YUKON-KUSKOKWIM HEALTH CORPORATION

the Messenger QUARTERLY

"Working Together To Achieve Excellent Health"

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In June, YKHC board members, staff, guests and community members gathered to celebrate the opening of the new Akiachak Native Community clinic. This project is part of YKHC's ongoing work to update or replace all health clinics in the region. Learn more about the new clinic on page 4.

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

How to provide feedback:

- Respond to survey from outside company, Press Ganey, if you are contacted by phone or text
- E-mail us at customer_feedback@ykhc.org
- Download a feedback form at www.ykhc.org/comment
- Mail a comment form to P.O. Box 287, Bethel, AK 99559 or fax a feedback form to 907-543-6366

RESOURCES

YKHC main switchboard 907-543-6000
Toll Free 1-800-478-3321

APPOINTMENTS

Outpatient Clinics 907-543-6442
Dental 907-543-6229
Optometry 907-543-6336
Audiology 907-543-6466

SUBREGIONAL CLINICS

Aniak 907-675-4556
Emmonak 907-949-3500
St. Mary's 907-438-3500
Toksook Bay 907-427-3500
Hooper Bay 907-758-3500

SERVICES

Inpatient (North Wing) 907-543-6330
Pharmacy Refill Line 907-543-6988
Toll Free 877-543-6988
Physical Therapy 907-543-6342
Women's Health 907-543-6296
Irnivik Birthing Center 907-543-6346
Behavioral Health Services 907-543-6100
BH CRISIS RESPONSE LINE 907-543-6499
Ayagnirvik Healing Center 907-543-6730
Sobering Center 907-543-6830
Developmental Disabilities 907-543-2762
Emergency Room 907-543-6395
Office of Environmental Health & Engineering,
Injury Control & EMS 907-543-6420
Community Health Aide Program .. 907-543-6253

ADMINISTRATION & SUPPORT

Administration 907-543-6020
Human Resources 907-543-6060
Public Relations 907-543-6038
Travel Management 907-543-6360

The Messenger is a quarterly publication produced by the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation's Public Relations Department as a report to Tribal Members.

For questions, comments, submission of articles, or subscription information, write to Messenger Editor, Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation, P.O. Box 528, Bethel, Alaska 99559; or call 907-543-6036. E-mail: publicrelations@ykhc.org

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The Messenger is also available for download on our website at www.ykhc.org/messenger. Please ask permission to reprint articles or pictures.

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ATTENTION: If you speak Yup'ik, free translation services are available to you. Call 907-543-6603.

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Message from the President & CEO



Dan Winkelman,
President & CEO

Waqaa!

Happy Summer! On June 3, 2024, we celebrated the grand opening of the new Akiachak clinic. It was a great day and years in the making. The new $2.7 million, 2,700 square foot clinic is state of the art! Congratulations again to the Tribe, its members, the YKHC board of directors, the health aides, our construction team and our funding partners, the US Indian Health Service and the Rasmuson Foundation.

I will introduce you to Deanna Latham, VP of Support Services, who will give you an overview of the new clinic and briefly describe our future plans for additional healthcare infrastructure.

Sincerely,





Deanna Latham,
Support Services VP

YKHC strives to create partnerships that will leverage resources to make projects like the new Akiachak Clinic a reality. YKHC was able to assist the Akiachak Native Community in securing $2 million from the Indian Health Services' Small Ambulatory Program. YKHC also requested grant funds from their long-standing partner, the Rasmuson Foundation, for $250,000 to purchase all of the medical equipment, furniture and fixtures for the new clinic. The Akiachak community provided the land and YKHC's Capital Projects, Construction, and Finance teams provided technical assistance and grant management services.

