

A History of the Council's Major Accomplishments

Since 1975, the Council has led systemic reforms to improve the lives of Alaskans with developmental disabilities (DD). From early efforts to deinstitutionalize services to the development of legislation, early intervention systems, employment programs, Medicaid reforms, and education policy, the Council has played a critical role in advancing inclusion, independence, and civil rights.

1975

- Produced the De-Institutionalization Action Plan.
- The Department of Health and Social Services adopted the plan's recommendations, forming the foundation for community-based services.

1981

- Drafted a model law to reform guardianship procedures.
- The Alaska Legislature passed the Council's proposed statute.

1984

- Adopted service principles that still guide support delivery for individuals with DD and their families.

1986

- Created the **Special Education Service Agency (SESA)** to support students with significant disabilities in rural areas.
- Led a 200-person statewide planning effort for early intervention services later being adopted by Alaska State Legislature in 1991.
- Successfully advocated for **Personal Care Assistance Services** to be added to Alaska's Medicaid Options.

1987

- Initiated formation of the **Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA)** to help resolve a long-standing legal battle over mental health trust lands.

1988

- Studied the feasibility of transitioning Harborview Developmental Center residents to their home communities.
- Recommended a no-new-admissions policy, which was adopted and led to the facility's depopulation.

1989

- Hosted the first **Pathways Conference** themed Parents and Professionals Coming Together, a vision of then-Executive Director Dot Truan.

1991

- Partnered with the Older Alaskans Commission (now the **Alaska Commission on Aging**) to expand Medicaid use. This resulted in creation of **Medicaid Waivers** and implementation of the **TEFRA** (Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act) Option for children with disabilities.
- The Alaska Legislature adopted the plan from the 1986 statewide planning effort for early intervention services establishing the **Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC)**.

1994

- Drafted changes to education regulations to fund students with disabilities based on individual needs rather than setting.

1996

- With the **Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)**, secured a moratorium on new nursing home licenses to support home and community-based care.

1997

- Organized the first **Disability Summit** with SILC and the Governor's Committee on Employment and Rehabilitation.
- Alaska became the first U.S. state without public or private disability institutions after:
 - Closing **Harborview Developmental Center**
 - Voluntary de-certification of Hope Cottages' ICF/MR (Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally Disabled)

1998

- Helped plan the **International People First Self-Advocacy Conference**, hosting 1,000+ participants from 18 countries.
- Advocated for and passed:
 - The **Assistive Technology Lemon Law**
 - The **Puppy Guide Dog Bill**
 - A **Medicaid Buy-In** program (first state to pass such legislation).
- Secured redirected funds from Harborview closure to support people on waitlists.

1999

- Funded the Learn as You Earn program with AMHTA support to train direct service workers via distance education.
- Advocated for improved quality and safety in developmental disability services.

2000

- Passed legislation requiring the state to maintain a DD services waitlist and provide annual reports on service needs
- Funded early childhood behavioral health initiatives and workforce retention strategies with AMHTA support.

2001

- Worked with the Department of Education and Early Development, the Disability Law Center, PARENTS, INC., and others to revise the **High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE)** law. This enabled students with disabilities to graduate via alternative assessments.
- Successfully advocated for a **\$700,000 increment** to reduce the **Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program (EI/ILP)** waitlist.
- Received a Governor-designated grant to reform long-term care. Resulted in:
 - Two federal grants to the Division of Senior Services (home-to-community transitions and consumer-directed personal assistance).
 - One federal grant to the Division of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities to promote self-directed service models.
- Co-sponsored a **transportation funding workshop** at the annual Transit Conference, leading to the formation of the **Alaska Mobility Coalition**.

2002

- Co-sponsored the **Autism Summit**, leading to a commitment to fund an in-state **Autism Resource Center**.
- Co-hosted the first **Full Lives Conference** for direct service professionals. Attendance exceeded expectations (350 vs. 250 planned).
- Supported **Senate Bill 345**, which enabled school districts to seek Medicaid reimbursement for services provided to eligible children with disabilities.

2003

- Co-led the second **Disability Policy Summit** with multiple agencies. Resulted in a state commitment to implement community recommendations.
- Chaired the **Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process** for early intervention and special education. Implementation began in July.
- Created a **parent training collaborative**, providing monthly updates and an email forum.
- Due to Council efforts, Alaska ranked **first nationally** in the percentage of individuals with DD (99%) living in small, publicly funded group homes.
- The Alaska Mobility Coalition secured state and federal transportation grants for six communities.

2004

- Through the **Alaska Works Initiative**, implemented a benefits counseling program, DVR self-employment policy changes, SSA local contacts, Access to job centers, Alaska's first **Individual Development Account (IDA)** pilot, and Disability inclusion in diversity training
- Developed a training package for **parent-professional collaboration**.
- Advocated successfully for **SESA reauthorization** through June 30, 2013.
- Sponsored **Wrightslaw Boot Camp** trainings on IDEA and No Child Left Behind; 339 total attendees.
- Received a **DOJ grant** to train service providers and families supporting women with disabilities experiencing violence.
- Co-sponsored the **2004 Transition Policy Summit** and **November Disability Policy Summit**, producing goals across six domains: education, employment, community, housing, healthcare, transportation.

