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STATE OF ALASKA  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY  
DIVISION OF ALASKA STATE TROOPERS



**EDWARD BYRNE MEMORIAL  
JUSTICE ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM  
APPLICATION**

PROGRAM NARRATIVE

FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2014

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## **PROPOSED PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

The State of Alaska proposes to use the funding received from the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program to support the continuation of the Statewide Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force and Prosecution program.

### Statewide Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force and Prosecution Program

Alaska's Statewide Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force and Prosecution program is a cooperative law enforcement and prosecution effort involving several criminal justice agencies with jurisdiction over different areas of the State, sharing the common goal of addressing illegal drugs and alcohol and violent crime problems in Alaska. The program enables law enforcement and prosecution agencies in different jurisdictions to work together as a single entity with the ability to improve communication, share intelligence, and coordinate activities. This allows for more efficient use of resources and targeting of offenders whose activities cross over jurisdictional boundaries.

Under the leadership of the Alaska State Troopers (AST), Alaska Bureau of Investigation (ABI), Statewide Drug Enforcement Unit (SDEU), the goals and objectives of this program are to:

- Coordinate the efforts and resources of law enforcement through a statewide multi-jurisdictional task force to interdict and seize controlled substances and alcohol that are illegally distributed throughout Alaska and investigate and apprehend distributors of controlled substances and illegal alcohol;
- Provide training, technical assistance, and support to local agencies in their narcotics alcohol enforcement and investigative efforts; and
- Coordinate special prosecution support to multi-jurisdictional task force efforts throughout the State to prosecute and convict mid and upper-level illegal drug and alcohol traffickers.

Additionally, the State proposes to use JAG funds to continue to support the State's improvement of criminal justice records.

## ANALYSIS OF NEED

The critical crime problems continuing to face the State of Alaska are violent crime, juvenile involvement in violent crime, and domestic violence. Members of Alaska's law enforcement community and other criminal justice professionals have long known that the greatest contributing factor to violent crimes including domestic violence and sexual assault is the abusive use of drugs and alcohol. Thus, the activities that further the availability of illegal alcohol and drugs are also recognized as critical crime problems for Alaska.

These crime problems were identified as critical through an analysis of Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR)<sup>i</sup> data, research conducted by the University of Alaska Anchorage's Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Center, and through information obtained from alcohol and drug task forces.

### Violent Crime

The United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime in the United States data reflects the violent crime rate for the nation dropped slightly in 2012 from 2011 by 0.05%. The United States 2012 violent crime rate was determined to be 386.9 per 1,000 inhabitants. Similarly in 2012 the State of Alaska reported a 1.1% decrease in the violent crime rate to 603.2 per 1,000 inhabitants, it is important to note that the Alaska rate remains 56% higher than the national average. The 2012 data also reflects that when arrests were made for violent crimes in the State of Alaska that approximately 7.8% of the arrests were juveniles, under 18 years of age. Overall between 2002 and 2010 juvenile arrests for violent crimes in Alaska has risen by 4% with significant increases in the arrest rate for robbery 20% and aggravated assault 8%<sup>ii</sup>. Based on this data, the conclusion is made that violent crime in Alaska continues to be a major issue.

