



State and Partner Report 2006*

State: Alaska

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Projects/Issues Addressed This Year:

Documentation of Population/Community and Systems Focused PHN Activities: Up to this point all of our PHN services data has focused on individual client care services. This year we have developed a database and are just now beginning statewide use of a population-based services information management system to collect information about the type of activities and time PHNs are investing in population based service delivery. Activities are categorized according to program, and the PHN intervention/activity as categorized by the Minnesota Wheel, and PHNs asked to make note of the process and outcome objectives for the activity. We are hopeful this will add significant new information and data which will be useful in looking at PHN services and reporting the impact of PHN activities.

Public Health Emergency Preparedness: PHNs continue to work actively on public health emergency preparedness and most recently pandemic influenza planning and preparations. PHNs are active on each Local Emergency Planning Committee in the state and numerous communities have already held or planning upcoming mass immunization/mass prophylaxis exercises. A respiratory protection plan has been completed for PHN staff and training and community planning and coordination work continues actively statewide. A contract was awarded to the Alaska Nurses Association to hire a coordinator for the Alaska Nurse Alert System. We were able to test the Alaska Nurse Alert System as we prepared to assist the Southeast as needed in response to Hurricane Katrina; we had more than 80 Nurse Alert volunteers ready to respond if called upon for assistance.

New Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Position: We have reclassified a vacant Nurse Consultant position into a Nurse Consultant who will focus on developing and instituting a comprehensive QA/QI program for the Section of PH Nursing. We hope to fill this position within the next few months.

Statewide PHN Conference: Alaska is holding its first Statewide Public Health Nursing Conference in four years on April 18 – 20. The theme of the conference is “Partnering for Healthy Communities” and Linda Olson Keller will be our keynote speaker. The major focus of many of the presentations will be provision of population based public health nursing services.

Projects/Issues Pending:

Funding: After suffering a \$1.2 million reduction and loss of 16.5 positions in FY 2005, and stable funding at that level in FY 2006, it is looking hopeful for a modest General Fund increase of \$750,000 for public health nursing in FY 07. This is part of a public health preparedness and infectious disease GF request to increase public health capacity in the areas of public health nursing, epidemiology and labs. (This is half of the \$1.5 million put forth for public health nursing in the Governor’s proposed budget).

PHN Practice Guidelines: Work on revising and updating PHN Practice Guidelines (in process since 2004) continues with a real possibility of completion by the end of the summer. Our goal is to make our guidelines consistent with the Scope and Standards of Public Health Nursing, the Core Functions, the Ten Essential Services, the Minnesota PHN Interventions Wheel, and the PHN Competencies. It has been a long, but very worthwhile process as we have worked to include PHNs from across the state in developing, researching, writing, and reviewing the guidelines. We believe the finished product will serve as a valuable guide for PHN practice and decision-making for experienced Alaska PHNs as well as new graduates and nurses new to the

field. Work has also begun on updating our Charting Manual to provide better instruction and to coincide with the Practice Guidelines.

Issues and Special Concerns for Public Health Nursing:

Recruitment and Retention: We continue to see departure of our most experienced PHN staff, primarily due to retirement. We have been experiencing a consistent 16% vacancy level despite our efforts to fill positions. We have been fairly successful in hiring PHN I level staff, but have it extremely difficult to find applicants for positions requiring PHN experience, particularly PHN III and PHN management level positions. The Division will be working together to encourage and assist staff in learning leadership and management skills so we can better grow our own new public health leaders for the future.

Medicaid Funding: Medicaid has been funding approximately 35%-39% of the Alaska PHN budget based on a time study that determines the percentage of time spent by Alaska public health nurses providing services to Medicaid eligible clients. We are now being required to revise our time study methodology for PHN staff and have had to begin daily documentation of time devoted to Skilled Professional Medical Personnel (SPMP) activities by PHN management staff. Previously the Medicaid funding percentage was determined for a one year period based on time study results for the previous six quarters. The new time study which will begin July 2006, will result in a new Medicaid percentage each quarter based on the previous quarter time study results. This will result in much more volatility in our budget and we anticipate that these changes will have a significant impact on our total annual budget, though it is impossible to predict what that impact will be at this point in time.