



State Report 2010

State: Alaska

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Projects/Issues Addressed This Year:

H1N1 and Public Health Preparedness: Like the rest of the nation, H1N1 response and immunization activities in Alaska demanded a large proportion of our public health nursing time and effort this past year.

Community Assessment: We have provided all State of Alaska PHNs training on the use of the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnership (MAPP) tool over the past couple of years with the long term goal of increasingly engaging PHNs statewide in incorporating MAPP tools and processes into their ongoing community practice. We have seen increasing buy-in and interest over the course of time and PHNs are progressively initiating and participating with local stakeholders in community assessment and strategic planning related to public health needs.

Strategic Planning: A new strategic plan was written for the Section of Nursing to guide our direction for the coming years of change.

Projects/Issues Pending:

Public Health Accreditation: Alaska recently received technical assistance from ASHHO to bring our public health leadership together to look at and discuss the pros and cons and possible timeline of applying for State Public Health Accreditation. This was very well done and extremely helpful. A formal recommendation will be going to the Division Director and Commissioner by the end of August.

AFHCAN Telemedicine: Our public health centers are part of the Alaska Federal Healthcare Access Network (AFHCAN) along with the Alaska Native Health Corporation clinics and Dept of Defense clinics within the state. The AFHCAN system offers a diagnostic "store and forward" telehealth platform with the ability to create a telemedicine case with textual information and data from biomedical peripherals, and send data for consultation. Health care professionals and specialists are able to view the data and respond to the case using a standard PC workstation. In the previous version of this system, utility to PHNs was limited by technological problems that allowed neither connectivity to the internet nor practical use of the store and forward technology. Deployment of updated hardware and software systems, along with improved coordination with our IT department, promises to both resolve these problems and offer greatly expanded opportunities to creatively use this system to benefit the health of our clients. It will be exciting to see the innovative ways our PHN staff find to use this new technology.

Nurse Family Partnership: We are beginning to work with partners on the needed assessment data and partnership development to be ready to apply for Federal Home Visiting funding once the RFP is released. Alaska currently has no NFP program in the state.

Issues and Special Concerns for Public Health Nursing:

PHN Recruitment and Retention: We have had a significant number of our management team and some of our very long term public health nurses retire this year. PHN recruitment and retention continues to be an ongoing challenge. This is particularly true in the more rural and remote parts of the state. We are continuing to look at creative ways of addressing this. We were lucky enough to engage an excellent new employee with great skills in workforce development and marketing who is working on this full time and who has been invaluable in helping us to recruit highly qualified applicants to fill many of these positions.