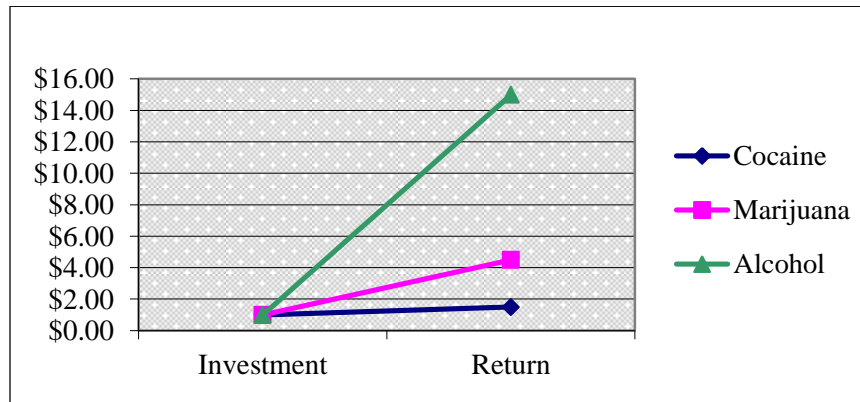
## Illegal Alcohol and Drugs

Alaska's criminal justice professionals recognize that alcohol is the primary substance of abuse in Alaska and is the leading cause of violent, suicidal, and accidental deaths, especially in rural areas. Currently, 108 Alaskan communities have voted in favor of local option statutes restricting the sale, importation, and/or possession of alcohol.<sup>iii</sup>

Because alcohol remains legal in many areas of Alaska, illegal bootlegging activities continue to be a problem in the local option communities. Alcohol is easily transported to the villages via the US Postal Service, local air carriers, private aircraft, boat, snow machines and express mailing services. Bootlegging alcohol of all types has become a very lucrative business in rural Alaska.

Alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin and pharmaceuticals have been identified as the primary substances of abuse in Alaska and are the focus of most law enforcement efforts. Alaska's criminal justice professionals recognize that of these substances, alcohol is the greatest contributing factor to violent crime, suicides, and accidental deaths, particularly in rural areas of the State.

The economics of the illegal sale of alcohol is staggering. A bootlegger can purchase a 750-milliliter bottle of alcohol legally for approximately \$10 in an urban liquor store, and sell it for \$50 in, Kotzebue, or Barrow. In the more remote communities, the same bottle can easily sell for between \$150 to over \$300, depending on supply and demand.<sup>iv</sup> The initial purchase for the bootlegger involves a minimal cash investment and a maximum cash return, with little risk of being caught or criminally charged.



Source: [Alaska State Troopers Annual Drug Report, 2013](#)

As the chart above illustrates, the profit margin for this illegal activity greatly exceeds the profit margin experienced by even the shrewdest of drug dealers. The death and destruction descending upon rural Alaskan communities as a result of illegal sale, importation, and/or possession of alcohol is immeasurable.

Enforcement of local option laws is difficult, primarily because most of the villages are not accessible by road. Aircraft, boats, or snowmobiles transport everything into these villages, including U.S. Mail. While some of these shipments arrive via commercial couriers such as scheduled flights or scheduled barges/ships, a great deal of alcohol is also imported via private aircraft, small watercraft, and snowmobile.

According to a 2011 report based on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Survey on Drug Use and Health, Alaska continues to show a comparatively high rate of illegal drug use.<sup>v</sup> Estimates of past-month use of any illicit drug ranged from a low of 4.96 percent in Utah to a high of 15.29 percent for Vermont, with Alaska at 13.65 percent for all persons age 12 and older. Any illicit drug was defined as marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), heroin, hallucinogens, inhalants, or any prescription-type psychotherapeutic used non-medically.

Marijuana is the most abused and widespread illegal drug in Alaska. The same SAMHSA survey found that Alaska had the fourth highest rate in the nation for prior year use of marijuana. Due to its exceptional tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content, demand for Alaskan-grown marijuana is great. Almost all of the marijuana grown in Alaska is harvested from indoor growing operations. It is not unusual for growing sites to be located in homes with hidden or underground rooms specifically designed for the cultivation of marijuana. These are often extremely sophisticated growing operations equipped with surveillance cameras and state-of-the-art timers controlling temperature, lighting, water, and humidity.

During 2013, Alaska State Trooper drug enforcement units seized 4 methamphetamine labs and 11.5 pounds of methamphetamine. The meth labs discovered continue to be present in single and multi-family residences in neighborhoods. These labs seized have

been of the “One Pot” variety producing user quantities of methamphetamine. Larger quantities of methamphetamine seized continued to be the result of shipment interdiction efforts.

The number of meth labs seized represents a continued downward trend which can be attributed to the combination of increased enforcement efforts coupled with pseudoephedrine restrictions.

