

**State of Alaska**  
**FY2023 Governor's Operating Budget**

**Department of Health**  
**Senior and Disabilities Services**  
**Results Delivery Unit Budget Summary**

## Senior and Disabilities Services Results Delivery Unit

### Contribution to Department's Mission

To promote health, well-being and safety for individuals with disabilities, seniors and vulnerable adults by facilitating access to quality services and supports that foster independence, personal choice and dignity.

### Core Services

- Long-term care services
- Home and community-based services
- Quality assurance
- Access
- Long-term care facility and program safety
- Long-term care workforce
- All applicants for services are evaluated for program eligibility.
- Grant services
- Protection of vulnerable adults

### Major RDU Accomplishments in 2021

- The Division's community-based grant programs have continued to provide essential, high-quality services to seniors and individuals experiencing disabilities throughout the state despite increasing needs in the senior population. The estimated number of individuals served in FY2021 is 23,391 (unduplicated).
- Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS) continued a pilot project in Anchorage in partnership with the Alzheimer's Resource Agency of Alaska and the Municipality of Anchorage Aging and Disability Resource Center to provide increased supports for caregivers caring for a family member with dementia. The goal of the project is to prolong the amount of time a caregiver can care for their family member at home and prevent placement in a nursing home.
- Statewide, the number of referrals and enrollment in our Infant Learning Program remained steady. In FY2021, there were 3,000 referrals. Annual enrollment was 1,857 in FY2018, 1,913 in FY2019, 1,858 in FY2020, and 1,700 in FY2021.\*
- The number of referrals from the Child Protection System or Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) to ILP continued to be high. Referral numbers: 2017 = 619, 2018 = 849, 2019 = 824, 2020 = 940, and 832 = 2021. \*
- Due to COVID-19, local Early Intervention/Infant Learning providers moved Child Find, evaluation and intervention activities from direct instruction to a distance platform. These new modes of service delivery allow for continuity of services and communication between Alaska families and their Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program and lay the foundation for future distance delivery of important services.
- SDS assisted recipients and providers of services with guidance, assistance, and support as the COVID-19 pandemic persisted through FY2021. Authority to change service approaches and requirements that was received from federal and state governments in FY2020 continued through most of FY2021 and in some cases was refined to be more responsive to needs as they evolved. In particular, the Emergency Preparedness and Response Appendix K for Home and Community Based Waiver Programs under the Social Security Act allowed these programs to continue to function despite conditions that limited home visiting, in-person interviews, and other requirements normally in place.
- The division teamed with partners both within and outside the department to develop guidelines for various programs and settings to operate safely through the pandemic. These included guidelines for skilled nursing facilities, assisted living homes, and other congregate residential settings; and guidelines for non-residential congregate settings such as for adult day services and community meal services. These guidelines were regularly updated as pandemic conditions shifted throughout the year.
- The division applied for and successfully renewed four of its five home and community-based waiver programs in FY2021. The Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Alaskans Living Independently,

Adults with Physical and Developmental Disabilities, and Children with Complex Medical Conditions waivers were renewed by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for five-year cycles effective July 1, 2021. Preparing the waivers for renewal required writing, data analysis, revision of performance measures, and layers of review across Division staff and management.

