

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Key Coalition:

Climbing Mountains and Making Change for Alaskans who Experience Disabilities!

The Key Campaign is a statewide effort, through the Key Coalition, to advocate for disabilities and community disability services. For the past 22 years, the campaign has been amazingly successful in obtaining increased funding and securing critical services such as the TEFRA option; in reinstating funding for adult dental services; in closing the state institution for disabilities; and, most recently, in the promise and in the implementation of a quarterly Waiver Draw that will systematically eradicate the statewide waitlist for community supports.

Unfortunately, each year there are new or ongoing issues that need to be addressed through the Key Coalition. ***In 2010, families and service providers watch with alarm and critical concern***, as community programs struggle to keep vital services available with minimal funding due to frequent rate freezes. Cost of living escalates year after year—fuel, heating, transportation costs continue to increase; workers' compensation, liability and health insurance costs rise higher and higher; wages and salaries tragically fall far below competitive rates in rural and urban regions of Alaska. As costs increase, community programs and families have felt the devastating effects of such a diabolical moratorium evidenced in low service delivery, inability to recruit and retain essential staff and in the closure of specific programs.

A unified priority for all the beneficiary boards under the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority is effectively addressing how the Department of Health and Social Services currently sets rates for all services offered by providers throughout the state. This system (or lack of a system) is currently arbitrary and inconsistent from one provider to another.

Last year, the Key Coalition fought for the passing of a **Periodic Rate Review in Senate Bill 32** that addresses an equitable process to establish rate increases for community services that are in place for institutional services. While the campaign worked side by side with legislators to make significant progress, there is more work to be done this legislative session.

The Coalition continues the fight for a process that would govern rates in statute for community services. Doing so would provide for fair and consistent rate setting, while giving all providers equal access to rate increases on an annual basis, just as hospitals and nursing homes now receive.

Other key issues that will be addressed at the Key Campaign are:

- **Community Support Initiative**—Continue to actively reduce and expeditiously eliminate the statewide Waitlist for Community Services currently holding hundreds of Alaskans who experience a disability. This initiative includes funding for developmental disabilities grants and the implementation of Intensive Support and Intervention Services.

- **Adult Dental Services**—Funding is critical to provide regular care and preventative treatment to reduce the drastic measures that are too often taken when a problem arises. Support legislative solutions that will allow for the adjustment of the current cap to \$1,750 on adult dental services and for creating a process to allow for upper and lower dentures to be completed at one time with the cost spread over two years.
- **Infant Learning**—The enhancement of early intervention and infant learning programs will significantly increase the outcome of available services. A change in the eligibility level for Infant Learning Programs will help provide children with every opportunity for a healthy and successful development period of growth and learning.
- **Autism Insurance Reform (House Bill 187)**—HB187 requires insurance coverage for autism spectrum disorders. The provision of insurance and early treatment in other states has shown a significant improvement of the quality of life for those individuals with autism. This bill seeks to reform the current standards on autism insurance coverage to meet the needs of Alaskans.

Anyone who is concerned about the rights, dignity and dreams of individuals who experience disabilities is encouraged to join in the efforts of the Key Coalition by submitting a public opinion message (POM) to your legislature and participating in the Key Campaign rally in their community.

The Key Campaign will be held in Juneau on March 2-3, 2010, with similar *advocacy rallies* across the face of urban and rural Alaska, taking place on Wednesday, March 3.

Anchorage

Wednesday, March 3—12:00 p.m.

Town Square—downtown between 5th and 6th Avenue

A celebration will follow at Hope Community Resources at 540 W. International Airport Rd

Fairbanks

Wednesday, March 3—12:00 p.m.

Veterans Memorial Park

(Contact the Fairbanks Resource Agency for info: eva@fra-alaska.net or 456-8901)

Juneau

Wednesday, March 3—11:30 a.m.

Meet at the Goldbelt Hotel and march to the steps of our state legislative office building

Kodiak

Wednesday, March 3—12:00 p.m.

Meet at Kodiak Post Office and march to Legislative Information Office

Kenai/Soldotna

Wednesday, March 3—12:00 p.m.

Meet at Bridge Access and Kenai Spur Highway

Celebration following at the Hope Community Recreation Center

Wasilla

Wednesday, March 3—11:00 a.m.

Meet at Legislative Information Office and march to Dairy Queen at noon

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