Cocaine is readily available in most areas of the State and continues to be a productive drug for sale and use in Alaska. Cocaine is brought into Alaska from the lower 48 states concealed on passengers or in luggage through ports of entry such as the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport. It is also shipped through the U.S. Postal Service or commercial parcel companies such as FedEx or UPS. Due to the State’s remote location, outside trafficking organizations are able to resell cocaine in Alaska at grossly inflated rates.

Throughout the state, the illegal prescription drug trade continues to be a significant problem. Not only does the abuse of prescription drugs create a health hazard for the users, it creates a financial tragedy in the communities. The drugs vary in price and can cost anywhere from one dollar per milligram to two dollars per milligram depending on availability. With the increased demand for the drugs and a shortening of supply, many abusers may not have the money or insurance to pay for their addiction; thus increasing property and violent crimes in these communities. It has been reported that tens of thousands of dollars are being spent to feed this growing abuse and addiction.

Prescription drugs have been linked to crimes to include homicide, assault, prescription fraud, home invasions, thefts and pharmacy robberies. People who are addicted to prescription drugs facilitate their addiction by doctor shopping, pharmacy shopping, forgery, and purchasing the drugs via the Internet. Law enforcement is especially concerned for the welfare of particularly vulnerable populations such as the elderly and those with severe long-term illnesses.

The National Governors Association has noted the increased abuse of heroin across a number of states. This increased use has contributed to a six-fold increase in the number of fatal drug overdoses in the last 30 years. Alaska is one of several states that have enacted legislation which potentially mitigates the underlying drug offense for those who seek medical assistance for drug overdose victims.<sup>vi</sup>

## **STRATEGIC PLAN**

The overall strategy is aimed at addressing the critical problems of violent crime, juvenile involvement in violent crime, and domestic violence. Additionally, since it is the position of the State's criminal justice professionals that the abusive use of alcohol and drugs is the greatest contributing factor to the State's crimes of violence, another critical crime problem identified are the activities which further the availability of illegal alcohol and drugs.

In 2012, DPS administered a survey to various stakeholder groups to assess the nature of drug and alcohol related impacts to their functional areas. Corrections, judicial, law enforcement and medical facility management personnel from across the state were polled. The overall results support the contention that alcohol abuse poses the most significant problems. Additionally, methamphetamine, heroin and illegal prescription drug were ranked highest in contributing to criminal conduct by law enforcement managers. The survey also showed support for participation in multi-agency efforts to address illegal drug activity and other crimes.

As the survey suggests, the primary substance of abuse is alcohol. Alaska's criminal justice professionals recognize it to be the leading cause of violence and accidental deaths in the State, especially in the rural areas. As a result, there are currently over 100 communities that have voted in favor of local option statutes prohibiting the sale, importation, and/or possession of alcohol. However, because alcohol remains legal in many areas of Alaska, illegal bootlegging activities have taken hold in the "local option" communities. Additionally, since alcohol is easily transported to the villages via the U.S. Postal Service, local air carriers, private aircraft and express mailing services, bootlegging alcohol has become a very lucrative business in the State.



Alcohol continues to be the root of many social problems in Alaska, and it is especially a problem in the rural communities. The correlation between alcohol and crime is significant, and alcohol is related to a number of premature and accidental deaths and injuries.

The illegal trafficking of traditional drugs of abuse; cocaine, heroin, marijuana, methamphetamine and illegal prescription drugs is also an area of concern for law enforcement professionals in Alaska. From its unique role of interdicting and investigating cases across the State, the Alaska State Troopers' Statewide Drug Enforcement Unit (SDEU) reports indicate that drug abuse is not confined to any one geographic location or any economic strata in the State. The negative effect of drug and alcohol abuse touches Alaskans, from all social, ethnic, racial and economic groups.

In the area of enforcement and prosecution, the State employs a multiple approach. In addition to traditional enforcement and prosecution efforts, local and State, the State utilizes the statewide regional multi-jurisdiction enforcement and prosecution task force approach to target the major offenders and the mid-level distributors as well as street level dealers. This is the core of the State's drug control effort. The task force approach brings together the efforts and resources of multiple agencies, local, State and Federal. This effort is supported through Federal Byrne Formula Grant and DEA Marijuana Eradication funding as well as local and State funding.

