities as follows:

- SB 103 – CNA Dementia Training. Ideally, this will be passed by the Board of Nursing. They have draft regulations, but because of the regulation freeze, they had to stall. 70 to 80 percent of care in nursing and home health care is provided by CNAs. This legislation is sponsored by Senator Gray-Jackson. They hope that Representative Underwood will pick up the House companion bill.
- Adult Day Services Funding - \$1.5 million into the operating budget. This funding has been requested and successfully passed through the legislature multiple years and was vetoed both times.
- HB 73/SB 76 – Complex Health Care Facility Standards. These bills are in Senate Finance. This is the Department of Health's new regulatory package and licensure category for complex behavioral care.
- Dementia Prevalence Study in collaboration with the Alaska Dementia Action Collaborative. National studies do not apply to the conditions in Alaska, so they want to know the true scope of dementia in Alaska and the economic impact. This project will likely require some sort of capital to complete.

Bob Pawlowski asked about additional levels of CNA training given the current challenges of just getting people trained up to the CNA level. Arielle said that the association feels this training is absolutely necessary and will help reduce turnover and improve longevity of staff.

Kori Mateaki asked if the association's ADRD clients were in the hospitals or out in the community. Arielle understands they are out in the community, but she lacks exact numbers and would be happy to follow up by e-mail. Kori stated that out in the community, staff are not primarily CNAs but they also need dementia training. She wondered if the legislation could be opened beyond just CNAs but all staff working in the field. Arielle said that would absolutely be an option, but she thinks they are going to focus on CNAs with the involvement of the Board of Nursing but would be happy to consider lay caregivers if there is additional capacity. The big challenge is funding.

Yasmin Radbod shared that Arielle Wiggin has offered to do a future presentation to the Commission about the legislature.

## **OFFICE OF THE LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN (OLTCO)**

Stephanie Wheeler updated the Commission as follows:

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### **Mission**

To provide resident-centered advocacy designed to protect the rights, health, safety and welfare of Alaskans living in long-term care facilities.

- 20 (soon to be 21) skilled nursing facilities and 350 assisted living homes.
- Goal is to visit each facility on an annual basis. Anchorage skilled nursing facilities are visited quarterly. There are also 30 to 40 assisted living homes they try to visit quarterly.

### **Review of FFY 2025 Program Priorities (most priorities met)**

- Resolution of complaints – 90% resolved according to residents wishes
  - Review all cases – cases begin with resident/end with resident
- Recruit new volunteers
  - Recruit at least 15 new volunteers for FFY 2025 – unmet priority
  - Have a volunteer recruitment and retention plan in place for 2026
- Increase social media presence
- Advocate for increase in program funding
- Timely documentation
- Strengthen partnerships
- Participate in legislative sessions/provide annual report to legislators
- Increase resident council participation.

### **Preliminary Data Review FFY 2025**

	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
Facility visits	804	852	827	619
Complaints	349	496	355	307
I&A to individuals	1037	763	788	930
I&A to staff	567	539	465	629
Res Council	58	33	27	14
Comm. Education	33	51	30	24
Interagency Coord.	339	398	265	

### **Top Three Complaints**

#### **Skilled Nursing Facilities:**

- Quality of care
- Autonomy, rights, and choices
- Discharge, evictions, and transfers.

#### **Assisted Living Homes:**

- Discharge, evictions, and transfers
- Autonomy, rights, and choices
- Quality of care.

### **Volunteer Activity FFY 2025**

- Total volunteer hours – 354 (FFY'24 – 306)
- Volunteer facility visits – 183 (FFY'24 – 149)
- Resident Council participation – 7 (FFY'24 – 4)

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- Family Council participation – 5 (FFY'24 – 0)

### Review of Volunteer Survey, Fall 2025

*What would make you feel more appreciated as a LTCO volunteer?*

- 40% - social events with other volunteers
- 20% - feedback on volunteer impact
- 20% - better communications from LTCO staff
- Additional training opportunities.

Volunteers primarily felt they provided a moderate impact, but they felt supported by LTCO mentorship a great deal.

### FFY 2026 Priorities

- Advocate for the rights of seniors
  - Continue to strengthen advocacy work
- Complaint resolution process
  - 90% of complaints resolved to the satisfaction of the resident
  - Continue strategic partnerships
- Resident Council meetings
  - Residents rights/voting rights
  - Fraud prevention education
  - Consider funding for new case management system for FFY '27, Mon Ami
- Ensure smooth transitions/regions
  - Connect with senior service providers in regions
  - Update policies and procedures manual
- Hire assistant ombudsman
  - Reassign Zip Codes (Wasilla and Anchorage)
  - Resident Satisfaction Survey
  - Support the Senior Summit.

### LTCO Focus Projects

- OAPPS – Federal report by January 31<sup>st</sup>
- Annual Report – mid February
- Update LTCO policies and procedures manual.

### Collaborations

- Nationally – Monthly NASOP meetings
- Meet monthly with RL
- HCFLC
- Alaska Nursing Homes Together – monthly meetings
- Mortality Review Board meeting
- Fall Prevention Coalition
- ACoA
- Alaska Dementia Action Collaborative
- Disability and Aging Coalition
- Brain Injury Council of Alaska
- Interagency senior providers meeting

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- Consumer Protection Advocacy Group – quarterly meetings
- Disability Law Center
- Adult Protective Services – MDT steering committee.

Kori Mateaki offered the LTCO any assistance from Turnagain Social Club.

Yasmin Radbod asked if the OLTCO developed a training on safe discharges. Stephanie said that they did develop that for skilled nursing facilities, and they will be doing that training again in March. For assisted living homes, LTCO sees challenges all the time in terms of discharges because residents don't have the same protections as they do in skilled nursing facilities. They have a meeting coming up to discuss safe discharges for residents in assisted living homes.

Chair Sivertsen asked about the volunteer process. Stephanie Wheeler said that the application is online, or people can call the main office to receive a volunteer application through the mail. Once the application is completed, the vetting process begins and includes a background check and references. Volunteers accepted into the program go through an initial 36-hour training and then 18 hours of training annually. The OLTCO also does mentoring and shadowing of volunteers throughout their time with them.

