



Statewide Independent Living Council of Alaska

35555 Kenai Spur Hwy PMB 285

Soldotna, AK 99669

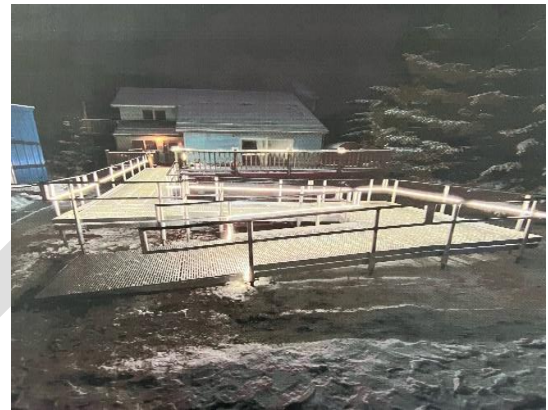
907-263-2011

Mandate Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS) Fix the Broken Medicaid Waiver Environmental Modification Program *Immediately*

WHAT:



Before ramp installation



This ramp was built with Alaska Mental Health Trust funding as part of a pilot project, and not Medicaid

For many older adults and individuals with disabilities, environmental modifications (E-MODS), such as ramps, lifts, and roll-in showers, are critical to address barriers to independence and community integration. Without E-MODS, many Alaskans are not able to age in place and are forced to live in more costly institutional care, including Assisted Living Facilities or Nursing Homes. All Alaska Medicaid Home and Community Based Service (HCBS) Medicaid Waivers, except for the Individualized Supports Waiver (ISW), offer the E-MOD service. SDS is required to make this service available statewide. SDS is aware of the issues and barriers to accessing the environmental modifications but says there are other priorities that come first. The E-MOD service is underutilized, unavailable statewide and discriminatory on many levels, thus forcing individuals into higher levels of care, costing the State of Alaska more money.

- The number of E-MODS authorized by DOH/SDS has gone down significantly in recent years. For instance, 140 E-MODS were approved in FY15 and only 26 were approved in FY22.
- The regulation that sets the HCBS Waiver E-MOD maximum rate was last updated in 2013. Unlike many other Medicaid rates, the E-MOD rate is not tied to inflation and has not increased in over 10 years, while labor, materials and shipping costs have increased.
- The \$18,500 cap set by the State is far too low. This rate includes shipping. In the majority of situations, this amount of money wouldn't pay for a small basic ramp, let alone bathroom modifications or shipping

to rural areas of the state;

- Currently, when a modification need is identified, the Care Coordinator provides documentation in the participant's Support Plan or an Amendment to the Plan. The Care Coordinator is then required to obtain at least three bids and submits them for review;
- To make matters worse, building contractors have gotten out of the Home modification business altogether because of the low reimbursement rates and inability to make the necessary modifications, the complicated Medicaid certification process and the length of time for reimbursement from SDS/SOA;
- To be successful, Alaska must find ways to pay for a comprehensive review, or home assessment, by trained professionals. Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL) has developed such a system, called HomeMAP™, which Medicaid does not pay for.

Making Medicaid Waiver Environmental Modifications Available Statewide is not optional—it is the law.

Ask: Mandate SDS to Make Environmental Modifications for Medicaid Waiver Participants A PRIORITY and Fix the Broken Medicaid Waiver Environmental Modification Program Now!

- Increase the E-MOD cap of \$18,500 per every 3 years to a soft cap of \$40,000 as other states have done to keep persons from having to move into institutional settings.
- Create a separate funding category for shipping costs, thus eliminating the urban bias.
- Implement a variance within reason to approve E-MODs that are above the cap. Everything should be measured against what it would cost to move to nursing homes.
- Provide for a geographic differential E-MOD rate so rural residents can participate too.
- Require a comprehensive home assessment, such as HomeMAP™, so Medicaid Waiver recipients are aware of the breadth of options available to maximize safety and independence; assessment costs should also be exclusive of the cap.
- Simplify contractor certification and bidding processes.
- Remove Scope of Work requirement for Care Coordinators as it is outside of their training and expertise and instead, require Medicaid certified contractors to complete the scope of work for a fee.

Minnesota's E-mod program represents a successful model that includes many of the above-mentioned solutions.

https://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=ID_002196