YKHC began construction in the summer of 2022. This clinic replaces the old, 1,844 square foot wood frame structure built in 1994 that had become inadequate and undersized to serve the growing village of Akiachak, with a current population of about 700 people. The new clinic meets updated healthcare code requirements and will better serve the current and future healthcare needs of the community. The facility has an urgent care room to respond to emergencies as well as exam rooms, dental, lab, pharmacy, and office space. It also accommodates sleeping quarters for traveling providers.



YKHC board members, staff and community leaders line up to cut the ribbon opening the new Akichak health clinic.

YKHC is embarking on many more projects around the region including new clinics in Anvik, Stony River and Oscarville beginning this summer as well as working on three more clinics in Lime Village, Mertarvik, and a clinic expansion in Kwigillingok. In addition, YKHC is constructing a 131 unit apartment building in Bethel for YKHC employees and is in the planning and design phases for the medical supply warehouse expansion and a daycare for YKHC employees. YKHC is excited to celebrate these accomplishments and is dedicated to continuously working together to achieve excellent health! Quyana!



RIBBON CUTTING AT AKIACHAK'S NEW CLINIC

On an overcast day in early June, dozens of community members, YKHC board members and guests gathered in front of the new Akiachak Native Community Clinic to celebrate its grand opening.



Akiachak Native Community leaders, YKHC board members and staff and project partners, including the Rasmuson Foundation and the Indian Health Service, gathered at the new clinic for a ribbon cutting event. Following the ceremony, the community celebrated with a meal at the high school.

The ceremony started with a prayer by the Monrovian pastor and a welcome from President of Akiachak Native Community Fritz George.

"I want to congratulate the community for all your hard work. It takes so many people, so many partners to get this all done," said Vice President of Support Services.Deanna Latham. "Without those partnerships, none of this would have happened."

YKHC President and CEO Dan Winkelman told the gathered crowd, "Your people, our customers, will have the wonderful opportunity to come to this new facility. It's all about increasing access to better healthcare, trying to improve outcomes for our customers."

Following the opening ceremony, the community gathered at the high school to celebrate. With the support of the construction team, health aides moved from the old clinic to the new building later that day and health aides began seeing patients in the new clinic by the end of the week.

Congratulations and thank you to everyone involved in this event!





The new building contains exam rooms, dental (left) , lab, pharmacy, office space and an urgent care room to respond to emergencies (right). It also accommodates sleeping quarters for traveling providers. The construction of the new clinic was made possible with funds from the Rasmuson Foundation and the Indian Health Service Small Ambulatory Program Grant in partnership with YKHC.



Community members attended the ribbon cutting event at the new Akiachak Native Community Clinic.



Clinic staff, shown here with the new dedication plaque.

YKHC MAKES IT EASIER TO GET YOUR MAMMOGRAM THIS SUMMER!

Getting a mammogram to screen for breast cancer is an important part of a woman's regular healthcare program. Alaska Native women should undergo annual breast cancer screenings starting at age 40 (or earlier if recommended by your provider.)

To make it easier for women outside of Bethel to receive this important screening, YKHC's mammogram team will be traveling this summer to provide mammograms at sub-regional clinics.

Mammogram appointments will be available in the following communities:

- **St. Mary's**: July 8–12. Make an appointment by calling the clinic at 907-438-3500
- **Hooper Bay**: July 22–26. Make an appointment by calling the clinic at 907-758-3500
- **Aniak**: August 5–9. Make an appointment by calling the clinic at 907-675-4556
- **Emmonak**: August 19–23. Make an appointment by calling the clinic at 907-949-3500
- **Toksook Bay**: August 29–September 2 (during Blackberry Festival). Make an appointment by calling the clinic at 907-427-3500.

In Bethel, women over 40 years of age who need a screening mammogram can receive this important service without an appointment at the hospital, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. To do this, visit the registration kiosks at the hospital. Enter your name and state that you're checking in for a "radiology only" appointment. After registering, go to the second floor to check in at the diagnostic imaging department through the doors next to the dental lobby.