## **LUNCH AND LEARN: OLDER DRIVER SAFETY AWARENESS WEEK**

*Center for Safe Alaskans CarFit Program – John Ruyak*

John Ruyak presented to the Commission as follows:

### Center for Safe Alaskans

Non-profit based in Anchorage. The goals are to prevent injury and promote well-being for Alaskans throughout the state. Within their injury prevention work, they have a significant focus on transportation safety where they work across the lifespan to reduce serious injury and death on Alaska's roadways.

### Why We Focus on Older Driver Safety

- Percentage of all Alaska fatalities and serious injuries 2016 – 2020:
  - 9% older driver fatalities
  - 6% older driver serious injury.
- In Anchorage, 2021 55+ years old, 76% of those injured were drivers.
- Health changes due to aging: Physical, cognition, vision, hearing
  - Greater risk for serious injury.
- Driving supports:
  - Sense of identity
  - Independence
  - Social connections.

### CarFit, An Older Driver Safety Program

Helping aging drivers:

- Increase comfort in their vehicles
- Reduce the risk of serious injury
- Stay connected to their community.

CarFit is:

- An educational program to improve vehicle fit
- Promoting conversations about driver safety
- Raising awareness of community resources (public transit, etc.)

CarFit is not:

- A driving test/evaluation
- Used to “take away the keys”
- A mechanical inspection
- Nothing is reported to driving authorities.

What does CarFit Look Like?

- 20-minute checkup – driver stays in their car
- Facilitated by a trained CarFit technician
- Uses standardized checklist.

What Does a CarFit Check Cover?

- Seatbelt adjustment
- Steering wheel
- Vehicle mirrors
- Line of sight
- Know your vehicle
- Review vehicle technologies and warning devices.

Goals For the Program

- Grow awareness and interest among older drivers
- Diversify partners for hosting events
- Grow the number of CarFit provider organizations.

### How to Get Involved

Connect with us to:

- Find out how to get a check
- Bring CarFit to your community
- Help us better understand older drivers’ needs.

Bob Pawlowski noted that one thing he was never aware of was how to use the different handles for getting in and out of a vehicle. John stated that when CarFit is running at its best, they partner with an occupational therapist to go over the process of getting out, doing a walk around, and sharing concerns with an occupational therapist about getting in and out of their vehicle. The OT can make recommendations on the physical tools that can help make that easier.

Chair Sivertsen asked if the training was for snowmachines and ATVs. John said that unfortunately, the federal money is just focused on motor vehicles, which leaves out a big part of how people in Alaska get around.



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Lorraine Thomas asked John if he would be interested in presenting at one of her elder gatherings. John said they would love to continue to spread the word about CarFit. Lorraine will reach out to him.

Vivian Stiver noted that everyone at the Fairbanks Senior Center was talking about the recent CarFit event that took place.

Director Anthony Newman asked what bringing CarFit to a community entails. John said that there can be an in-person or virtual training for people to become CarFit technicians. The training is free as they are funded by the Alaska Highway Safety Office. They can then travel to the community again at a later time to help them put on their own event. The Center for Safe Alaskans will continue to provide technical assistance remotely after they are up and running.

Chair Sivertsen remarked that navigating road construction is very difficult for seniors. He wondered if part of the program is traffic safety in construction sites. John said it's not something they currently do a lot of messaging about, but he would like to explore that more.

Bob Pawlowski raised the issue of multiple driver settings in newer cars, and John said they do go over that with people if their vehicle is so equipped.

Brenda Shelden from the Mat-Su Council on Aging expressed her interest in CarFit.

Yasmin Radbod asked how many people they reach statewide annually. John stated that it's a team of two that does CarFit, and they do around 40 people per year on average. The Fairbanks site had around 15 in their first event.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Public comment was received, and a full transcript was prepared.

## **AARP Alaska**

Marge Stoneking introduced herself as the advocacy director for AARP and presented to the Commission as follows:

### Concerns Heard from Older Alaskans

Alaskan concerns mirror national concerns:

- Having enough retirement income to live on
- Family caregivers needing more support
- Healthcare access
- Support for aging independently at home.

The top AARP policy priorities at the state and federal levels are focused on the policies and programs that support improving those conditions. For more information about AARP's state advocacy, visit the AARP blog site at <https://www.aarp.org/Alaska>.

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### **2025 Capitol Corps**

The Capitol Corps is a subset of AARP's full volunteer team, which consists of 30 volunteers from around the state. Marge meets with the advocacy volunteers weekly during the legislative session and monthly during the interim. The average attendance is about 12 volunteers that participate in multiple state-level grassroots advocacy actions. The grassroots impact of AARP and the 75,000-person membership in Alaska gives them a strong voice for older Alaskans.

In 2025, the Capitol Corps consisted of six pairs of volunteers from Fairbanks, Mat-Su, Anchorage, Eagle River, and Southeast/Juneau. They met with 40 of the 60 legislators on four advocacy priorities during the 2025 fly-in.

### **2025 AARP Alaska Legislative Priorities**

Health and Caregiving:

- SB 190 – Guardianship and Conservatorship Reform
- Senior Services Funding Increase

Financial Resilience:

- HB 78 – State Employee Pension
- SB 21 – Work and Save Small Business Retirement Savings Program

### **2026 Potential AARP Alaska Legislative Priorities**

Health and Caregiving:

- SB 190 – Guardianship Reform
- Non-Medicaid Senior Services Funding Increase – ask of \$1.5M

Financial Resilience:

- HB 78 – State Employee Pension
- SB 21 – Work and Save Small Business Retirement Savings Program
- Cryptocurrency ATM Fraud Protection
  - Older adults are disproportionately affected by fraud and scams using cryptocurrency ATMs.

E-activists are always encouraged. To support making Alaska a place where we can all choose how we live and age, please sign up to become an e-activist at

<https://www.aarp.org/getinvolved>.

The advocacy hub on the Alaska website can be found at

<https://www.aarp.org/akadvocacy> where people can learn more about AARP advocacy and get involved.

### **Retirement Readiness**

AARP is in the third year of a three-year campaign focused on financial resilience for AARP members in Alaska. Retirement readiness is a huge part of financial resilience.

What does retirement readiness mean?

- A life of leisure and travel?

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- Maintain a pre-retirement lifestyle?
- Have enough to pay the bills?

Most Americans now consider a secure retirement simply surviving and paying the bills. Social Security alone is not enough to depend on for a secure future.

