

## Targeted Capacity Expansion

### Meeting The Mental Health Service Needs of Older Adults in Alaska

#### Section A: Rational for the Project

1. Specific age group to be addressed for all persons 65 and older with mental health needs.

This project targets all persons over 65 living in Alaska who experience mental health issues.

2. *Target population described in terms of sociodemographic characteristics, racial/ethnic minority composition, population size and geographic distribution* – Alaska's population has remained relative stable over the past decade and is currently estimated at 626,000. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, racial and ethnic representation include Whites 69.3%, African American 3.5%, American Indian/Alaska Native 15.6%, Asian 4%, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 5.4%, and two or more races reported 5.4% (Healthy Alaskans 2010). 79% of the population resides in the six largest census areas; Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kenai Peninsula, Ketchikan, and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and Juneau. The remainder, about 30%, lives in "roadless" areas where access to the major urban centers is only by air, boat, or snow machine. In order to receive primary, preventative, or emergency health care, many rural Alaskans must wait for clear weather to schedule a trip to an urban center, if they are able to pay for transportation (Healthy Alaskans 2010).

“Alaska’s senior population is one of the fastest growing in the nation and is the fastest growing sector of Alaska’s population.” The most recent projections from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development indicate that Alaska’s population aged 65 and older was estimated at 35,699 in 2000 and could triple to 92,356, comprising 12% of the total population by 2018. In a December 2001 Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development published and special report titled “Seniors in Alaska - A tidal wave rolling toward us.” The report summarized a number of studies including the McDowell Group Inc. 2000, Alaska Commission on Aging 2000, U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and, Healthy Alaskans 2010. The following information was provided:

- Women over 65 comprised 53% of the population compared to 47% for men with women having a life expectancy of 79.5 years and 73.8 for men.
- Approximately 14% of the senior households live below the poverty line with women at 54% and men at 46%. Seniors 85 and older are the poorest group, with approximately 40% living below HUD very-low-income guidelines.
- Alaskans age 65 and over participated in the labor force at a 17.5% rate compared to 12.8% nationally.
- 44% of Alaska’s population over 65 experiences at least one disability.
- Alaska will rank second in the highest expected increase in the nation in people with Alzheimer’s (estimated 15,700) by 2024.
- Demographic distribution of Alaskan’s 65 and over population indicate that 79% live in larger communities centered around Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Fairbanks Northstar Borough, Kenai Peninsula, Juneau and Valdez-Cordova, with 21%

living in communities with a population under 2500 mainly located in Southwest, Interior, and Aleutian Islands

- Southeast Alaska has the highest percentage of seniors (10.4%). The Interior and Southwest regions have the lowest at approximately 7%.
- 81% live in their own homes with 1% living in long-term care settings including 1300+ residing in assisted living and 6000+ living in skilled nursing under Medicaid funding. In addition 878 older adults are receiving Home and Community based waivers.
- The largest community, Anchorage, is home to more than 12,700 seniors 65+ and has the highest concentration of all ethnic minority groups with Whites at 77%, African American at 7.2%, Asian and Pacific Islander at 6.9% and Hispanic at 6.5% (U.S. Census 1998).

Demographics indicate that Anchorage's 65+ population will increase by 700% within the next 15 – 30 years (Anchorage Senior Study 2000).

*Number to be served* – With the continued rapid growth of the 65+ population located in the Anchorage bowl alone, the number of seniors in need of mental health services and supports will increase proportionately. Currently the Anchorage Community Mental Health Center provides services to 90 older adults and average 10 –12 referrals per month through the Senior Psychiatric Outreach Team (SPOT), the only one of its kind in Alaska. Southeast Senior Services provides mental health consultation to ##\_\_\_\_\_ of older adults in communities though a contract with Juneau Community Mental Health. SAMHSA funding will provide resources to increase the capacity and expand the number of older adults receiving treatment by 1/3 each year or 180 by the end of the project period. These figures do not necessarily reflect the number of older adults that will benefit from training and education of community members, care providers, and older adults themselves.