Important note: Walk-in mammograms are not appropriate for individuals who have breast pain, a lump, discharge or any other abnormal symptoms. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, please make an appointment to see a provider.

Early detection of breast cancer leads to better outcomes. Don't wait for something to feel "off" to meet with your provider. Take time this summer to take care of yourself so you can keep doing what you love.

PROTECTING OUR FAMILIES WITH IMMUNIZATIONS!

Over the past year, several vaccine preventable illnesses like Pertussis, Haemophilus influenza type b, and Rotavirus have appeared in the YK Delta. These are diseases that many people may have never heard of, and we want to keep it that way! Sadly, as fewer people are getting vaccinated, more and more are finding out just how serious these illnesses can be.

To combat this, YKHC Immunizations is working on several projects to make vaccines easier to get in our villages. Here's what we're doing:

- **Hiring more nurses** to travel to villages and hold vaccination clinics.
- **Updating the village health clinic inventory system** to ensure vaccines are available whenever a patient needs one.
- **Sending vaccines** with all traveling providers and float health aides.
- **Installing battery backup units** for vaccine refrigerators in communities with frequent power outages to keep vaccines at the right temperature.

Our population health team will be calling to schedule immunization clinics. Please watch out for these calls this summer and take advantage of this opportunity to keep your child up to date on their vaccines.

You can also call your local clinic today to schedule an appointment for vaccinations or a Well Child visit. In Bethel, call 907-543-6442. Visit ykhc.org/services/childhood-vaccines/ or www.immunize.org to learn more about the childhood vaccine schedule.

Let's work together to ensure our children stay healthy and don't have to experience how serious these illnesses can be. Get vaccinated and protect our community!

STAY SAFE ON THE RIVER



Boating safety

Summer is here! This is a good time to review some measures you can take to ensure you are ready for and continue to stay safe during this boating season.

Boating is a way of life in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, whether you are traveling, fishing, logging, tubing, canoeing, rafting, kayaking, or swimming. Be prepared every time you go out.

Prepare for your boat trip

Check the weather forecast and river conditions. Learn your limits for operating in unfavorable circumstances. If you notice storm clouds, a sudden drop in temperature or wind speed increasing, play it safe and get off the water.

Check the tide chart. Tides and currents affect water conditions, so you should be mindful of where you can safely travel, beach or anchor. Do your research before a trip, and know what type of conditions to expect.

Check that your equipment is in good working order. Find or create a pre-departure checklist to ensure you have everything you need in your boat, including

- Tool kit
- First-aid kit
- Extra fuel and parts
- Towels and blankets
- Fire starting tools
- Flares and flashing lights
- An extra set of clothes in case you get wet
- Sunscreen and bug spray
- Plenty of drinking water

Consider a sobriety check. Exercise good judgment. Drugs and alcohol affect judgment, vision, balance, coordination and reaction time. Don't operate a boat under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Leave a float plan with a reliable person. Once you return home safely, or you change any of your plans, notify your contact.

Be prepared for hazards and emergencies

Be alert to hazards that can occur when boating on the river.

- Currents are the strongest over the deepest part of the channel. Currents are stronger during and immediately following rain; water levels may also rise dramatically during this period. This affects the boat's speed and direction. It may overpower the boat. Upstream travel takes more fuel and time. Strong winds against currents and incoming tides can create turbulence.
- Sandbars can form on the inside of a bend, where two rivers join, near river mouths, and where water flow changes from rapid to slow. Sandbars, along with floating or submerged debris and rocks can cause any of the following: grounding, capsizing, being thrown from the boat, and damage to the lower engine, prop, and hull.
- Strainers, also known as sweepers, are obstructions in the water that allow water to pass through (e.g., trees, branches, and fences.) but are known hazards for boaters. These may cause boats to capsize or damage to the lower engine, prop, and hull.
- "Widow makers" are tree trunks extending over the river, near or at high water due to a collapsing riverbank. Be prepared for trees to fall from a bank in front of you, especially when the current is behind you. Widow makers can sweep people out of the boat, hold and trap the boat and/or people, and capsize the boat.
- Watch for floating logs and other debris, especially after floodwaters recede following spring break-up.
- Maintain control of the boat at all times while operating it. Drive at an appropriate speed, enough to maintain steerage, but slow enough to see ahead and respond to unexpected situations. Look ahead and plan your route. Take action in sufficient time, currents can sweep you into hazards. Expect the unexpected, any and all possible hazards.
- If you find yourself in an emergency situation, stay calm. Do not panic. Recognize you are in an emergency. Make sure everyone is ok. Call for help. Stay near the boat. It's easier for rescuers to find the boat first. If you must leave the boat, find something that will help make a big contrasting signal for rescues to find. Wearing a life jacket will help you swim to shore and wearing high-visibility gear will help others find and rescue you.