Average benefit per year for 65+ Alaska family:

- Social Security = \$17,800
- Food, utilities, and healthcare = \$21,000

More Americans save if their employer offers a program. They are 15 times more likely to save if they do so through a workplace retirement savings program, and they are 20 times more likely to save if they are automatically enrolled in that program. Of Alaska's private-sector workers of roughly 105,000 people, 47% don't have a way to save for retirement out of their regular paycheck.

What is Alaska Work and Save?

- It would operate like the college 529 savings plan in that its state facilitated and privately managed
- Voluntary for employees
- Save out of regular paycheck with an automatic payroll deduction
- Worker decides how much to put away
- Savings moves with the employee.

20 states have already enacted this legislation. 70% of Alaskan small business owners are very supportive of a public/private retirement savings option for Alaskan small businesses and non-profits.

AARP Alaska Work and Save Campaign

- Small business outreach campaign
- Volunteers armed with Work and Save Small Biz Outreach kits to conduct outreach visits in their communities
- Gather letters of support
- Video series of three small business owners supporting Alaska Work and Save airs on social media to raise visibility.

## **AGENET UPDATE**

Marianne Mills shared that AGEnet is proud to be offering a letter of support for Alaska Work and Save. Thank you to AARP for all their excellent work.

AGEnet is an advocacy group for Alaskans to support senior services to help older Alaskans remain in their own homes for as long as possible. Individuals and groups can be members. They currently have 30 members, and the goal is to have 40 before the session.

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AGEnet is planning for their upcoming legislative fly-in February 4 – 6, 2026. Their tentative legislative priorities include:

- Prompt award and payment of grants – A project that Foraker Group is bringing forth to the legislature.
- Bringing the home modification and upgrades program up to its FY'25 level of funding.
- \$1.5M increase in home and community-based grants for seniors, non-Medicaid senior services funding.

## **ACoA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2026, FEBRUARY JUNEAU VISIT**

Paula Pawlowski announced that the legislature starts January 20<sup>th</sup>. The Governor's budget will be released mid-December. The first prefile date for bills is January 9<sup>th</sup>, and the second prefile date is January 16<sup>th</sup>. She reminded everyone that this is the second year of a two-year legislative cycle, so they will see many items from last year appearing during this session.

Marty Lange noted that the priorities are still a work in progress and will be voted on and adopted during the February meeting. He led Commissioners through a review of proposed priorities for the session as determined by the Legislative Committee:

1. **Senior Grant Services Increase.** Introduced by Governor Dunleavy last year and made it all the way through the legislative process, but the full amount was not granted. They are not specifying a dollar amount, but are advocating for an increase in funds.
2. **Alaska Housing Finance Corporation Senior Citizen Housing Development Fund.** This is an ask to support the Governor's budget for housing.
3. **SB 190 – Guardianship/Conservatorship.**
4. **Senior Citizen Grants Dividend Raffle.** Sponsored by Rep. Stapp.
5. **SB 124 / HB 131 – Nursing Licensure Compact.**

There was a question from an attendee asking if SB 124 and HB 131 apply to other professions such as social work. Marty stated that this is completely separate from the social worker licensure compact, and there are several other licensure compact bills being introduced that will make it easier for people in several different professions to come to Alaska. Marge Stoneking noted that the legislature had previously passed a compact for speech pathologists, audiologists, and physical therapists, and there wasn't a lot of opposition to this compact legislation. The nurse licensure compact legislation has always had a lot of opposition from the labor movement. In addition to the nurses and social workers is an occupational therapist compact as well.

Bob Pawlowski suggested a talking point to priority number 1 of sharing the number of seniors who receive SNAP benefits.

Marty Lange stated that Foraker Group is working on Prompt Payment Parity, which is basically that everyone has to pay the State on time, the State should have to pay everyone else on time. The increased funds that were set aside for seniors still haven't been distributed yet, and oftentimes, senior centers are getting reimbursed for services

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they have already provided instead of providing services with funding they have. Smaller centers have a much more difficult time weathering this than the larger ones. Marty isn't proposing this as an additional priority, but he feels the Commission needs to support it at some point.

Yasmin Radbod wondered if they can add to the bottom of their priority list a statement that indicates ACoA supports partner priorities in a bulleted list or include letters of support as well. Vivian Stiver supports the idea of the bulleted list and feels that the letters of support are very important. Paula Pawlowski noted that ACoA writes letters of support, and those letters are given to the legislators.

Kori Mateaki asked why they aren't asking for a dollar amount with a business plan for priority 1. Marge Stoneking stated that is exactly what they did in 2025 jointly, and they based it on the senior center survey that ACoA did and the amount that the senior centers thought they needed in order to maintain their current level. Understanding it was a tight budget year, they only asked for a percentage of that need. They are continuing to ask because the need remains and is documented. Vivian added that they can do it both ways, but sometimes there is more success in asking without a number. Arielle Wiggen agreed. Paula Pawlowski said their role is not to debate dollars with legislators but to show them the need and tell the story for seniors.

**UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ANCHORAGE, INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL & ECONOMIC RESEARCH (ISER)**

*Spencer Perry, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Economics and Public Policy*

*Diane Hirshberg, Ph.D., Director, ISER and Vice-President Academic, UArctic*

Dr. Hirshberg presented to the Commission as follows:

**ISER: Non-Partisan Policy Research for Alaska and Beyond**

- Founded in 1961 by the legislature.
- In addition to economic and fiscal analysis, ISER also works in budget revenue tradeoffs, education finance, health, and more with new faculty members bringing energy into these areas.
- Most of ISER's 1,800+ publications are available online at no cost.
- ISER has been at the forefront of public policy research in Alaska for decades, and they study issues that Alaska is facing as well as those affecting the Arctic in order to help Alaskans and residents across the north better understand the state and region's changing economy, population, and infrastructure and the challenges and opportunities that come with the changes.
- ISER teaches and mentors young scholars as well as engages in public service along with their research.
- ISER has 11 faculty members, 13 research professionals, and graduate students and affiliates/collaborators across the institution and UAA.
- ISER's research is primarily funded through competitive grants and contracts with state and federal agencies as well as private foundations and philanthropic support.
- Faculty and research professionals come from a wide range of disciplines.

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### Two Centers within ISER:

#### UAA Center for Alaska Education Policy Research (CAEPR)

- CAEPR researchers focus on education policy issues, evaluate education policies and programs, act as a clearinghouse for education-related research at ISER, and provide analyses on education topics to policymakers.

