



July 2022
Issue 3

Alaska Medicaid Newsletter

Important information for you as an Alaska Medicaid Participant

5 ways to help support your child's mental health

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Create routines at home

Sticking to set schedules is important for getting a good night's sleep. Create a routine at home that may help young people better cope with changes.

Limit news viewing

News and social media can help you stay informed, but watching too much may add to stress. Spending 15 to 30 minutes is likely enough to stay current but not become too stressed.

Lead by example

Eat right, exercise and get the sleep you need to stay positive, even during hectic times. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says coping with stress in a healthy way can make you and the people you care about more resilient.

Be a good listener

Adolescents like their space. Make sure your children know they can come to you with questions or to share their feelings any time. Pay attention for changes in their behavior or schoolwork. When they talk about being scared or nervous. Support their feelings, help them feel secure and let them know it's possible to feel better.

Watch for signs of anxiety

Focus on your teen's overall mood and not just what they're saying for a reading on how they're handling stress. Signs of ongoing stress may look like jitteriness, sadness or withdrawal. Be alert to sudden changes in mood or behavior.

Common signs of worry in young people may include: irritability or jumpiness, feeling tired, trouble thinking, sleep disturbances, eating too much or too little.



Feeling empowered to have difficult conversations



Helping parents feel empowered and not afraid of having difficult and uncomfortable conversations or asking their child questions, and sharing stories more openly to reduce the stigma of suicide.

How to help spot the signs of suicide

Even though mental health awareness is increasing, the stigma surrounding suicide still exists. The fear of differences between people may stop people from getting help. Without help, feelings of hopelessness and loneliness may grow, leading one to have thoughts of taking their own life. There are often signs that a person may be struggling to help you understand when intervention may be needed.

Below are some warning signs when a person is considering suicide and may need urgent help.

- ◆ Feeling hopeless or feeling like they don't have a purpose in life
- ◆ Feeling trapped or being in pain
- ◆ Being a burden to others
- ◆ Wanting to die or to kill oneself

Think about these tips on **starting a conversation** with a person in a dark mental state:

- ◆ **Show that you're concerned in a way that is not confrontational or judgmental.** Let them know that you care about them and that you're concerned.
- ◆ **Keep questions simple.** Ask how they're doing, what they're feeling and how you can give support.
- ◆ **Suggest reaching out to a local recovery support resource.** Ask if they have thought about seeking support from a professional trained to help with these types of issues.
- ◆ **After your conversation, stay engaged with them and check in.** Having support may help make a difference to people feeling this way.
- ◆ **Take action if the person is not receptive to your help and displays intent to kill themselves.** If someone is threatening to hurt themselves, searching for ways to take their life or often talking, writing or posting about death and suicide in a way that seems out of character, you should call **9-1-1**.

You may worry about the person becoming angry, but it can be the difference between life and death. It's always worth calling 9-1-1.



Peer Support Corner

Sleep is important! So what can you do to get better shut-eye? Here are a few tips that may help you sleep smarter and perhaps stay at a healthy weight:

Hours matter. Simply put, there's no way you can cut corners on the hours of sleep you need. Adults need seven or more hours of sleep each night. Children need a minimum of eight hours every night, which varies by age.

Practice good sleep hygiene. Stick to a regular schedule, make sure your bedroom is dark and quiet and make sure your thermostat is at a comfortable temperature.

Go easy on caffeine and alcohol and do it well before bedtime. Foods and beverages with caffeine shouldn't be taken right before bedtime. Alcohol can also disrupt your sleep.

Exercise can help you sleep, but be sure to exercise early in the day and not within 2 hours before bedtime.

Turn off your screens. The blue light from devices such as TVs and cell phones can interfere with the hormone melatonin, which can make it more difficult to fall asleep.

Tips courtesy of Optum partners at UnitedHealthcare; both companies are part of UnitedHealth Group

Coming Soon!

988 will be available nationwide starting July 16, 2022.

In the meantime, to reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, call 1-800-273-8255 (TALK).

Alaska Communications supports 988 suicide prevention hotline with 10-digit dialing.

Resource Links:

[Alaska Communications supports 988 suicide prevention hotline with 10-digit dialing Company also makes donation to local suicide prevention chapter \(afsp.org\)](#)

[By July 2022, 9-8-8 will be the Nationwide Mental Health Crisis and Suicide Prevention Number | NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)

The Web Safe & Sober BBQs in Anchorage:

(Please visit <https://www.theweb.ngo/about/special-events>)

July 4, 2022 10am to 3:45pm - Independence Day with a Safe and Sober BBQ

September 5, 2022 10am to 3:45pm - Labor Day with a Safe and Sober BBQ

Cuddy Family Midtown Park—Anchorage walk:

(Please visit <https://supporting.afsp.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=donorDrive.event&eventID=8186>)

September 10, 2022 11am Out of the Darkness Community Walk

Make A Connection

Find a Provider:

Participant Access Line: 1-800-225-8764 TDD/TTY dial 711 or visit alaska.optum.com and click *Find a Provider* on left side of the page.

Get Transportation:

For Medicaid travel benefits call the Medicaid Participant Helpline at 800-770-5650, Option 2.

Get Information:

[Live & Work Well](#) - You can find information about maintaining your wellness and resources for crisis support.

Hotlines

[National Suicide Prevention Line](#)

1-800-273-8255

[Veterans Crisis Line](#)

1-800-273-8255 text 838255

[Careline](#)

1-877-266-4357 (HELP) or text 4help to 839863 3-11 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday

[National Domestic Violence Hotline](#)

1-800-799-7233