Have a safe and enjoyable boating season!



Buckle up! Make sure you and your loved ones wear a properly fitting life jacket when you are on the water. Before you head out to the river, do a quick fit-check on your life jacket.

- Look at the label and make sure the jacket is a proper fit for your size and weight.
- Make sure all the buckles on the jacket are properly fastened.
- Hold your arms straight up over your head and ask a friend to grasp the tops of the arm openings and gently pull up. There should not be any excess room above the openings and the jacket should not ride up over your chin or face.

YKHC partners with the State of Alaska and regional tribes every year and provides hundreds of "Kids Don't Float" life jackets for our communities. Kids Don't Float is a statewide injury prevention program that was developed to address Alaska's high child and youth drowning rate.

The program is free and it provides a life jacket loaner board with signage and life jackets that can be borrowed by boaters (at no cost). If your village does not have a loaner board and your tribe is interested in being a local sponsor, please contact YKHC's Injury Prevention department at 907-543-6420.

YKHC also sells a variety of life jackets, float coats and other safety equipment at the Safety Store, located near the cafeteria in the Bethel hospital. If you are interested in purchasing a new life jacket or other safety equipment, but you are not in Bethel, you can contact our Safety Store at 907-543-6556 or email SafetyStore@ykhc.org. Shipping is free to all YK villages.

CARE MANAGERS HELP PATIENTS NAVIGATE THEIR HEALTHCARE

YKHC Care Managers play a critical role in coordinating care for our patients and ensuring they get the follow up care they need.

The team consists of 19 people who support our customers by working closely with YKHC providers, health aides, and outside facilities to ensure a patient's needs are met.

What can your care manager assist you with?

- Schedule follow-up appointments at YKHC
- Send referrals and give status updates
- Assist with escort and travel coordination
- Respond to myYKHealth messages
- Propose labs or imaging to providers as indicated for follow-up care
- Assist with documentation requirements for medical supplies
- Assist with ordering medical supplies
- Assist with ordering durable medical equipment
- Coordinate hospital discharge follow-up
- Assist with communication between YKHC and outside facilities for coordination of care
- Assist with management of chronic care patients
- Patient education
- Assist with receiving outside facility documentation for care coordination
- Assist with updating contact information and/or registration required documentation
- Assist with ordering medically indicated dietary items (special formulas, nutritionals drinks, etc.)

Although care management can assist with many of your healthcare needs, there are some limitations to the ways they can assist. For example, care management is unable to schedule appointments at ANMC, unable to view complete chart notes from ANMC, and unable to book travel or lodging within Bethel or outside facilities.

When you have a question related to your care, consider reaching out to a care manager for assistance. You can contact a care manager by calling 907-543-6278 or by messaging through YKHC's online *myYKHealth* portal.

NURSE TRIAGE LINE UPDATES

Village clinics are staffed with health aides and itinerant providers to help meet the healthcare needs of their community during regular business hours. However, there are times when a person needs immediate help at night or another time when the clinic is not open. To provide that support, YKHC provides an emergency call line—also known as the nurse triage line. Customers who call the village clinic after hours are automatically forwarded to the nurse triage line to access support and connection to medical treatment for emergencies.