#### UAA Center for Behavioral Health Research & Services (CBHRS)

- CBHRS' multidisciplinary team of faculty, research professionals, and students engage in collaborative research and evaluation that addresses applied and behavioral health issues within and outside Alaska.

### ISER Does More than Just Research

- ISER faculty teach UAA classes in economics, public policy, resource management, and more.
- They testify to the legislature and answer queries from local and national policymakers.
- Researchers give public lectures and talks across Alaska.
- They are featured regularly in the media.

Dr. Spencer Perry presented to the Commission as follows:

### Economic Contribution of Older Alaskans

- A 2004 ISER report found that retirees aged 60+ contributed roughly \$1.46B to the state economy, outpacing mineral production and seafood harvest.
- Using an updated methodology, ISER estimates that number grew to roughly \$6.7B in 2023, outpacing 2023 tourist spending, 2024 mineral production, and 2022 – 2023 seafood harvest.
- This contribution will continue to grow. The population of seniors aged 65+ has nearly tripled since 2004.
- Future projections show that the growth rate of the senior population is expected to decline relative to recent decades.
- Not only will the number of Alaskans who are older continue to grow, but they are also wealthier. Seniors aged 60 and older are bringing more income to the state than ever before.
- A large share of the economic contributions of Alaskan seniors is not just consumer spending, but a lot of it is generated by federal dollars coming into the state through the Medicare program.

### An Aging Population Presents New Challenges

- Outmigration for seniors aged 65+. Illustrates that there is something the State is or isn't doing that is not quite meeting the needs of older Alaskans.
- Increasing rate of dual Medicare/Medicaid individuals in the state. The healthcare that is not covered by Medicare is supplemented by the Medicaid program. Some of that Medicaid money is coming from the state.
- Larger share of Medicare beneficiaries who have ADRD. In 2021, nearly 6.5% of all Medicare beneficiaries across the state were either highly likely or likely to have ADRD. If they use a more generous definition of ADRD encounters through



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Medicare claims, that number increases to almost 10%. The share of ADRD beneficiaries will continue to grow as the population continues to age.

Director Newman noted that the outmigration trend seems to be moving in the right direction. Dr. Perry noted that the other years in the graph are five-year time periods where the most recent data from 2021 – 2023 (excluding 2020) is only a two-year time period. Once they have a few more years of data to add, it will be more comparable.

Vivian Stiver asked for the current percentage that the federal government contributes to the state for the Medicaid program. Dr. Perry stated that for the dual eligible population, the FMAP matching is 52%.

Bob Pawlowski wondered if ISER has been able to look at any data about how much retired veterans bring into the state. Dr. Perry stated that he hasn't taken into consideration payment from other sources like the VA, and he has only looked at Medicare and Medicaid.

Bob Pawlowski also asked if there was any way to understand seniors on fixed pension plans that continue to reside in Alaska. Dr. Perry noted that it would be nice to split the income graphic up by source of income. He plans to do that, but hasn't had the time yet.

Director Newman understood that the proportion of Indian Health Services (IHS) dual eligibles as a percent of the total is shrinking. He wondered if they looked at a population trend on Alaska Natives if they would see the reason for that. The Department works very hard to ensure that Alaska Native IHS eligible people are getting their services billed at the 100% federal rate. He wondered where this trend is going to go. Dr. Perry stated that he believes any change in this relative share is going to be driven by the population trends of the Native communities relative to non-Native communities. He also noted that the data is a little bit noisy, but it is something to look into more.

**ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH TRUST AUTHORITY**

Kelda Barstad updated the Commission about the Trust's activities as follows:

- The Trust had a draft of the strategic plan out for public comment. Changes will be incorporated as Trustees are finalizing the draft. Trustees will be voting to adopt the plan mid-December during a special board meeting.
- The Trust is working on finalizing their annual report, which includes the annual grant making report.
- They are just beginning to figure out the schedule for the FY'28 – FY'29 budget cycle. In spring of 2026, they will begin having conversations with stakeholders about what that will look like.
- Grant work continues to evolve. Anyone interested in a Trust grant should reach out to the program officer. The Trust has switched to a quarterly grant making schedule, and they are requiring a little bit more in the documentation area.
- Authority grants are no longer named in the budget, and they now go through the grant application process, which allows for more flexibility.



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- The Trust has been supporting the Alaska Dementia Action Collaborative for the past several years, and they are pleased to announce that it has found a home in the State under the Division of Public Health.
- For the FY'27 budget and advocacy work, the Trust has put forward in their request to the State for General Fund/Mental Health expenditures support for funding for coordinated community transportation, home modifications funded through the Department of Health, the Basic Homeless Assistance Program, and the Special Needs Housing Grant. The Trust recognizes it is likely to be another year of an austere budget, but they feel that these are important requests that help support not only Trust beneficiaries, but the community at large.
- The FY'27 budget has an increase in mini-grants. The ADRD mini-grant will see an increase of \$100,000. The Trust has noticed an overall increase in requests for mini-grants.
- The Trust is also funding two dementia education programs in FY'27.
- The Trust will continue their sponsorship of the Joint Advocacy activities during session. Once session begins, they will start the Friday afternoon teleconferences to review any bills pertinent to Trust beneficiaries.

Bob Pawlowski remarked on the increased attention to complex behavior. He asked where the Trust stands on complex behavior as an area of investment. Kelda Barstad stated that the Trust funds some of the work of the Complex Behavior Unit with the Department of Family and Community Services (DFCS). The Trust also participates in a number of initiatives that involve complex care across different departments and also supports cross training across many different industries.

## **SDS GRANTS UNIT UPDATE**

Nicole Wery-Tagaban reported to the Commission as follows:

- The amendments have gone out to most of the programs for the increase that SDS received, and SDS is in the process of getting them executed.
- The home modification and capital grants position closes today. They have applicants and should be filling the position in the next four weeks.
- The mental health essential program equipment and assistive technology RFPs should be going out soon.
- The NTS grant has three regions, Bethel, Bristol Bay, and Alaska Legal Services, who are in the process of being resolicited and evaluated.

Director Newman noted that concern was raised earlier in the meeting about the additional money advocates were able to get for the grants not being released yet, and he confirmed that that money is getting ready to go out. Nicole explained the process of SDS dealing with the timing of the increment and the complexities of getting the money out to providers.