- SDS successfully implemented Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) on January 1, 2021, as required under the federal 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act of 2016. EVV will enable the state to improve health and welfare of recipients of personal care services by validating delivery of those services through mobile phone and other applications. The Division selected a vendor to assist in its implementation of this program in November 2020 and proceeded to adopt its EVV system and train providers in its use under a very short timeframe. On January 15, 2021 the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services informed SDS that the Division was determined to have successfully implemented EVV and therefore would avoid reductions to Alaska's federal Medicaid matching percentage, as would be allowed under the federal law.
- A bill representing the final step in the Division's efforts to comply with federal standards for Medicaid waiver settings passed the Alaska Legislature in FY2021 and was signed into law. Senate Bill 89, an act relating to house rules for assisted living homes, was introduced at the request of the Governor and brought Alaska fully into compliance with federal regulations for home and community-based settings that were adopted in 2014
- Regulations projects that were completed in FY2021: Streamlining nursing facility level of care determinations (effective 3/31/21); electronic visit verification for personal care services (effective 2/12/21); and moving the Chore waiver service into the Community First Choice program (effective 1/1/21). Policy projects underway during FY2021 continuing into the new fiscal year included regulatory changes for Employment Services; COVID Flexibilities Made Permanent; Provider Certification Updates, and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities/Community First Choice Level of Care determinations.
- The Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities Unit served 441 individuals through the Individualized Supports waiver. This newest waiver in the SDS array was developed as one of the efforts in Senate 74, the 2016 Medicaid reform bill. The Unit continues to draw recipients from the Developmental Disabilities Registration and Review waitlist and continues to strive toward reaching capacity of the ISW waiver at 600 recipients. This waiver will likely reach capacity by the end of the next fiscal year.
- The Central Intake Unit processed 19,823 reports of harm/critical incident reports. 17,880 web intakes, 1,064 phone intakes, 585 fax intakes, 252 email intakes, 0 walk-in intakes and 42 mail intakes. Central Intake requested 20 welfare checks for immediate emergency response.
- The Adult Protective Services Unit received 6,423 reports of harm and, after reviewing the reports, 1,478 were made into information/ referral cases and 1,905 were investigated.
- SDS continued to provide training for critical reporting of health and safety concerns to approximately 900 individual providers, and home and community-based setting training to about 650 providers. The SDS training unit conducted outreach and training to all provider types to keep updated on requirements of services per COVID-19. Approximately 650 provider agencies attended. SDS Training also developed and implemented a specific training course for care coordinators to learn how to use the required data system, Harmony, training 189 individual care coordinator users. The Training Unit also provided over 200 hours of HIPAA compliant open virtual office time, in which trainers were available to answer questions and walk providers through technical or case specific issues. All provider types were served, and the office hours included time with individuals and families to answer questions on about 12 occasions.
- The General Relief/Temporary Assisted Living program served approximately 612 clients in FY2021. The division worked closely with care coordinators, hospital discharge planners, assisted living homes, family members, and Adult Protective Services to determine eligibility for the program and match vulnerable adults with assisted living homes.
- Despite the waitlist being in effect in FY 2021, the General Relief program was able to draw 545 applicants from the waitlist with an average waiting time of 11 days between the application submission date and the date of program eligibility. The General Relief program worked to ensure prompt eligibility determinations for initial applicants and worked closely with our medical provider community to ensure that program funding was available for safe and swift discharges from hospitals and long-term care settings experiencing COVID related hardships.
- The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education completed and submitted the required Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act Five-Year Plan for Federal Fiscal Years 2022-2026. This federal DD Act Five-Year Plan includes comprehensive research across the lifespan for Alaskans with intellectual/developmental disabilities as well as a robust stakeholder engagement and input process.

*\* Due to the cyber incident, six weeks of data is not yet available. Reported data has been extrapolated to more accurately reflect service numbers.*

