

# APHIP Update



## STRATEGIC PLANNING PHASE BEGINS



The strategic planning phase of the Alaska Public Health Improvement Process has begun with the organization of four workgroups. A workgroup has been formed for each of the four strategic issue areas identified by the APHIP Steering Committee at their November retreat. Each workgroup is charged with identifying strategies for making systems improvements and forwarding recommendations regarding solutions to the Steering Committee.

One of the issues identified by the Steering Committee is the need to improve communication, coordination and working relationships between the various state agencies established to improve the health of Alaskans. They determined that services and programs cannot succeed at the community level without a coordinated effort at the state level. The **Interagency Connectivity Workgroup** is charged with studying the relationships between state health organizations and developing recommendations for improving communication and coordination between them. This workgroup will convene following an initial meeting of agency directors.

The **Public Health Infrastructure Workgroup** is charged with identifying legislative action required to strengthen the public health system. The workgroup will begin by defining the roles and responsibilities of the various partners in the public health system. This workgroup will hold its first meeting on February 18 in Anchorage.

The Steering Committee also identified the need to develop consistent, dependable approaches to data collection, and to improve the use of data findings in public health policy making. The **Public Health Data Systems Workgroup** is charged with researching

public health data collection and dissemination models, and with developing recommendations for improvements to Alaska's public health data systems so that they better meet the needs of Alaskan communities and government agencies. The first meeting of this workgroup is scheduled for February 17 in Anchorage.

One of the goals of the Alaska Public Health Improvement Process is to increase public awareness of the public health system. The Steering Committee has charged the **Engaging the Public Workgroup** with developing and implementing a plan to educate the public about the public health system, and to increase public participation

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## Alaska Health Status Report Complete

The effort to compile current information on the health of Alaska's residents is complete. The Health Status Assessment Team, led by Dr. Catherine Schumacher of the Section of Epidemiology, has been working over the past year to update the data originally presented in the *Healthy Alaskans 2000* report published in 1994. The new report, *Health Status in Alaska: Healthy Alaskans 2000 Review, 1998*, follows the same format as *Healthy Alaskans 2000*, which was based on the Healthy People 2000 national guidelines. According to Dr. Schumacher, "This report presents the first comprehensive update for most of the health indicators in Healthy Alaskans 2000, including the Alaska baseline value, the Alaska trend data since the baseline year, the Alaska goal for the year 2000, and the most recent U.S. data for comparison."

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## APHIP Update

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### IS A CIVIL ACTION PLAYING IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

The film, *A Civil Action*, was released in early January. This film details the true story of a community that was devastated by lethal groundwater pollution from illegally disposed hazardous wastes. The resulting contamination of the town's drinking water supply allegedly contributed to numerous deaths from leukemia. While the courtroom drama dominates the movie, the film carries a significant message that should inspire us all to consider the importance of our public health system in protecting our families and our communities against health hazards.

Please contact the APHIP Office if you would like more information on how to use the release of this movie as an opportunity to educate your community about the need for a strong public health system.



## National Discussion ON State Public Health System Improvement

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is sponsoring a special forum for representatives from the fourteen Turning Point states in Virginia the first week of March. The forum will provide an opportunity to share and discuss state plans for the second year of the public health improvement process. In addition, participants will discuss ideas for implementing state public health improvement plans in the year 2000.

The Foundation will also provide technical assistance to state grantees in four specific areas: public health law, tribal affairs, performance measurement, and state child health insurance programs. Grantees will have the opportunity to meet with experts in these areas and gain a better understanding of how these areas can influence the transformation plans for the public health system.

Three Alaskans representing the Alaska Public Health Improvement Process Partnership will attend the National Turning Point Forum.

## 1999 APHIP Calendar

### January 1999 *Happy New Year*

- 13th – Engaging the Public Workgroup
- 14th – Kenai Partnership Meeting  
Sitka Partnership Meeting
- 18th – Fairbanks Partnership Meeting
- 28th – Kenai Annual Meeting
- *PH System Redesign Phase – Strategic Planning Begins*

### February 1999

- 6th – Kenai Health Indicators Work Session
- 11th – Kenai Partnership Meeting  
Sitka Partnership Meeting
- 17th – PH Infrastructure Workgroup
- 18th – PH Data Systems Workgroup  
Engaging the Public Workgroup
- 22nd – Fairbanks Partnership Meeting