## **SDS REPORT**

Nicole Wery-Tagaban updated the Commission on the FY'26 budget through 11/24/25. She noted that the Commission has approximately \$300,000 in unspent funds for this fiscal year. Things that are not showing in the budget include personal services; travel to Juneau, which should cost around \$22,000; and core service costs that go to State agencies to provide support for the Commission.

The SDS administrative team meets with Marty on a regular basis to go over the budget projections and anticipated expenditures.

Director Anthony Newman stated that they are busy on a number of projects and day-to-day work of the division and updated the Commission as follows:

#### Guidehouse Medicaid Rate Study

This study was to review all the rates Medicaid pays for long-term services and supports (LTSS), which includes waiver services. The report will be released within a week, and SDS will hold a public webinar on December 12th. The report did identify the need for increasing rates for many services, including personal care and private duty nursing. They also recommended tiered rates for several services based on the complexity of the individual they are working with.

#### Waiver Renewals

Home and Community-Based Waivers to be renewed by July 1, 2026:

- Alaskans Living Independently
- Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- Adults with Physical and Developmental Disabilities
- Children with Complex Medical Conditions
- Public comment will be held in December or early January
- The interRAI will be reflected in the waiver renewals.

#### interRAI Assessment Instrument

This is a new instrument that the Division will use to assess people's eligibility for home and community-based waivers and personal care services. It will ultimately enable SDS to reorient their system in a variety of ways, one of which is self-directed services. They are awaiting Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) approval on the draft contract with Mon Ami, who will be developing the software SDS needs to use the interRAI. CMS will be covering 90% of the costs of implementing the new tool. SDS is doing a lot of work to ensure that when they bring the new tool online, it will not be disruptive to recipients and the transition will be smooth. They anticipate signing the contract by the end of December and initiating project kickoff in January 2026.

#### Budget Reconciliation Bill

##### *Rural Health Transformation Fund*

- \$50B nationally to be split between states.
- Intended in part to help mitigate the cuts to Medicaid spending that are expected in the coming decade.
- During the request for information (RFI), many statewide stakeholders weighed in on suggestions for how the money should be used.
- Based on all the information received through the RFI, Department of Health submitted the funding application to the federal government on November 7<sup>th</sup>.
- The application is available online and was crafted to be general enough to allow for creative ideas to come forth on how to spend this money but also specific enough to show that Alaska has real intention to improve its healthcare system.

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- The legislature just authorized the Department to accept up to \$200M in federal funds through this Rural Health Transformation program.
- This is a five-year program, and it's possible Alaska could see about \$1B over the coming five years.
- Funding announcements will be made to states at the end of this year, and people will be able to apply for funds at the beginning of next year.

Chair Sivertsen wondered if ACoA could apply for some of that funding to help fund the summit.

### *New 1915(c) Waiver*

- This waiver doesn't require people to meet an institutional level of care.
- The waiver will become available in 2028, so SDS has a lot of time to continue to discuss and research for the new waiver type.

### Medicaid "Ensuring Access" Rule

- Rule that passed in 2024.
- Federal rule placing many requirements on the Department of Health and SDS, including the 80% rule which says that for every \$100 that gets paid out to a provider agency, \$80 of that needs to go to the worker actually providing the service.
- The rule has expectations around how SDS manages critical incidents, how quickly people get into service, and what the wait lists look like.
- The required Medicaid Advisory Committee has been established.
- The required grievance process is in development and will be implemented by July 2026.
- The timelines for complying with all the requirements of the rule go out to 2032.

### American Rescue Plan Act Section 9817 Funding

#### Past/Current Projects:

- Direct support professional (DSP) Recruitment and Retention Fund.
- DSP training and certification program – teamed with Medicaid training dollars to make it easier for that program to continue.
- Environmental modifications for assisted living homes.
- Complex Behavior Collaborative.
- interRAI technical assistance.

#### New Projects Underway:

- RingMD, a new telehealth service for IDD/ISW waiver participants.
- Direct care worker marketing campaign.
- Dementia training in collaboration with UAA Training Cooperative. The trainings are underway, and they are training people who work in assistive living, care coordinators, DSPs, and others. Approximately 60 people have been trained.

### Administrative Order 360

The Governor announced that all state agencies needed to open up their regulations and go through a public process to begin reducing them. The number of regulatory

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requirements must be reduced by 15% by the end of next year and 25% cumulative by the end of 2027. SDS arranged public hearings on every section of SDS regulations, and comments are under review.

### **Legislative Forecast**

- Governor's proposed FY'27 budget will be released by December 15<sup>th</sup>.
- HB 73/SB 76: Complex Care Residential Homes
- HB 96/SB 154: Home Care Employment Standards Advisory Board – board comprised primarily of people and agencies who provide home care and recipients of care to advise on wages and rates. The bill is being driven by the Service Employees International union.
- SB 178: Expand Early Intervention Services for the Infant Learning Program.

Bob Pawlowski remarked that based on his experience with putting complex care in the Pioneer Home, there may be miscommunication about the complex care residential homes, and he recommended looking at their messaging. Director Newman stated that one of the purposes of this legislation is to keep people out of API. There are people who have been residing in API for years, and API an acute care mental health hospital, not long-term living for people at a very high cost. This license type will allow for clinical and medical help that doesn't need to be provided in a mental health hospital.

Yasmin Radbod stated that ACoA has been collecting feedback for the Senior Summit planning for next year, and one tribal health organization said they have had a series of people who didn't make it onto a waiver who are living with dementia but don't meet the nursing facility level of care. Director Newman said they are hearing lots of stories like that, and he is excited about being able to explore this new waiver. They are waiting for guidance from CMS.

## **ALASKAN WAY**

*Theresa Hankins*

Theresa Hankins introduced herself as someone who has worked with the homeless in Anchorage as well as the various shelters. She also worked on her Native reservation for a year before coming to Alaska. She shared a story about an individual who was denied shelter services because of the inability to care for their activities of daily living (ADLs). The person eventually froze to death in their wheelchair outside of Walmart. Ever since that day, she has been advocating for homeless clients that have ADL challenges and is when she created Alaskan Way.

### **Mission**

Alaskan Way provides a safe, transitional shelter for medically fragile adults and those unable to meet their activities of daily living needs focusing on dignity, safety, and connection to recovery resources.

