

AK Pioneers' Home, 7 AAC 74. Rates & Levels of Service, Response to Frequently Asked Questions (Law File Number 2019200185).

The Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Alaska Pioneer Homes is proposing several changes to its current regulation, 7 AAC 74. These proposed changes include adding two additional levels of service, increasing rates, changing the penalty for turning down a room in a Pioneer Home, and changes to the payment assistance program. Alaska Pioneer Homes have received many questions about the proposed changes during the public comment period. Questions have been aggregated into common themes and are answered below:

1. Why is the proposed rate increase so high?

The State of Alaska currently subsidizes all elders of the Alaska Pioneer Homes. For example, the current rate for level III services is \$6,795 per month. The cost for the state to provide these services is \$13,333 per month, so the state is subsidizing all current level III elders at a minimum of \$6,538 per month. All subsidy amounts come from State of Alaska general fund dollars and would continue under the proposed plan. There is no increased cost to the state under the current rate proposal.

2. Where did you come up with these rates?

Rates are based on the true cost of providing services. In FY2020 it is estimated that the division will spend nearly \$60,000,000 to provide services across all six Pioneer Homes.

These rates were reviewed both internally by Alaska Pioneer Homes and by an independent study conducted by Agnew::Beck Consulting. This study is available on the Alaska Pioneer Homes website at http://dhss.alaska.gov/daph/Documents/docs/Part_1_Division_level-Report_AKPH-staffing-Plan-Cost-Impact-Analysis-112918.pdf.

3. How will individuals on a fixed income pay those costs?

Alaska Pioneer Homes have a payment assistance program for those residents who do not have the ability to pay the full monthly rates. Residents will not be evicted from the homes if they cannot pay the monthly rates.

4. Will the state start evicting residents?

No, the state has protections in place for those residents who do not have the ability to pay. Alaska Statute 47.55.020 states that, "The department may not evict a person from a home if the income and assets of the person are insufficient to pay the monthly rate."

5. Who decides a resident's level of service?

Nurses that are employees of Alaska Pioneer Homes will assess the resident's level of service needs, just as they currently do now. Employees will be using the same assessment tool across all six homes.

6. Why should the inactive waiting list time be increased?

When an elder is on the active waitlist and turns down a room offer, they are moved to the inactive waitlist. Currently, they remain on the inactive waitlist for a minimum of 90 days before they can request a transfer back to the active waitlist. The proposed regulation increases this penalty to 180 days. Alaska Pioneer Homes has been experiencing a higher number of elders who are turning

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down room offers, which then delays the time for others on the active waitlist that are ready to move into a home. Increasing this penalty for those who are not truly ready to move into a Pioneer Home will help to keep the active waitlist more accurate.

7. Would applicants who are already on the inactive waiting list have to meet new time requirements if they have not been on that list for the new, increased amount of time, or will they be exempt from the new time requirements?

At the time of their initial application, an elder may choose to be on the inactive or active waitlist. Elders can request a transfer between the inactive and active waitlist at any time. The proposed regulation would only affect those elders on the active waitlist who turn down a room offer at any of the six Pioneer Homes.

8. Would applicants who are already on the inactive waiting list retain their priority status on that list?

Applicants retain their original application date as long as they maintain eligibility criteria, regardless of the amount of times they move between the inactive and active waitlist.

9. Why is the state decreasing spousal support for payment assistance?

The state is not reducing spousal support for payment assistance. Our proposal actually ties it to the Medicaid Community Spouse Monthly Income Maintenance Standard. This would be an increase from \$2,000 to \$3,160.50 per month this year.

10. If you are going to start requiring financial verification, what type of security will you provide to ensure that the information will be safe?

The income verification form does not require any specific account information. It only asks for dollar amounts for different asset categories like bank, property, etc. The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services takes extraordinary measures protect all private data in our systems. Data received from Alaska Pioneer Home clients is only used within the Division of Alaska Pioneer Homes and is not shared with any other division, department or agency.