

# ALASKA BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## SAMHSA Grant Supports Expanded Services for Alaskans

**Alaska Behavioral Health** is grateful to be one of 231 community mental health centers to receive funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration as part of SAMHSA's COVID-19 response.

According to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), from August 2020 through February 2021, the percentage of adults with recent symptoms of an anxiety or a depressive disorder increased from 36.4 percent to 41.5 percent, and the percentage of those reporting an unmet mental health care need increased from 9.2 percent to 11.7 percent. The federal funding is designed to increase capacity and access to outpatient care to meet this growth in need for behavioral healthcare services.

When there are large scale stressors that affect the entire population, most of the growth in clinical need for children and adults is for outpatient services. As Christine Alvarez, Chief Clinical Officer for Adult Services, notes, "This pandemic is impacting all behavioral conditions responsive to stress. This money will help us hire more clinicians who can provide treatment to respond to the increase in general mental health needs."

In addition to increasing capacity, the funding requires Alaska Behavioral Health to assess whether all Alaskans, across all demographics, have equal access to care and see similar outcomes, and to address disparities if they do exist.

Alaska Behavioral Health has been growing to meet community need since before the pandemic. Between September 2018 and September 2021, clients served more than doubled, with dramatic increases in the number of assessments and crisis services, while state funding has remained flat. The federal funding will help maintain this increased level of services to Alaskans. Alvarez says, "We plan to have the expanded services outlast the initial outpouring of funding and support, as the need is going to be long term, so there must be a sustained response."

Read SAMHSA's press release about the funding here: <https://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/press-announcements/202109281153>.

**About Alaska Behavioral Health:** Alaska Behavioral Health, formerly known as Anchorage and Fairbanks Community Mental Health Services, has been providing mental health services to the Anchorage community for more than 45 years and in Fairbanks since 2013. A not-for-profit 501(c)3, Alaska Behavioral Health is nationally accredited by the Council on Accreditation and is licensed by the State of Alaska. Services include individual and group therapy and skill development for children and adults, psychoeducation, psychiatric services, case management, family therapy, and vocational training. ###