### **Developing Two Key Programs**

- Qasgiq House – a transitional shelter providing a supportive, healing environment with 24-hour PCA services, case management, assistance with obtaining disability, life skills training, and housing exploration.

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- Alaskan Way PCA: Partners in Care – offering personal care assistance, advocacy, and long-term support. PCAs will be able to go to shelters to provide services until Qasgiq House has openings, provide services to the people Alaskan Way is currently housing, and also work in Qasgiq House.

### The Need in Anchorage

- Elderly and medically fragile homelessness have grown over 30% in recent years.
- Existing shelters cannot accommodate those needing medical or ADL supports.
- At least 35 to 50 percent of unsheltered adults struggle with ADL challenges or mental health conditions that prevent them from safely caring for themselves.
- ACH's November 24 shelter update shows 52% of people who use seasonal shelter beds had disabling conditions including mobility limitation, cognitive impairments, chronic illness, mental health conditions, substance use disorders, and other ADL challenges.
- Hospitals face discharge delays due to lack of transitional placements.
  - On a daily basis, ANMC has four to five patients that fall into this category.

### Who We Serve

- Medically fragile adults
- Elders with limited ADL capacity
- Individuals without stable housing or family support
- Those referred through hospitals, shelters, and care coordinators.

### Our Approach

- Alaskan Way's approach is grounded in the Native teaching of Mino Bimaadiziwin – living the good life.
- The logo is a dreamcatcher that symbolizes the medicine wheel. They focus on all of the four categories of the medicine wheel.
- 24/7 supportive shelter environment.
- Coordination with hospitals and case managers.
- PCA services for shelter clients.
- Life skills training and case management for independence.
- Culturally responsive and trauma-informed care.

### Community Support and Partnerships

- Disabled Veterans National Foundation
- Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
- Emily Robinson and Alaska Native Health Campus
- Henning, Inc.

### Current Goals

- Secure stable funding and operational partnerships to be able to start the program running.
  - They have a building that is ready for them once they get the funding that will house 14 clients. By the middle of next year, they should be able to move into a second building that will house 24 clients.

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- Strengthen the transitional medical respite model.
- Expand awareness and community collaboration.
- Continue advocacy for medically fragile and aging Alaskans.

### **Call to Action for ACoA**

- Recognize Alaskan Way as an essential community resource.
- Advocate for continued development of supportive housing for medically fragile and elderly individuals.
- Partner in raising awareness of this critical need.

Chair Sivertsen remarked that it sounds like Alaskan Way has a solid plan. He appreciates her stepping up to help individuals who need it.

Vivian Stiver asked how they can address individuals who choose not to be housed. Theresa stated that talking to people face to face goes a long way. In the past they have had clients who chose not to be housed, and it's hard. She shared another story of an individual who kept falling through the cracks and nothing was working. Over time, she was able to get the individual committed for an evaluation, which was difficult. She did well under the supports of the shelter, but if she left those supports, she couldn't make it. In the end, they were able to get her stabilized with medication, get her a guardian, find her family in Texas, and the family was able to step up. She is currently housed in an assisted living facility and is thriving.

Bob Pawlowski asked if Alaskan Way has reached out to the Alaska Warrior Partnership. Theresa said she hadn't, and Bob encouraged her to do so because they would be a natural partner. Theresa also noted that her program will be working with landlords if they see a renter is declining to be able to send case management out to help keep them housed.

Director Newman introduced himself and stated that he became aware of her work through the Municipality of Anchorage. He is very intrigued by her program, and he encouraged her to reach out to him for more information about offering PCA services in this unique setting and approach. He noted that the intriguing aspect is that they are developing a shelter not intended to be a long-term living arrangement. The State typically likes to see PCA services offered in individuals' homes, and this pushes the envelope on what SDS understands about the way services can be provided. He doesn't see any reason why they couldn't do it since the plan is to continually work with people and transition them into more permanent living situations. He remarked that there might be bumps along the way, and if they can continue to communicate, he hopes they can smooth those out.

## **AROUND THE TABLE: COMMISSIONER UPDATES**

Paula Pawlowski thanked Director Newman for the time he gives the Commission. In her time on ACoA, there has only been one other director who has spent as much time as he has, and that was Duane Mayes. She appreciates him and his staff attending and staying for the entire meetings. Director Newman stated that Duane was his mentor, so that means a lot to him.



Bob Pawlowski thanked the Commission for allowing Director McGinley to introduce himself. He noted that his term on the Commission will be ending at the end of June 2026, and John Lee has agreed to take on the leadership.

Jennifer Stoehr enjoyed the meeting and thanked everyone.

Kori Mateaki thanked everyone for the wonderful meeting.

Art Delaune voiced his support for the Foraker proposal for prompt payment. He agreed that no more than five priorities should be presented to legislators, and he would support writing a letter of support which could then be included in the legislators' packets. He also thinks it's a great idea to combine the Senior Summit with the Aging and Disability Summit. This was a very good meeting, and he really enjoyed the ISER presentation.

Vivian Stiver encouraged everyone to share information about the senior services raffle and the types of senior services available in the community. She feels that a Lunch & Learn to discuss the various capacities seniors lose over time would be beneficial, because this could drive home some of the needs in legislation. She was very intrigued with Theresa's suggestion to focus on landlords because she knows of a tenant that lost her home because she had fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and is 65 and had no support.

Director Newman appreciated today's presentations. He looks forward to seeing everyone in Juneau.

Nona Safra truly appreciated the opportunity to serve on the Commission. She will miss everyone, but hopes to serve on committees. She encouraged everyone to stay in touch and let her know what she can do as a committee member.

Marty Lange shared that there has been discussion about doing a Lunch & Learn about the senior raffle. If that is of interest, Commissioners should let him know. He expressed his appreciation to Nona Safra for her leadership and suggestions. He looks forward to the February meeting and seeing everyone. He also thanked Kori Mateaki and Jennifer Stoehr for taking the time to have a conversation to get to know them. It has helped him understand how everyone fits together on the Commission. He also noted that Angela Jackson is adding a lot of value to the Commission with her life experience and the projects she is tackling.