### March 1999

- 11th – Kenai Partnership Meeting  
Sitka Partnership Meeting
- APHIP Steering Committee Meeting  
in Juneau
- APHIP Umbrella Partnership Retreat  
in Juneau

### April 1999

- 5th to 11th – Public Health Week
- 8th – Kenai Partnership Meeting  
Sitka Partnership Meeting

*Call (907) 465-8622 for more information.*

## Fairbanks Partnership Introduces Community Grants and Health Indicators

The Fairbanks Community Health Partnership has begun community outreach by awarding mini-grants for health related projects. Mini-grant applications have been distributed to individuals and groups in the Fairbanks North Star Borough. These grants are intended to provide seed money (up to \$500) for small innovative projects that will improve the health of the community. The applications are easy to complete, and although anyone can apply, youth groups are being targeted. The Partnership will review applications and grantees will report to the Partnership upon completion of their grant project.

A web site on Fairbanks Health Indicators should be online by February 1999. The Community Health Resources Committee continues to seek an existing Internet site for building a resource directory. The MAT-SU's Community Connections is an excellent example of a user-friendly site. AKINFO is also being considered.

The complexities of a collaborative process continue to be a challenge for the Partnership. The mission statement was rewritten following a discussion about individual partner's expectations from the Partnership. The members struggle to meet a middle ground between planning and action. The progress of workgroups is just now becoming evident in concrete actions. This is critical in keeping the Partnership viable and able to define their purpose. For information on the Fairbanks Partnership please contact Jean Becker at the Fairbanks Public Health Center, (907) 451-1673.



## Sitka's Steering Committee Focuses on Community Partnering and Recognition

The Sitka Partnership Steering Committee is addressing local issues by looking at how they can partner with community groups. A grassroots effort in Sitka focused on youth and substance abuse is one such group. The group will make a presentation at the next Steering Committee meeting and discuss how they might partner to help move their agenda along. Steering Committee members have attended meetings of the grassroots group and are encouraged by the substantial community participation in this effort.

The data collection project is close to being completed. Maureen Northway, Director of Nursing at the Sitka Community Hospital, and Partnership facilitator Steve Hamilton have taken responsibility for this task. The information will be presented to the community through a publication entitled the "Health of Sitka Report."

The public health system assessment is being conducted through a community survey and much has been learned through this process. The initial assessment will be completed in time for a public meeting in late March, when findings on both the system and health data information will be presented.

A public recognition ceremony has been planned by the Partnership's Engaging the Public Workgroup. The recognition will focus on "random acts of kindness" in the community. The event is planned for the evening of March 10 and the Partnership is excited about the prospects of "engaging the community." Contact Lisa Sadleir-Hart at (907) 966-8736 for more information on this event and the Sitka Turning Point Towards Health Partnership.

## Kenai Partnership Engages Elected Officials and Local Groups in Process

State and local elected officials are actively involved in the Kenai Turning Point (TP) Community Partnership process to improve public health. Kenai officials were recently interviewed by Larry Gostin, a nationally known public health law consultant. Professor Gostin came to Alaska last summer to research the state's current public health law and how to update laws which in some cases predate statehood.

Mr. Gostin traveled to Kenai to meet with the TP Community Partnership Steering Committee members and elected officials for the borough, city, and state. The meeting provided Mr. Gostin with insight on the community perspective for his research and served to promote the activities of the local Kenai TP Community Partnership. As a result, the Steering Committee appointed a legislative liaison to keep elected officials informed and the Borough Mayor appointed his assistant, Kathy Scott, to work with the Kenai Partnership as a member of the steering committee executive board.

Kenai state Representative Gary Davis attended the Alaska Public Health Improvement Process Statewide Steering Committee Meeting in November and helped to identify a vision for guiding the improvement of public health in Alaska. Representative Davis will introduce a resolution in 1999 proclaiming "Public Health Day" as March 20, the day Kenai will host their annual Village Fair.

The Kenai Partnership's Community Indicators Committee has formed a partnership with the local Kenai Watershed Forum. This partnership will assist in a collaborative community process to develop local health status indicators. The first all-day work session will be held February 6<sup>th</sup> at the Kenai Bi-Centennial Visitors Center. The local office of the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Nature Conservancy are active participants in these discussions.

