



October 2023
Issue 8



Alaska Medicaid Newsletter

Important information for you as an Alaska Medicaid Participant

Inside This Issue

Maintaining Healthy Families

Healthy Family Life

Peer Support Corner

Upcoming Meetings/Events

Make a Connection

Hotlines

Optum

Adults Working and Maintaining Families with Mental Health and Sober Lifestyle

Being a parent, significant other, spouse, child, grandparent, co-worker or employee, all hold challenges when managing stress. When a person has a mental health and/or substance use disorder, that stress can be heavier. Stress can affect any role. It is a normal response to our surroundings but can become hard or last too long. Your stress can also affect others.

First, one might need to be aware of some of the signs of stress:

- Mood changes (irritability, anger, depression, sadness)
- Physical changes (stomachache, headache, chest pain, muscle pain)
- Change in sleep (too much or too little, feeling tired)
- Increased mental health symptoms (worry, feeling overwhelmed, withdrawn, etc.)
- Eating changes (less or more)
- Not wanting to be around others or join in activities or hobbies
- Substance use relapse or thought of relapse

Second, here's how to reduce stress and keep up with roles:

- Speak up: let others know you are feeling stressed and how they can help
- Take a break: take a day off from work and family to release feelings of stress
- Reach out: connect with your support systems
- Work together: being a family member can mean others are there to take some stress or pressure off you
- Make a commitment: spend time on activities and hobbies for yourself or others

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



Healthy Family Life

Healthy habits are important for living a healthy life. Making time to do things you enjoy will help you keep your stress levels in check. Taking steps for your physical and mental health can be easier when you have someone to do them with. When it comes to fun, good-for-you activities, the more, the merrier. At-home activities or group outings, there are so many ways to make your family a healthy family.

Here are four simple ways to help your family live healthier:

1. Be a family that cooks together

The kitchen is a great way to bond with loved ones, share family traditions, talk about healthy eating, and try new things. Making your kitchen a space where everyone has a job can show the whole family that cooking can be fun.

2. Put a hold on screen time

Did you know kids ages 8 to 12 in the U.S. spend an average of 4 to 6 hours each day in front a screen? Time in front of a screen may have negative side effects, like trouble sleeping, less time outside, poor self-esteem and less quality time with family and friends. Next time you or a family member reaches for that phone, try one of these family activities instead: break out a board game, take a walk around the block, make crafts, paint, draw, cook a meal or make a snack, do a puzzle, or head to the park or ice rink.

If you choose to spend a little family screen time together, make it engaging. Prep healthy snacks as a family for a movie night and plan so it ends in time for everyone to get a good night's rest. Try to put all your screens away at least an hour before bedtime.

3. Exercise as a family

Family workouts are a perfect way to get moving and lead by example to help you and your family form healthy exercise habits. Everyday exercise helps to de-stress your mind and it helps younger kids burn off some of that youthful energy. Alaska winters can be long and cold. It's important to make moving fun and easy. Consider walking for 30 minutes at a mall, joining the YMCA, swimming at the local school pool, or choose from Alaska's many winter sports.

4. Stay on track with doctor visits

Part of forming positive health habits includes visits to your doctor and/or therapist. Showing your family how easy (and important) visits to your doctor and/or therapist will help them model that behavior when it's their turn to take charge of their health journey. Connect with the Optum Care Management Team at Medicaidhelpoptumak@optum.com.

Article courtesy of Optum partners at UnitedHealthcare®

If you're a participant or a participant advocate and have questions about Medicaid coverage, please call 800-225-8764, toll-free statewide Monday - Friday 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Alaska Time. Free language assistance services are available to you.



PEER SUPPORT CORNER

Maintaining Healthy Families

With summer ending many of us can find ourselves shifting habits for the upcoming winter. Winters can bring a bit of downtime, and moments for reflection. While there is nothing wrong with checking in with ourselves, more can be done during this time to break up the stillness to get the most out of our time.

Routine activities or exercise can lead to a more uplifting Winter. [Health benefits](#) include:

- Lower blood pressure
- More energy
- Lower chance of heart and lung disease

Exercise also boosts our creativity and helps our moods positively. As we approach the holidays, this can make our time spent with our loved ones more meaningful. A friendly reminder that exercise is not just lifting weights and running. With activities like yoga, dance, and walking, we can include friends and family. If you are far away from those who you would normally go with, you may even find friends in a new community if you're just starting out.

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

Catholic Social Services - a helpful resource:

Catholic Social Services provides many services to the community.

Some of the most common programs for individuals or families not already engaged with our services are emergency shelters, housing case management, and food pantry services.

3rd Avenue Resource & Navigation Center is a place for adults experiencing homelessness to access a full range of services, from short-term needs like a shower or a phone charge, to long-term engagement like case management and employment support. Providers are available to meet with clients at the 3rd Avenue Resource & Navigation Center:

[3rd Avenue Resource & Navigation Center Service Provider Schedule](#)

[List of Services](#)

[Map of Services](#)

More Alaska support and meeting information:

[The World Federation for Mental Health](#)

NAMI Mental Health Awareness Month
[#MoreThanEnough](#)

[Mental Health America – Calendar 2023](#)



MAKE A CONNECTION

Find a Provider:

Participant Access Line: 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.

Live & Work Well:

You can find information about maintaining your wellness and resources for crisis support.

Hotlines

National Suicide Prevention Line

9-8-8 [988.alaska.gov](#)

Veterans Crisis Line

800-273-8255 text 838255

Careline

877-266-4357 (HELP) or text 4help to 839863

National Domestic Violence Hotline

800-799-7233