Also in 2012, the Alaska State Troopers completed its implementation of the Alaska Records Management System (ARMS). This robust system consolidates complaints reported, officer responses, suspicious activities, report writing, crime victim information, arrest information, reported stolen property, evidence management and various other law enforcement functions within the Department of Public Safety. The system has improved the efficiency with which DPS is able to share information, determine trends, and extract and report meaningful statistical information. It is one of the principle means by which performance measurement data is collected for submission to BJA.

## **PRIORITIES**

Parallel with the National Drug Control Strategy's priority of disrupting domestic drug trafficking and production,<sup>vii</sup> the State of Alaska has identified the priority for JAG funding as enforcement and prosecution programs which continue to increase efforts toward the interdiction and trafficking of illegal alcohol and drugs. The State has identified the following three priority areas to be addressed:

1. The current level of violent crime and juvenile involvement in crimes of violence;
2. The high levels of domestic violence and sexual assault; and
3. The availability of and the demand for illegal alcohol and drugs.

### Priority One

Determining that the abusive use of alcohol and/or drugs by young people is the primary causal factor in many violent crimes, the State has identified the need for early and consistent intervention to avoid the development of lifelong patterns of substance abuse and criminal behavior among its young people.

Aware of the high correlation between substance abuse and incidents of violent crime and the importance of providing young people with the abilities for avoiding such abuse, the State plans to continue to support programs that strengthen enforcement and prosecution efforts to provide early, consistent, and meaningful system intervention.

By targeting street and alcohol drug sales, making police officers available to enforce the State's controlled substance laws as well as local ordinances, and making prosecutors available to assist with the enforcement investigations and to prosecute cases, the system will be delivering interventions which are immediate and consistent.

### Priority Two

The high levels of domestic violence and sexual assault, as recognized by the State of Alaska's highest executive branch, continue to be a priority issue for Alaska. The Alaska State Troopers view the abusive use of alcohol and drugs as the greatest contributing factor to these acts of violence. The following website provides additional information on the State of Alaska Governor's Choose Respect Initiative. <http://gov.alaska.gov/parnell/priorities/public-safety/choose-respect.html>

The highest incidents of domestic and family violence take place in the State's rural communities where there is also a high rate of violent crimes involving illegal alcohol abuse. Given this, the State plans to continue to support programs which provide immediate and intensified illegal drug and alcohol enforcement and prosecution, increase focus on illegal alcohol distribution to rural communities, and increase offender accountability.

By supporting enforcement programs which interdict and seize illegal substances and prosecutorial programs which assist with investigations and obtain convictions with sentences that include jail time with other punitive sanctions for illegal drug/alcohol distributors, thereby making drugs and/or alcohol scarce and expensive, the system will interfere with the availability of illegal substances that contribute to domestic and family violence.

### Priority Three

In light of the fact that substance abuse is frequently involved in incidents of violent crime in the State, the availability of and the demand for illegal alcohol and drugs is a priority issue.

As a means of reducing the availability of drugs and alcohol and the resulting violent crime, the State plans to continue law enforcement and prosecution efforts that interdict illegal alcohol and drugs as well as disrupt the markets for these substances.

By strengthening enforcement and prosecution, targeting all levels of trafficking, interdicting shipments, seizing illegal drugs and alcohol, and prosecuting offenders with results that include jail time and forfeiture of assets, the availability of illegal alcohol and drugs will be interrupted as well as the resulting violent crime.

By concentrating on these priorities, the State aims to reduce violent crime and juvenile involvement in violent crime, to reduce the high levels of domestic violence and sexual assault, and to reduce the demand for and availability of illegal alcohol and drugs, as well as to prevent, to the greatest extent possible, accidental and suicidal deaths associated with drug and/or alcohol abuse.