The Kenai TP Partnership is working with several other community groups to find resources to carry out their programs. Members are assisting with the preparation of a grant for the Chronic Disease Network (a TP partner) to better address the prevention of asthma crises. A

local group is interested in establishing a community health clinic and members are assisting with developing an application to secure federal funds. The community clinic would serve all residents and allow low income citizens without adequate health care coverage to get needed medical and dental care.

For more information on these projects or the Kenai Partnership, please contact JoAnn Hagen at (907) 283-0677.



## NorthWest Arctic Public Health Improvement Process Plans Team Meetings with Communities

The NorthWest Arctic Public Health Improvement Partnership (NWAPHIP) has formed teams to travel to the twelve villages in the Borough to discuss improving the public health system. Travelling teams will include health care providers and program-based professionals from the Maniilaq Association in Kotzebue. The teams will meet with village tribal government and local city government representatives, and host a village gathering to talk with all concerned residents. The travel and meeting schedule is currently being developed, with the first meetings to be held in February or March. The teams will present information on existing regional and local public health services and share health data for the village. Community members will have a chance to voice their opinion about local public health services and issues. The information will be compiled for a follow-up meeting to develop a plan to strengthen and improve the regional public health system. Local village residents who are interested in participating in the planning process will be recruited.

For more information on the NWAPHIP, contact Margaret Wright at the Maniilaq Health Center in Kotzebue at (907) 442-7144.

# Alaska Public Health Improvement Process Update



Jim Clark facilitating the 1998 Kenai Healthy Communities/Healthy People Coalition retreat.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING PHASE BEGINS

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in the APHIP. This workgroup will also be developing recommendations for systems changes that will increase and sustain public participation in public health planning and agenda-setting. The workgroup met for the first time on January 13, and is currently finalizing their workplan for the year.

Recommendations from each of the four workgroups will be forwarded to the APHIP Steering Committee in September, 1999 for incorporation in the Alaska Public Health Improvement Plan. The final plan will include strategies, responsibilities, and timelines for implementing the recommendations. Implementation of the plan will begin in January, 2000.



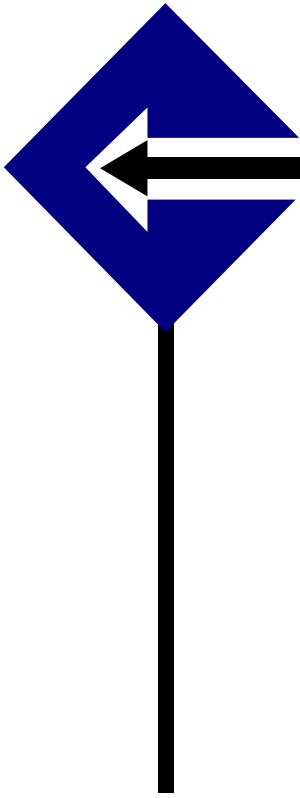
## Health Status in Alaska Report Complete ....from page 1

The new health status report contains a chapter on each of 19 health focus areas, including heart disease and stroke, cancer, family planning, immunization and infectious diseases, environmental health, mental health, and more. Each chapter provides a brief explanation of the focus area, a data summary, a race/ethnicity analysis for at least one health indicator, and a regional analysis for one health indicator. Data sources and issues are also discussed in each chapter.

The report finds that progress has been made in meeting some of the year 2000 goals, but many areas require continued efforts to improve Alaskan's health. Examples of some of the findings from the report include:

- ◆ Cancer is the leading cause of death for adults in Alaska and accounts for 25% of all deaths. The report concludes that the "death rate for all cancers has remained fairly constant throughout the 1990's, and remains above the *Healthy Alaskan's 2000* goal."
- ◆ Unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death for Alaskans aged 1-44 years and the third leading cause of death for Alaskans overall. Death rates for all unintentional injuries are declining, but have not met the goal for year 2000.
- ◆ Alaska has not met its goals of decreasing the proportion of Alaskans with a sedentary lifestyle, and the proportion of adults who are overweight has been increasing rather than decreasing.
- ◆ Alaska continues to have one of the highest smoking rates in the country, and lung cancer and chronic obstructive lung disease mortality rates have remained relatively constant since 1989.

With this comprehensive review, public health agencies and organizations can evaluate progress in meeting the goals for the year 2000 and focus their efforts on improving the health status of Alaskans for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The report is currently being printed and will be available in mid-February. Copies may be obtained by contacting the APHIP Office.



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- ◆ Turning Point Community Updates

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