## **Key RDU Challenges**

- Alaska is the state with the fastest growing senior population in the nation for the past five years. People age 60+ are the fastest growing demographic in the state. People are living longer, and many are active; however, the numbers of seniors with dementia, chronic health conditions, and behavioral health needs are also increasing proportionately (State Plan for Senior Services FY2016-FY2019, U.S. Bureau of the Census). This results in an increased need for long-term care services and increased waiting lists for seniors who need assistance to remain in their homes.
- Developing capacity and training providers for service delivery to meet the increasing needs of the senior population in each community. Providing additional support and technical assistance to grantees, especially in rural and underserved communities.
- Availability of trained workforce to provide all home and community-based services.
- The greatest challenge in FY2021 continued to be modifying services and continuing to support individuals while also mitigating the spread of COVID-19. Congregate settings have closed and meals are available through pick-up or home delivery. Transportation and in-home services are limited and providers are conducting telephone check-ins and providing other types of support through an increased use of technology.
- Providing a full array of services for children birth to three years old identified through either the child protective service system or from other community sources remains a challenge to the Infant Learning Program system. Recruitment and retention of early intervention staff who meet highly qualified standards remain a challenge for local agencies and teams. Staff stress and burnout is being reported at record high rates during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Agencies and individuals providing home and community-based services report that workforce shortages and staffing needs are the most severe they have seen. Care coordinators have steadily decreased in number over the past several years. Agencies employing direct services professionals, who work in assisted living homes, provide personal care services, offer respite to family caregivers, and perform other direct tasks, are reporting increasing turnover and challenges in recruitment that are leaving many vulnerable Alaskans without these critical supports and ultimately are more likely to need higher levels of care.
- Alaska continues to be challenged in meeting the service needs for individuals with complex behaviors who also have disabilities. Such individuals have long-term support and service needs that are not appropriately met in hospitals or correctional facilities; yet Alaska's communities lack the housing, staffing, and other infrastructure that can help them live in homes where they, their families, and neighbors can be assured of safety and health.
- While the state's electronic visit verification system was successfully launched in FY2021, considerable work remains on a variety of fronts to ensure that the system proves its use as a secure and effective tool to reduce fraud, waste, and abuse in personal care services. These efforts include development of the interface between the state's electronic visit verification system and the Medicaid Management Information System to validate that personal care visits documented by EVV are accurately matched by Medicaid claims for these services.
- Housing and service provision capacity development is a key need for many Alaskan communities. Alaska's senior population is projected to reach nearly 98,000 in 2020 and more than 100,000 by 2025 and, a portion of the senior population, which requires assistance from this program, is anticipated to grow proportionately.
- In FY2021, the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education continued to see challenges due to maintaining at a reduced staffing number from prior historical norms in both its administrative and professional sections as well as significant loss of expertise and institutional knowledge caused by turnover within remaining positions.

## **Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2023**

- The Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program is entering a new five-year cycle of Federal reporting, with new targets related to key indicators. Strategies for progress in meeting these targets are being updated, with an increased focus on measuring implementation of evidence-based practices supporting

young children’s social emotional development. Continued monitoring of providers to evaluate program quality as well as compliance with State and Federal regulations.

- Changes in work approaches brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic have provided the Division with valuable insights into the ways its services might be delivered more efficiently. For example, the Division and providers came to rely on distance-delivered assessments, evaluations, and other contacts with clients when home visits became ill-advised. The experience showed that some services can be safely provided by telehealth. The Division will be developing rules around its use in FY2022 with the expectation that regulations will be in place in FY2023.
- The division’s projects under the American Rescue Plan Act are anticipated to point the way toward overall system improvements. For example, one of the projects is to implement a critical incident detection system that allows the state to use data-mining techniques to proactively identify trends in critical incidents (those that jeopardize the health and safety of service recipients). Identifying potential incidents in this way is expected to lead to a more targeted and systemic approach to identifying and preventing future incidents from occurring.
- In FY2022, the division received notice that it had been awarded technical assistance from the National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems to help build the state’s person-centered vision, planning, and practice to support people with disabilities and older adults with long-term service and support needs. The Division anticipates that recommendations from this technical assistance will point the way toward needed changes to better align with the “shared vision” for individuals with developmental disabilities embedded in Alaska Statute in 2018, in which each person directs their own supports, based on their strengths and abilities, toward a meaningful life in their homes, jobs, and communities.
- The division will work with the Division of Health Care Services to implement electronic visit verification for home health services by January 2, 2023.
- Housing and service provision capacity development is a key need for many Alaskan communities. Alaska’s senior population is projected to reach nearly 98,000 in 2020 and more than 100,000 by 2025 and, a portion of the senior population, which requires assistance from this program, is anticipated to grow proportionately.
- The Rural Outreach Coordinator will begin providing support to the SDS grants unit and managing grants in rural Alaska. This work will increase communication and trust in rural Alaska to strengthen relationships between tribal leaders and the Alaska Commission on Aging.
- Begin collecting data for the upcoming State Plan for Senior Services to be implemented September 30, 2023. Develop survey and needs assessments to assess the needs of seniors throughout the state, update population and demographics using 2020 census numbers and develop a workgroup to look at revising the Interstate Funding Formula
- In FY2023, the Council will begin implementation of the federally required Developmental Disabilities and Bill of Rights Act new Five-Year Plan to ensure federal compliance as Alaska’s Developmental Disabilities Council beginning in October 2021.

