

**MH Medical Appliances for Beneficiaries Experiencing Sensory Impairments**

**FY2014 Request: \$500,000**  
**Reference No: 33671**

**AP/AL:** Appropriation  
**Category:** Health/Human Services  
**Location:** Statewide  
**Impact House District:** Statewide (HD 1-40)  
**Estimated Project Dates:** 07/01/2013 - 06/30/2018  
**Project Type:** Equipment / Commodities  
**Recipient:** Various  
**House District:** Statewide (HD 1-40)  
**Contact:** Jennifer Klein  
**Contact Phone:** (907)465-1870

**Brief Summary and Statement of Need:**

This project procures medical appliances and assistive technology devices that help ameliorate sensory impairments. Many Alaskans suffer from sensory impairments. They may or may not occur with other physical, developmental, or cognitive impairments.

<b>Funding:</b>	<u>FY2014</u>	<u>FY2015</u>	<u>FY2016</u>	<u>FY2017</u>	<u>FY2018</u>	<u>FY2019</u>	<u>Total</u>
GF/MH	\$500,000						\$500,000
<b>Total:</b>	\$500,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$500,000

<input type="checkbox"/> State Match Required	<input type="checkbox"/> One-Time Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - underway	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On-Going
0% = Minimum State Match % Required		<input type="checkbox"/> Amendment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Bill	

**Operating & Maintenance Costs:**

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Staff</u>
Project Development:	0	0
Ongoing Operating:	0	0
One-Time Startup:	0	
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Prior Funding History / Additional Information:**

Sec5 Ch16 SLA2012 P13 L14 HB 285 \$125,000

**Project Description/Justification:**

An estimated 14,881 Alaskans experience vision impairments and/or blindness. Approximately 17% of American adults report some degree of hearing loss, with the prevalence rising with age (15% of adults age 20-69, 30% of adults age 65-74, 47% of adults 75 and older). The rate of children born deaf or hard-of-hearing is 2-3 for every 1,000.

Sensory impairments affect all sorts of people, in all age groups. They may or may not occur with other physical, developmental, or cognitive impairments. However, sensory impairments can have a greater negative impact on trust beneficiaries, due to the significant role sight and hearing have in socio-cognitive development and functioning, daily living, mobility, independence, communication, and community integration.

Medical appliances and assistive technology devices that help ameliorate sensory impairments are expensive. The cost of hearing aids, depending on the technology, ranges from \$1,000-\$5,000 per device (i.e. per ear). Low vision devices can range from a few hundred dollars to thousands of dollars, depending on the need of the individual and the level of functioning achieved. Many trust beneficiaries have Medicaid or Medicare, which cover some or all of the cost for medically necessary appliances and assistive technology for sensory impairments. However, many trust beneficiaries (for

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various reasons) do not qualify for Medicaid or Medicare, or they have private health insurance or Indian Health Services (IHS) benefits that do not cover medical appliances.

With this project, funds will be made available to Alaska's assistive technology organizations (Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI) and Assistive Technology of Alaska (ATLA) to expand beneficiary access to hearing and vision aids. Under an existing Memorandum of Agreement it is expected that these agencies will use the funds granted to expand current services and supports. Assistive Technology of Alaska currently partners with community organizations to provide amplification and alerting devices to individuals with hearing impairments. Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired travels statewide in partnership with local eye care professionals and community organizations to provide low vision clinics and offer assessment and instruction to clients needing supports for independent living. These agencies could also administer "mini-grant" programs by which individuals/caregivers can apply for subsidized appliances/assistive technology. An estimated 1,300 beneficiaries could be served with this funding, with expanded use of technology-sharing programs.

Individuals with disabilities often require assistive technology devices in order to live independently, perform well in school, and maintain employment. They are also more likely to live in poverty and lack resources to investigate or purchase outright these types of devices.