### Reducing Gun Violence

The University of Alaska, Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Center examined firearm use in violent crime in Alaska from 1985-2012. The data points out an overall decrease in the murder rate over that time period in the United States as a whole and in Alaska. It also shows a decrease in the use of firearms in the commission of these crimes. The report further indicates that while the probability that a firearm was used in the commission of homicides nationwide increased over the period from 1985-2012, that number declined significantly in Alaska not only for homicides, but for aggravated assaults and robberies as well.<sup>viii</sup>

Despite the downward trend of firearm involvement in violent crimes in Alaska noted in the above examination of data, firearm violence continues to be a significant problem in Alaska. In 2013, the Alaska State Troopers investigated 21 homicides of which 19 were classified as murders. Of those 19 classified as murders, 11 involved firearms.

Another specific area of concern is assaults on peace officers involving firearms. In 2012, Alaska State Troopers were involved in 8 separate officer involved shooting incidents. All but one of these incidents involved suspects with firearms. In another study conducted by the University of Alaska, Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Center, assaults against police officers in Alaska were examined for the period between 2001-2011. The study found that 43.5 percent of assaults on Alaska State Troopers were committed with a firearm.<sup>ix</sup>

In 2012, the Alaska State Troopers enrolled 25 personnel in the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco Firearms and Explosives (BATFE) E-Trace program. The system allows investigators to query federal systems for specific data on firearms encountered during their investigations.

#### Evidence-Based “Smart” Programs

The Alaska State Troopers are currently engaged with the University of Alaska Anchorage in a research project aimed at examining the nature of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Sexual Abuse of a Minor cases. Conclusions drawn from this research, will help the agency continue to evolve in its efforts to reduce the incidence of and respond effectively to these crimes.

In partnership with the University of Alaska Anchorage, a study titled, The Predictive Validity of Marijuana Odor Detection: An Examination of Alaska State Trooper Case Reports 2006–2010 was undertaken. The results of the study are currently being used in search warrant applications presented to Alaska state courts in commercial marijuana production cases.

## **COORDINATION EFFORTS**

To address illegal drug and alcohol activity as well as the resulting violent crime problems in Alaska, the State plans to coordinate efforts involving Byrne Justice Assistance Grant funds with efforts involving related justice funds. These efforts support approaches that include prevention, enforcement, adjudication, corrections, and treatment.

In the area of prevention, the State provides the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program in the rural and urban communities of the State. To maintain the availability of officers as instructors, training is also provided for local, State, and Federal law enforcement officers as well as Village Public Safety Officers. During the 2012-2013 school year there were 70 active DARE instructors around the state of Alaska.

In the area of enforcement and prosecution, the State utilizes the statewide multi-jurisdiction enforcement and prosecution task force approach to target the major offenders and the mid-level distributors as well as street level dealers, in addition to traditional enforcement and prosecution efforts. This is the core of the State's drug control effort. The task force approach brings together the efforts and resources of local, State, and Federal agencies. This effort is also supported by funding provided through the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration Domestic Cannabis Eradication Program as well as local and State funding.

In conjunction with the task force approach, the State has initiated an effort that focuses on the interdiction of alcohol bound for communities where alcohol is prohibited by local ordinance. These are primarily rural villages in western Alaska located near the hub cities of Bethel, Nome, and Kotzebue. In addition to an emphasized law enforcement and prosecution approach, this effort includes a community-policing component. Currently, the community policing effort involves State law enforcement officers regularly meeting with the residents of these rural villages to increase awareness in addressing illegal alcohol and drug activity in their communities. This effort is supported through State funding.

In addition to these two approaches for illegal alcohol and drug activity enforcement and prosecution in the State, the statewide regional multi-jurisdiction task force, and the emphasized alcohol interdiction program, a third program is one that provides needed resources to the State's drug enforcement and prosecution efforts. This program allows the State to increase its efforts to address illegal marijuana production and safe response to clandestine methamphetamine laboratories as well as focus on unsolved drug related felonies statewide.

The State's effort in the area of corrections and treatment is the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) for State Prisoners program. This effort seeks to break the cycle of drug use and violence by reducing the demand for, use, and trafficking of illegal drugs and alcohol by using the therapeutic community model as an approach to treating

the most seriously addicted inmates. RSAT is supported with Federal formula grant funds and State funds.

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