Chair Sivertsen thanked Commissioners for the time they spend at these meetings and work they do in their communities. He is in weekly contact with Marty Lange, and Chair Sivertsen appreciates how eager Marty is to learn and grow in his position. He noted that Yasmin Radbod is making connections across the state that the Commission hasn't had before, and she brings a lot of things to the table they haven't had before. He agreed that Director Newman does a wonderful job for the Commission.



**NEXT STEPS, MEETING DATES AND TIMES**

- Quarterly Meeting – Juneau, February 9 – 13, 2026
  - AGEnet – Juneau, February 4 – 6, 2026
  - AARP – Juneau, February 9 – 11, 2026
  - Governor’s Council – Juneau, February 10 – 12, 2026

**ADJOURN**

Hearing no objections, Chair Sivertsen adjourned the meeting at 3:52 p.m.

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

QUARTERLY MEETING

Videoconference

Tuesday, December 2, 2025

Public Testimony

Pages 1 - 11, inclusive

Commissioners:

Bob Sivertsen, Chair

Paula Pawlowski

Bob Pawlowski

Kori Mateaki

Vivian Stiver

Art Delaune

Jennifer Stoehr

Director Anthony Newman, ex-officio

Darlene Supplee - not present

Sara Chambers, ex-officio - not present

Staff:

Martin Lange, Executive Director

Yasmin Radbod, Program Coordinator 2

Angela Jackson, UAA Intern

Transcribed by: Paula DiPaolo, Notary Public

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 CHAIR SIVERTSEN: I'd like to make sure  
3 to open public comment. We have a time period for  
4 that. We went by it a little bit, but the Commission  
5 is now open for public comment. If there is anybody  
6 from the public that wishes to speak to the  
7 Commission, please make yourself known.

8 (Pause)

9 CHAIR SIVERTSEN: We are open for public  
10 comment. If there is anybody that wishes to speak to  
11 the Commission at this time, please do.

12 MICHELLE BOWLDS: Hello, this is  
13 Michelle Bowlds with Agnew::Beck. Can everybody hear  
14 me?

15 CHAIR SIVERTSEN: I can, Michelle.

16 MICHELLE BOWLDS: Hi. It's wonderful to  
17 see some familiar faces.

18 I just wanted to pop on and let folks  
19 know that Agnew::Beck is working with AHFC on their  
20 Statewide Housing Assessment, and as part of that  
21 housing assessment, we are doing a senior and persons  
22 with disabilities sub report. And as part of that sub  
23 report, we will be conducting a statewide survey of  
24 seniors.

25 The goal of the survey is not to

1 duplicate what the state needs -- needs for seniors  
2 survey that happens every couple years is going to do.  
3 It's going to be more targeted on specifically housing  
4 needs and preferences for seniors. It's about 20 to  
5 30 questions long, and we'll be launching it at the  
6 beginning of the year, and I just wanted to put this  
7 on everybody's radar since it will be coming in the  
8 next month.

9 And we would love some assistance with  
10 getting the word out about the survey and making sure  
11 that seniors have an opportunity to make their voice  
12 heard across the state about their specific housing  
13 needs as part of the housing assessment that AHFC is  
14 completing.

15 CHAIR SIVERTSEN: Bob.

16 BOB PAWLOWSKI: Yes, thank you, Mr.  
17 Chair.

18 In doing your assessment, will you be  
19 reaching out to the veteran population? Specifically  
20 I would recommend being in contact with Bernie Bowen  
21 (ph) and the State Department of Military and Veterans  
22 Affairs so that we address the question about homeless  
23 seniors and senior needs. Thank you.

24 MICHELLE BOWLDS: Thank you, yes, that  
25 is on our radar as a partner to reach out to, and it's

1 definitely a population we're specifically going to be  
2 targeting for the survey as well.

3 CHAIR SIVERTSEN: So, Marty, we could  
4 partner with them and use our website to populate that  
5 and get the information back to them.

6 MARTIN LANGE: Yes. And another format  
7 would be the E-Blast that we send out each week. We  
8 can feature it in that.

9 CHAIR SIVERTSEN: So Michelle, if you  
10 can get the information to the office, we can help you  
11 launch that when it's ready.

12 MICHELLE BOWLDS: Wonderful. Thank you  
13 so much. I really appreciate your support. And we  
14 will be launching at the beginning of the year, so  
15 after the holiday season is over. So we'll have more  
16 details coming shortly, and it should be launching in  
17 January 2026.

18 CHAIR SIVERTSEN: Great, sounds good.  
19 So I think being able to share that information across  
20 multiple platforms is going to be a good avenue to get  
21 as much information as you can to make the study  
22 worthwhile.

23 MICHELLE BOWLDS: Wonderful. Thank you  
24 for your time and the opportunity to provide public  
25 comment.

1 VIVIAN STIVER: Michelle, I had a  
2 question.

3 MICHELLE BOWLDS: Oh, yes, go ahead.

4 VIVIAN STIVER: Yeah, I'm curious. So  
5 are you going to take a look at -- it's kind of a  
6 little different -- seniors that may be in housing  
7 currently that may have some input either on how it's  
8 going with the setup they have or -- so I'm just  
9 curious. Are you going to look at all -- at the  
10 seniors who are currently in different housing  
11 provided by Alaska Housing Finance Corporation and  
12 other owner/agents of affordable housing?

13 MICHELLE BOWLDS: Yes, we will be. And  
14 it is a targeted survey. We try to keep it short, but  
15 we will be asking questions of seniors across a  
16 variety of housing types because we want to make sure  
17 we're capturing the housing -- the current housing and  
18 then also future housing needs of seniors. So we will  
19 be, yeah.

20 VIVIAN STIVER: I think that's really  
21 good because we're encouraging people to stay longer.

22 MICHELLE BOWLDS: Yeah.

23 VIVIAN STIVER: So properties that have  
24 been around for a long time need financials to move  
25 ahead and do alterations and such too. So all right,

1       thank you.

2                       CHAIR SIVERTSEN:   Bob.

3                       BOB PAWLOWSKI:   Yes.   I'm going to  
4       follow up.   Vivian, that was an excellent question  
5       because the question is, how do we get access to the  
6       labor or the support to make the modifications to stay  
7       in our house longer?

8                       MICHELLE BOWLDS:   Yes.   And that is one  
9       of the goals of the senior sub report is for AHFC as  
10      an organization, they are wanting to know about the  
11      type of modifications that people are needing and are  
12      interested in, and then also so that they can plan  
13      ahead for the next 10 years for their programs to best  
14      meet needs of seniors, especially senior housing going  
15      forward.

