

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Alaska Commission on Aging

SEAN PARNELL, GOVERNOR

*P.O. BOX 110693
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811-0693
PHONE: (907) 465-3250
FAX: (907) 465-1398*

Alaska Commission on Aging 2010 Legislative Priorities

- 1. Establish a regular and periodic schedule of rate reviews for home- and community-based services** that serve persons who are Medicaid-eligible and meet nursing home level of care. This measure will promote ongoing awareness of the true costs of providing services. SB 32, sponsored by Senator Johnny Ellis, passed the Senate and the House Health and Social Services Committee last session and waits to be scheduled for a hearing in House Finance. ACoA encourages passage of this legislation.
- 2. Eliminate, or alternatively, adjust the cap on adult dental services reimbursed by Medicaid** to provide program benefits that keep pace with higher health care costs due to inflation, and **allow Medicaid patients access to two-years of program benefits in a single year** to permit scheduling of treatment around the oral health care needs of the patient. The current law places a statutory \$1,150 limit on dental health care expenditures per eligible client. When the Medicaid Adult Dental program was created in 2005, this amount was sufficient to pay for one half of a set of dentures, either an upper or lower, with the idea that a patient who needed dentures could have both sets if the treatment was scheduled around the turn of the fiscal year. Although health care costs continue to rise, the cap has not been increased in three years. Allowing Medicaid patients access to two years of program benefits in a single year furnishes Alaskans and their dentists the flexibility needed to provide treatment addressing oral health emergencies that can occur at any time.
- 3. Provide increased operating and capital funding to establish an Alaskan Public Transportation Fund for operations of local coordinated transportation systems** which the State can use to leverage additional federal funds to improve accessible, affordable transportation for older Alaskans, persons with disabilities, low-income individuals, youth and others without access to transportation so that Alaskans with special needs may have greater access to employment and community participation opportunities. According to the Governor's Coordinated Transportation Task Force Report (2009), Alaska is one of only three states in the nation that does not provide any specific state funding for public transportation.
- 4. Provide operating funding to enhance the Aging and Disability Resource Centers**, administered under the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services, to streamline access to more efficient information and referral services by providing eligibility screening, options counseling, and assessments so that Alaskans can make informed decisions and have access to long-term care services through a "one-stop shop," reducing confusion and program fragmentation.
- 5. Return to the original wording of AS 47.07.020 (b) (6), the Medicaid statute establishing income eligibility for persons requiring nursing home level of care, referencing 300% of the maximum Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefit rate rather than the current frozen dollar amount (\$1,656 a month) to reflect changes in cost of living** so that seniors and other Medicaid-eligible persons will not be disqualified for services, including home- and community-based waiver services, due to small increases to their Social Security and other benefits. The amount of \$1,656 is the monthly amount of 300% of SSI in 2003. The 2009 income equivalent is \$2,022 monthly.