During 2023, YKHC received feedback that the external company we were working with to staff the nurse triage line was not providing the service our customers needed. We heard concerns about excessive wait times, dropped calls and staff that seemed to lack an understanding of our communities and local culture. We understood that improvements were necessary to better meet the needs of our communities.

In response to our customers' feedback, we made changes and are proud to announce that YKHC launched our own nurse triage line service in April. By mid-June, all communities were transitioned to the new line.

This new nurse triage line has been adapted to respond to the unique needs of our region. It is staffed by registered nurses employed by YKHC who have received comprehensive training and can provide culturally relevant, quality care for those living in our villages. The manager of the line will live in Bethel. All the nurses on the line are oriented and trained in



L-R: Christina Balacuit, NTL RN; Jessica Kelly, FNP-C, Interim Manager NTL with daughter Alexa Kelly; Brandi Norkus, NTL RN

Bethel and several have experience working in our region or other rural Alaska communities. Our goal with these changes is to ensure our customers can access medical professionals who understand our communities, any time of day or night, while also allowing our hard-working health aides to have some off hours.

We are excited to complete this project, as it supports our goal of improving access to care and emergency response in villages. Creating the infrastructure for this new system has been a large undertaking, with a strong team of leadership, administrative staff, and clinical personnel. We are excited to have our new nurse triage line live and believe it will help us in our mission of working together to achieve excellent health.

ALASKA NATIVE HEALTH BOARD HOLDS QUARTERLY MEETING IN BETHEL

YKHC hosted the Alaska Native Health Board for their quarterly business meeting in June. The board, which has been active for over 50 years as the statewide voice on Alaska Native health issues, has met in other parts of the state and held their first-ever meeting in Bethel.

During their visit, the group of about 30 people representing various regional Tribal healthcare organizations toured multiple facilities on the YKHC campus including the YK Elder Home, Ayagnirvik Healing Center, McCann Treatment Center and fish camp, as well as the prematernal home and new hospital.

The culmination of the trip involved a boat trip on the Kuskokwim River to the Betty Guy Memorial Clinic in Kwethluk. Clinic staff showcased their space which includes rooms for community health aides to conduct their exams as well as offices and rooms for behavioral health aides and



The Alaska Native Health Board visited McCann Fish Camp during their time in the region.

dental health aide therapists to provide their services.

The visit had an overall positive impact for each board member who participated in the jam-packed agenda. We look forward to ANHB's continued advocacy for Tribal health organizations in our state!

TACKLING TB IN THE YK DELTA: YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

The YK Delta is facing a serious health challenge: tuberculosis cases are on the rise.

From 2015 to 2021, we saw an average of 27 cases each year. In 2022 and 2023, this number doubled to 54 cases annually. This increase is alarming, especially because TB has historically affected Alaska Native communities more than others. In the YK Delta, TB rates are nearly 100 times higher than the U.S. average.

To fight this growing health problem, the YKHC, along with local Tribal councils, the State of Alaska Department of Health, the CDC, and the University of Washington, created a comprehensive TB plan. Here's what we're doing:

- **Mass testing and detection**: Everyone in the YK Delta should be tested for TB each year. In 2023, YKHC conducted over 9,000 TB tests in 46 communities—nearly three times the average number of tests performed between 2018 and 2022. These efforts were made possible through partnerships with 45 schools and support from all 7 school districts in the region.
- **Case investigation, treatment, and care**: The State of Alaska continues to provide case investigation and works closely with YKHC to coordinate and follow up on testing of close contacts, as well as to provide treatment and support.
- **Community engagement and education**: YKHC and the Department of Health held community events to raise awareness about TB, TB prevention, and the importance of testing. These events, combined with weekly meetings between YKHC, DOH Epidemiology and Public Health Nursing teams, and monthly TB providers' meetings, have improved our ability to identify and treat TB in the region.
- **Research and evaluation**: YKHC is working closely with the University of Washington to evaluate the effectiveness of its care for TB patients, aiming to refine and enhance TB control strategies. We have applied for grants to evaluate new tools like mobile chest x-ray units and tongue swab testing to bring diagnostic services closer to home.