16                      BOB PAWLOWSKI:   Thank you.   Thank you.

17                      LORRAINE THOMAS:   Michelle, it's  
18      Lorraine.

19                      MICHELLE BOWLDS:   Hi, Lorraine.

20                      CHAIR SIVERTSEN:   Yes, Lorraine.

21                      LORRAINE THOMAS:   Hi.   So we have  
22      Aleutian Housing Authority that does a majority of the  
23      housing in the -- in some of the (speaking Native  
24      language) communities.   Would you be able to work with  
25      someone there, or do you already work with someone?



1 MICHELLE BOWLDS: Yes, we actually  
2 reached out to all of the regional housing  
3 authorities, and we met with AHA already, so we have  
4 been. We are trying to reach out to all of the  
5 partners because we are looking at housing as a whole  
6 across the state, but then there is a specific  
7 emphasis on seniors and persons with disabilities for  
8 this specific housing assessment, because that's a  
9 priority area for AHFC currently.

10 LORRAINE THOMAS: Thank you so much.

11 MICHELLE BOWLDS: No problem.

12 CHAIR SIVERTSEN: So, Michelle, when you  
13 talk about home modifications, one of the big tech  
14 things that is coming at us now is heat pumps.

15 VIVIAN STIVER: Mhm.

16 MICHELLE BOWLDS: Uh-huh.

17 CHAIR SIVERTSEN: And working -- I know  
18 that here in Southeast, Southeast Conference got a  
19 considerable amount of money to help support putting  
20 heat pumps in a house, but of course there has to be  
21 surveys and different things like that.

22 So when we're looking at housing in  
23 particular, then existing housing, getting  
24 (indiscernible) -- in Southeast Alaska, most people  
25 use fossil fuels, and it's much more expensive in some

1 areas to do that than it is to use heat pump  
2 technology.

3 And so there's going to be a big  
4 conversion coming at us, and I don't know if there's  
5 anything through the program you're talking about that  
6 will either talk about that, suggest something, or  
7 have a program within.

8 MICHELLE BOWLDS: That is on our radar.  
9 We actually met with Baranof Island Housing Authority  
10 last week, and that was one of the flags that they  
11 raised, so it will be on AHFC's radar.

12 The work that we're doing is really just  
13 identifying the needs, and then it will go to AHFC who  
14 will do more of the programmatic design to address  
15 those needs going forward. So I can't speak to what  
16 AHFC plans to do, but I do think one of the goals of  
17 this work is to identify things like the heat pumps  
18 and see if that's something that we can, you know,  
19 integrate into programs going forward.

20 CHAIR SIVERTSEN: Jim, I see you have  
21 your hand up. Go ahead.

22 JIM McCALL: Yeah, Bob, that's a good  
23 question.

24 And I think it's important to note here  
25 that my office is working with obviously Agnew::Beck,

1 but the other partner at AHFC who is instrumental in  
2 this is our -- the name just left me. R2D2 --

3 MARTIN LANGE: ADRCs.

4 JIM McCALL: -- Research and Rural  
5 Development Division, which is responsible for all of  
6 our energy programs.

7 So as Michelle pointed out, what we  
8 learn from this will allow different departments  
9 within AHFC to respond accordingly, whether that's our  
10 energy department, their programs; whether that's our  
11 Planning Department and the GOAL programs we talked  
12 about; or whether that's Mortgage and the Senior  
13 Housing Office. What we learn from this will help,  
14 you know, drive that message and also direct policy.

15 CHAIR SIVERTSEN: Perfect, thank you,  
16 Jim. Vivian.

17 VIVIAN STIVER: Yeah, I just wanted to  
18 throw in there we are an experimental site for a heat  
19 pump right now. It just got installed. It's got all  
20 kinds of monitors on it up here because they've been  
21 changed to maybe take the sub Arctic climate and be  
22 more, you know, productive. But they are a very  
23 interesting item.

24 So there is work being done in our  
25 building and another property here in town testing

1       these heat pumps for use and the cost of them.

2                   CHAIR SIVERTSEN:   So Jim, in some of the  
3       housing units that are operating and managed, do they  
4       provide heat in most of them, or is it individuals are  
5       required to do so?   I would imagine in a larger  
6       complex the heat is part of the rent, I would imagine.

7                   JIM McCALL:   Yeah, Bob, you're correct.  
8       If it's, for example, like our public housing units,  
9       obviously that's included.   In many of the senior  
10      developments that we have financed, it depends on how  
11      they put it together, but in many cases it may be, or  
12      there may be some type of utility allowance or  
13      something.   But generally speaking, there is some type  
14      of coverage for it.

15                   And if the individual pays, you know,  
16      it's generally looked at as a portion of that but not  
17      perhaps what you would see as a private citizen paying  
18      in your own home, for example.

19                   CHAIR SIVERTSEN:   Yeah, but the whole  
20      idea here is to keep the -- after the construction,  
21      the brick and mortar part of it, the occupancy, to  
22      keep that cost for the rent of the facility as low as  
23      possible so these guys -- I mean, they're not meant to  
24      be long term, right, from what I understand?   They're  
25      supposed to be short term until they can get their way

1 free to move into something else maybe.

2 JIM McCALL: Well, that would be true  
3 for public housing perhaps on the family side. But  
4 remember, that doesn't apply to senior public housing  
5 and would also not apply to independent senior living.  
6 I mean, if you get one of those units, you know,  
7 that's your home. You're not forced out in five years  
8 or whatever like the public housing requirement for  
9 family-type situations. Once you're in a senior  
10 property, if that's where you elect to stay, you know,  
11 that's up to you, but there is no requirement that  
12 after so many years you're out and moving on.

13 CHAIR SIVERTSEN: Yeah, so some of those  
14 that have been around for a long time and are used  
15 in -- you know, hydronic (ph) heater or fossil fuels  
16 in order to keep them updated and affordable, maybe  
17 heat technology is just one of those issues energy  
18 wise. So thank you.

19 We'll be looking forward to seeing what  
20 that questionnaire looks like.

21 So anything else? If not, we've gone  
22 past, but we didn't receive any other public comment,  
23 so we can close public comment now.

24 (End of public comment period)

25