

# STATE OF ALASKA

## DEPT. OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

*Alaska Commission on Aging*

**SARAH PALIN, GOVERNOR**

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

March 6, 2009

Ms. Rebecca Wells  
Alaska Department of Health and Social Services  
P.O. Box 110616  
Juneau, AK 99811-0616

**BY EMAIL**

Dear Ms. Wells,


The Alaska Commission on Aging asks that you consider advocating for the **addition of Section 31: Veterans' Health Care to the core questions of the Behavioral Risk Surveillance System Survey (BRFSS)**. Issues of veterans' health care are of growing concern in Alaska both for our current veterans and for our new veterans returning from service overseas with a variety of physical and behavioral health conditions.

Data from the BRFSS provides critical information for the development, implementation, and evaluation of the Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Plan (Comp Plan). The Comp Plan guides Alaska's behavioral health system. In order for our system to appropriately respond to the emerging issues faced by Alaska's veterans, we need data about their behavioral health status.

Veterans' health issues have attracted both national and statewide attention. As the feature article in [SAMHSA's Newsletter \(Sep. Oct 2008\)](#) highlights, in addition to the basic question of health care access, many of our veterans (both returning and retired) are confronting mental health and substance abuse issues as well as post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury. In order to benefit from the increased attention, programmatic focus, and funding availability related to veterans' health issues, we need accurate data made available from asking questions directly applicable to veteran healthcare and the larger questions addressing the effectiveness of the continuum of health care for all Alaskans.

We appreciate your advocacy efforts and thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



Denise Daniello  
ACoA Executive Director