These initiatives have laid a strong foundation for combating this epidemic, but we are still early in our fight, and rates remain high. The path toward TB elimination requires support from everyone to identify and treat cases. We have put together a **survey** to help us better understand the ways that TB impacts the YK Delta. To participate, scan the QR Code**.**

With your support, we are confident that we can continue our progress toward eliminating this terrible disease and improve the lives of YK Delta residents for generations to come.

TAKE SURVEY

RABIES SHOTS AVAILABLE IN YK VILLAGES



During a recent trip to Alakanuk, Jennifer Pak, Field Environmental Health Officer in YKHC's Department of Environmental Health and Engineering (pictured here with a pup belonging to YKHC Board Member, Marilyn Stanislaus) offered rabies vaccinations to dogs in the community.

Rabies vaccinations are extremely effective at preventing the spread of rabies among animals and from animals to humans. As part of their Rabies Prevention Program, OEHE provides vaccinations to hundreds of dogs and cats in the YK Delta every year, including a free rabies vaccination clinic in Bethel.

EXCELLENT HEALTH ON YOUR RADIO

Medical experts from YKHC talk about health-related topics that you can use to keep yourself and your loved ones in excellent health on KYUK's Wellness Wednesday show on the first Wednesday of every month! If you miss any episodes, you can find them on KYUK's website or on YKHC's Facebook and Instagram pages. Past shows included information on behavioral health programs, heart health and how to become a dental health aide therapist.



YKHC BEHAVIORAL HEALTH IS BY YOUR SIDE

It can be hard to see someone you know struggling with a mental health issue or substance use disorder. You may want to help but not be sure what to do.

YKHC's Behavioral Health team is by your side. We offer a wide range of therapies and programs to help those in need, as well as provide assistance for people looking to help their loved ones. If you are wondering how you can support people in your family or community, take a moment to review the information below.

Invite YKHC Preventative Health to your community. Our behavioral health prevention team works to support people and communities before they need care. Our outreach team travels to communities to offer a comprehensive and culturally relevant approach to supporting mental health, reducing suicide risk and building strong communities. Reach our preventative health team by calling 907-543-6100, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Regularly check in with family, friends and neighbors. Connection and community can help support those who are struggling. Sometimes inviting a person for a conversation or meal can help them feel less alone or hopeless.

When a person presents as having a behavioral health need and is willing to get help: If someone is struggling with a mental health issue or substance use disorder, encourage them to contact behavioral health services at YKHC. We offer a variety of outpatient and residential programs and services to support individuals and their families. We will work with the person and their loved ones to find the right therapies and programs. Call (907) 543-6100, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

If you see someone struggling but they are *not* willing to seek help: Let them know you care and are there when they are ready to seek help. Make sure they know how to contact YKHC's Behavioral Health team (907-543-6100) and crisis support (see below.) If they are likely to cause serious harm to themselves or others, contact village officers or state troopers for assistance.

If there is an immediate crisis: In an emergency, crisis care is always available. A person in crisis— or someone supporting them—can get professional, trained assistance 24 hours a day, seven days a week by contacting one of these emergency resources.

YKHC Crisis Line: 907-543-6499 or (844-543-6499
AlaskaCareLine: 877-266-HELP (4357)
Call or text 988

To learn more about the variety of programs offered by YKHC's Behavioral Heath program, visit www.ykhc.org/services/behavioral-health/



LIFE-SAVING NALOXONE AVAILABLE TO INDIVIDUALS AND TRIBES

August 31 is National Overdose Awareness Day and a good time to ensure you are prepared to assist someone experiencing an opioid overdose. This year's theme is "Together We Can," highlighting the power of our community when we all stand together.

