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Issue 11- Final Edition



Alaska Medicaid Newsletter

Important information for you as an Alaska
Medicaid Participant

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7 Ways to Advocate for Yourself at Your Doctor Visit

When it comes to seeing your health care provider, there are several ways to get the most out of your time with them. It's a good idea to be prepared. Read on to learn 7 ways to advocate for yourself, so you can make the most out of every appointment.

1. **Prioritize your questions:** Before your appointment, make a list of questions. List the most important questions first.
2. **Be specific:** Use details to describe any new symptoms. Let your provider know when the symptoms began, how often they happen, and what makes them better or worse.
3. **Bring a list of your medications:** Your health care provider can go over your list with you. Your list should include prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, and any supplements you take. If you can, bring the medications with you to your appointment. It helps to know the reason you take it, dosage, how often you take it.

This let's your health care provider know if a medication doesn't seem to be working well or if you're experiencing unusual side effects.

4. **Ask about screenings and shots:** It can be confusing to figure out which screening tests and vaccines you might need and which you might be able to skip. One good place to check before your visit is the [U.S. Preventive Services Task Force website](#).
5. **Ask for generic medications:** Ask your provider about lower cost alternatives, like a generic medication.
6. **Bring a family member or friend:** If you can, it's a great idea to have someone join you that can take notes and help you remember what the provider said.
7. **Be engaged in the conversation:** Don't be afraid to ask questions. If something doesn't make sense, let your provider know.

Advocating for yourself may feel uncomfortable at first, but it'll likely get easier the more you do it.

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

Alaska Division of Behavioral Health and Optum Working together for Alaska



Sleep For Health Under the Midnight Sun

Now is a good time to be thinking about ways to get enough sleep.

How many hours of sleep do you need? Is getting 5 or 6 hours of sleep per night enough? It's a question that's worth learning about — nearly 35 percent of adults get less than the recommended 7+ hours per night. And there are many facts that support increasing that number.

Sleep affects every aspect of your waking life. It is essential to your overall well-being. Seek help if you're not getting a good night's rest.

Poor quality and insufficient sleep have short- and long-term consequences: In the short-term, poor sleep may result in loss of attention span, poor decision-making, fatigue and irritability. The long-term implications, which are more compelling, include an increased risk for obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease stroke and depression.

Why get 7-9 hours of sleep each night? It helps support brain function, reduces your risk for disease, improves daytime performance and safety and improves your emotional health.

Tips to Sleep Better

A list of "to-dos" that may help you snooze

1. Power down to recharge	Blue light from screens can disrupt your circadian rhythm and affect your ability to sleep. Turn off your mobile devices at least 30 minutes before you head to bed.
Keep a regular pattern of bedtime and waking	Try going to bed and waking up around the same time every day — yes, even on the weekends.
Make your bedroom all about sleep	A comfortable mattress, pillow and bedding will help you get a good night's sleep. Keep your room dark, cool, and quiet. You may consider using "white noise" to mask startling sounds.
Say "no" to that late day "cup of joe"	Because it is a stimulant, caffeine may disrupt sleep. Avoid caffeine after lunch. Also, avoid alcohol before bed. Even though alcohol might make you feel sleepy, it can disrupt sleep later in the night.
Still awake?	If you don't fall asleep within 20 minutes or so, get up and go into another room and do something relaxing, such as reading or listening to soft music until you feel tired.

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

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.

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PEER SUPPORT CORNER

As our days get brighter during this time of year, we need to do our best to get good sleep. Good sleep is the pillar of our well-being, and helps us in many **important areas**.

It helps the brain by supporting healthy neuron connections while reducing stress and detoxifying the brain as you sleep.

Sleep helps with mood regulation and fatigue reduction. You feel better after a good rest!

Sleep even reduces your risk for disease and disorders.

If you have trouble maintaining a sleep schedule or aren't sure where to start, **here** is a list of "to-dos" to get started on ensuring yourself and/or others the best method for success.

Final Edition — Changes in Alaska

Optum has been the Administrative Services Organization for the State of Alaska since 2019.

The current contract ends Dec. 31, 2024. The State of Alaska Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) released a Request for Proposal this Spring. At this time, it is unknown who will have the next contract to work with DBH.

Optum will stop publishing Participant newsletters and focus on steps to close the contract.

We have truly enjoyed gathering helpful information for you.

Thank you from all of us at Optum.

More Alaska support, resources and meeting information:

Food pantries in Alaska

Food banks in Alaska

Community gardens in Alaska: Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CFSP) – Food boxes

See page 3 for more Alaska support, resources and meeting information.

Make a Connection

Find a Provider:

Participant Access Line: 800-225-8764 TDD/TTY select 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

More Alaska support, resources and meeting information:

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

[Alaska Homeless Shelters](#)

[Alaska Housing Finance Corporation](#)

[Alaska Medicaid Recipient Handbook](#)

[Anchorage, AK – Remote Area Medical](#)

[Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness](#)

[Community Pregnancy Center \(Anchorage, AK\)](#)

[Fairbanks, AK – Remote Area Medical](#)

[Fairbanks Housing & Homeless Coalition](#)

[Family Promise of Juneau](#)

[GCI Affordable Connectivity Program](#)

[Heating Assistance Program \(HAP\)](#)

[Homeless Shelters Directory](#)

[Lifeline Phone](#)

[Mat- Su links Resource Center](#)

[Medicaid Renewal](#)

[NAMI National HelpLine Resource Directory](#)

[SAMHSA Virtual Recovery Resources](#)

[Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#)

[Statewide Health Clinics](#)

[Veterans with disabilities](#)