2005

- Developed a **strategic communications plan** with statewide partners to reduce stigma and promote support for services.
- Facilitated a five-year plan for the **Alaska Works Initiative** to increase employment for people with disabilities.
- Sponsored Alaska's involvement in the **Alliance for Full Participation**, developing a state plan to grow leadership and workforce capacity.

2006

- Helped create **Early Learning Guidelines** for infants through grade 2.
- The **DD Waitlist Ad Hoc Committee** submitted 17 recommendations. Legislature responded with \$3 million in state funds and \$4.1 million in federal funds.
- After years of advocacy, passed the **Newborn Hearing Screening Bill**.
- Secured **Medicaid dental coverage** for adults, including dentures.
- Advocated for and passed **House Bill 357**, updating disability terminology.
- Commissioned a State of the State report describing the lives and needs of people with DD.
- Received a **three-year ODEP grant** to promote self-employment for individuals with disabilities.

2007

- Secured AMHTA funding for: Early Childhood System Grants (\$100,000) and Positive Supports Training (\$80,000)
- Autism Ad Hoc Committee recommendations led to \$500,000 in FY08 for expanded diagnostic clinics
- Secured a \$300,000 increment for **EI/ILP services**.
- Advocated for Medicaid Buy-In rule changes to increase asset limits for individuals and couples.
- Received a **DOJ grant** to improve collaboration between the disability and victim services communities.
- Conducted provider and family surveys to assess impact of the Medicaid rate freeze.

2008

- Co-sponsored the **Disability Employment Policy Summit** with the Governor's Office. Agencies committed to being model employers, promoting asset-building, and integrating services.
- Advocated for and secured a \$250,000 autism workforce development grant.
- Increased **Medicaid waiver rates by 4%**.
- **HB 272** passed: increased Base Student Allocation and adjusted intensive needs and transportation funding.
- Secured \$1.1 million for coordinated transportation—first time using state general funds for this purpose.

2009

- Autism initiative led to: Full state funding (\$500,000) for diagnostic capacity, \$125,000 for workforce development, \$150,000 for the **Alaska Autism Resource Center**
- Launched the **Kids Can't Wait** campaign, securing: \$1 million for EI/ILP services, and \$300,000 for staff development
- Secured \$150,000 for rural transition services.
- Supported **HB 26**, permanently reauthorizing adult Medicaid dental coverage.
- Hosted a residential services summit with 125 participants.
- Advocated for new regulations allowing **advanced nurse practitioners** to diagnose autism.
- Coordinated public support for replacing "MR" with "Cognitive Impairment" in state special education rules.

2010

- Passed **SB 219**, establishing a **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)** program.
- A follow-up AMHTA survey revealed: Comfort interacting with people with DD rose to 82.1%, belief in employment potential increased from 31.8% to 53%, and confidence in services improved from 58.9% to 73.4%

2011

- Helped launch **three Project SEARCH sites** to support youth employment.
- Secured **\$1 million** for Public Transit Program match.
- Received a **\$325,000 OTI increment** for the Complex Behaviors Hub.

2012

- Passed **SB 74 (Autism Insurance Reform)**.
- Secured: \$135,000 for services for the deaf and \$100,000 for Project SEARCH.
- Job centers began accepting **Tickets-to-Work** for SSA beneficiaries.
- Secured a **CDC health promotion grant**.
- Received a **five-year federal grant** to expand youth employment programs.

2013

- Passed **HB 88 (Respectful Language Bill)**.
- Helped launch the **Beneficiary Employment & Engagement Initiative** with AMHTA, funded at over \$1 million/year for five years.
- Secured \$25,000 for the **Trust Microenterprise Grant**.

2014

- Passed **HB 211 (Employment First Bill)**.
- Passed **HB 210 (Safe Student Act)**.
- Passed **HB 278**, repealing the HSGQE and applying changes retroactively.
- Secured \$450,000 GF/MH funding for the Complex Behavior Collaborative.
- Helped launch the Alaska chapter of **APSE**.

2015

- Passed **HB 161**, allowing Medicaid reimbursement for **used durable medical equipment**.

2016

- Passed **HB 188 (Alaska ABLE Act)**, enabling people with disabilities to save for education, housing, and other expenses without losing SSI or Medicaid eligibility.

2017

- Passed **HB 16**, mandating **disability training** for law enforcement and allowing a voluntary disability indicator on state IDs.

2018

- Passed **SB 174**, establishing the **DD Shared Vision** in law.
- Passed **HB 336**, legalizing **Supported Decision-Making Agreements**.
- Received a **\$1.96 million ACL Living Well grant** to implement the Shared Vision.

2019

- Began co-leading the **Alaska Work Matters** group with DVR to improve disability employment policy.

2021

- Successfully reauthorized **SESA** through June 30, 2029.
- Passed **SB 89**, establishing assisted living home resident rights.

2022

- Passed **SB 185**, eliminating subminimum wage for individuals with disabilities.
- Passed **HB 133**, updating Alaska's ABLE Act and ensuring oversight remains with the Department of Revenue.

2023

- Passed **SB 57**, allowing Medicaid reimbursement for family caregivers and creating a licensed adult foster home model.
- Awarded a **DEED grant** in partnership with the Department of Education and Early Development to improve youth employment outcomes.