Contact Information
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**Senior and Disabilities Services  
RDU Financial Summary by Component**

*All dollars shown in thousands*

	FY2021 Actuals				FY2022 Management Plan				FY2023 Governor			
	UGF+DGF Funds	Other Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds	UGF+DGF Funds	Other Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds	UGF+DGF Funds	Other Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds
<b>Formula Expenditures</b> None.												
<b>Non-Formula Expenditures</b>												
SDS Community Based Grants	10,876.9	792.6	6,882.1	18,551.6	11,524.6	951.5	19,540.4	32,016.5	11,774.6	951.5	7,495.4	20,221.5
Early Intervention Learning Prgm	7,395.9	0.0	1,778.4	9,174.3	7,424.5	0.0	1,859.1	9,283.6	7,424.5	460.0	1,859.1	9,743.6
Senior/Disabilities Svcs Admin	10,378.1	918.1	10,535.3	21,831.5	11,539.9	1,228.2	12,686.8	25,454.9	11,380.8	1,182.3	12,447.4	25,010.5
Genl Relief/Temp Assisted Living	6,728.3	0.0	0.0	6,728.3	6,976.5	0.0	0.0	6,976.5	6,976.5	0.0	0.0	6,976.5
Commission on Aging	0.0	271.0	0.0	271.0	0.0	371.8	0.0	371.8	0.0	423.6	0.0	423.6
Governor's Cncl/Disabilities	25.0	348.1	824.7	1,197.8	51.4	865.5	920.6	1,837.5	75.0	795.0	926.2	1,796.2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>35,404.2</b>	<b>2,329.8</b>	<b>20,020.5</b>	<b>57,754.5</b>	<b>37,516.9</b>	<b>3,417.0</b>	<b>35,006.9</b>	<b>75,940.8</b>	<b>37,631.4</b>	<b>3,812.4</b>	<b>22,728.1</b>	<b>64,171.9</b>

**Senior and Disabilities Services**  
**Summary of RDU Budget Changes by Component**  
**From FY2022 Management Plan to FY2023 Governor**

*All dollars shown in thousands*

	<u>Unrestricted</u> <u>Gen (UGF)</u>	<u>Designated</u> <u>Gen (DGF)</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Federal</u> <u>Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
<b>FY2022 Management Plan</b>	<b>37,516.9</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>3,417.0</b>	<b>35,006.9</b>	<b>75,940.8</b>
<b>One-time items:</b>					
-SDS Community Based Grants	0.0	0.0	-300.0	-12,045.0	-12,345.0
-Senior/Disabilities Svcs Admin	0.0	0.0	-329.4	0.0	-329.4
-Commission on Aging	0.0	0.0	-140.0	0.0	-140.0
-Governor's Cncl/Disabilities	0.0	0.0	-378.0	0.0	-378.0
<b>Adjustments which continue current level of service:</b>					
-SDS Community Based Grants	250.0	0.0	300.0	0.0	550.0
-Early Intervention Learning Prgm	0.0	0.0	460.0	0.0	460.0
-Senior/Disabilities Svcs Admin	-159.1	0.0	283.5	-239.4	-115.0
-Commission on Aging	0.0	0.0	191.8	0.0	191.8
-Governor's Cncl/Disabilities	23.6	0.0	307.5	5.6	336.7
<b>FY2023 Governor</b>	<b>37,631.4</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>3,812.4</b>	<b>22,728.1</b>	<b>64,171.9</b>