*Estimated unmet need* – Mental Health services and supports for older Alaskan's is basically non-existent in Alaska. In essence, there is such a tremendous need statewide, it's basically very difficult to know where to start. We know several key factors about the socio-demographics of older adults in Alaska, and have a broad range of community based supports and services that allow more and more older adults to remain in their homes; however, we do not have a clear and concise picture of the number of older adults who experience mental health issues or chronic mental illness across the state. Even among the over 7000 older adults living in institutional settings there is little, if any, information about their mental health status.

In Alaska there are several planning boards charged with identifying the needs of Alaskan's across the lifespan. For older adults, the **Alaska Commission on Aging (ACOA)** is mandated by the Older Americans Act to develop and administer the state plan on Aging. Services are provided by 66 non-profit organizations statewide and must provide a range of services including nutrition, transportation, and a variety of support services including Home and Community-Based Services. **The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority**, a quasi state agency, is responsible for planning and funding programs that serve Alaskan's experiencing one or more of the following: 1) mental illness, 2) mental retardation or similar disability, 3) Alzheimer's disease and related disorders, and 4) chronic alcoholism with psychosis.

Other planning boards include the **Mental Health Board** and the **Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse**.

In 2001, the State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services published a comprehensive integrated mental health plan for fiscal years 2001-2006 titled "In-Step." A collaborative effort among the groups identified above, the report focuses on those Alaskans with mental and cognitive disabilities and/or substance use disorders. It incorporates work from the

Healthy Alaskans 2010 public health plan and other statewide planning processes to offer guidance to policy makers for improvements to state services and to personal circumstances of individuals experiencing disabilities.

Unfortunately, throughout these published reports and plans, there is little if any information clearly identifying and planning for the mental health needs of Alaska's older adult population. However, in each report there is limited reference to the "unmet needs" of older adults with mental health issues. The following statements are taken from published reports and state plans regarding the "un-met" needs of older adults;

Alaska Commission on Aging State Plan 2001-2003 – *“Seniors with physical and undiagnosed and untreated mental illness, seniors experiencing chemical addictions, and seniors with dual diagnoses all represent underserved populations with special needs (p. 21).”*

In-Step 2001 – *“The number of complaints and requests for assistance received by the Long-Term Care Ombudsman has risen by 53% since 1997. Between 60 and 70 percent of the complaints are against assisted living homes. This is of concern because Alaska has the nation's fastest growing cohort of people 65 and older (p.36).”*

Healthy Alaskans 2010 – *“Alaska is first in the nation in the proportional growth of our senior population....An increase in the number of elderly and adults with disabilities means dramatic increase in the number of people needing long-term care services.”*

Substance Abuse/Mental Health Integration Project – *“There are an estimated 40,412 adults and children experiencing a serious mental illness or severe emotional disorder in Alaska.” This constitutes 10% of the population. 65,015 experience substance abuse disorders or 14.9% of Alaska's total population (p 3).”* There is no breakdown

Surgeon Generals Report -

Epidimology reports –

\*\*\*Based on lack of evidence and data, figures presented above our best estimate of projected growth in the number of older Alaskan's experiencing specific mental disorders that are not part of normal aging .....then site surgen general report\*\*\*\*\*.

*Risk factors that will be addressed by the preventative intervention/or the mental or emotional disorder addressed by treatment strategies*

*The domains where risk factors will be addressed*

3. Demonstrated Need for the program
  - a) Documentation of emerging and urgent need
  - b) Service systems gaps

- c) Barriers to serving older adults
- d) Needs for prevention, early intervention, and/or treatment services

4. The proposed program's impact on the existing services environment, including;

- a) beneficial outcomes at the individual level
- b) beneficial outcomes at the program level
- c) beneficial outcomes at the system level
- d) adverse consequences of not implementing the program