All community members are encouraged to know how to recognize and react to a drug overdose. Signs of an overdose may include small, constricted "pinpoint pupils;" falling asleep or loss of consciousness; slow, weak, or no breathing; choking or gurgling sounds; limp body; cold and/or clammy skin; or discolored skin (especially in lips and nails).



An opioid overdose can happen to anyone who has access to opioids, including prescription opioid medications, heroin, or drugs (e.g., cocaine, methamphetamine) that are contaminated with an opioid, like fentanyl. Overdoses can also occur when a person combines opioids and other substances, such as alcohol, sedatives or stimulants.

YKHC offers naloxone, a life-saving drug that can reverse an overdose from opioids. Often given as a nasal spray, naloxone is safe and easy to use. Once administered, it can quickly restore normal breathing to a person whose breathing has slowed or stopped as a result of an overdose.

Naloxone is available to the public.

- Individuals can obtain naloxone after a consultation at the pharmacy at the hospital in Bethel.
- To obtain naloxone in a village, please speak with your health aide or call the pharmacy in Bethel at 907-543-6988.
- Many Tribal offices have naloxone for distribution. (Tribal leaders: If your Tribal office would like to request stock of naloxone, please call the pharmacy.)

Individuals who use opioids for any reason or are around others who use opioids are encouraged to obtain this opioid reversal medication. You could save a life.

If you are using opioids, let others know you have naloxone in case you experience an opioid overdose. Remember, you will not be able to administer naloxone to yourself.

YKHC offers counseling and medication to those struggling with opioid use disorder. Our Behavioral Health team offers treatment in our outpatient clinic and through residential services at the Ayagnirvik Healing Center. Contact Behavioral Health at 907-543-6100 to schedule an assessment for treatment and connect with our services.

SMILE ALASKA STYLE PROMOTING DENTAL HEALTH SINCE 1990

Nearly 70 individuals visited the YKHC Dental department through their outreach event at the Cama-i Dance Festival in Bethel in March. This beloved outreach initiative promotes oral hygiene and preventive care and leaves a lasting impact on participants of all ages.

The main attractions at this event were two essential components of preventive dental care—dental screenings and fluoride applications. Through screenings, participants received personalized insights into their oral health, empowering them to take proactive steps toward maintaining healthy smiles. The fluoride application further fortify teeth against decay, offering an additional layer of protection to participants.

Smile Alaska Style is not just about screenings and treatments—it is about education too! Dental professionals took the opportunity to educate about oral hygiene practices, emphasizing the importance of regular brushing, flossing, and routine dental check-ups. Attendees left with the tools and knowledge necessary to make informed decisions about their dental health.



Best smile recipient Bethany Kohl, 8 years old.

YKHC dental took this 35th anniversary Smile Alaska Style to honor dentist Dr. Bob Allen and his continued dedication to oral health in the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta region. The Dental department thanks everyone who made this event possible and looks forward to seeing you at next year's event.

CHAP NEWS



Left to Right: Patricia David, Kwethluk; Rhonda Jackson, Kwethluk; Charlamagne Olick, Kwethluk; Danielle Paul, Kipnuk; Krysten Goetz, Mountain Village; Jon Phillip, Akiachak; Sherileen Chris, Tuntutuliak; Katherine Joseph, Bethel.

EIGHT NEW HEALTH AIDES GRADUATE IN 2024

YKHC's Community Health Aide Program proudly celebrates the graduation of eight dedicated employees. These graduates represent the backbone of healthcare in rural, western Alaska, where their role as Community Health Aides (CHAs) is indispensable. From routine care to emergency response, CHAs play a vital role in ensuring healthcare access and continuity of care in remote communities.

The graduation of these eight employees signifies a milestone not only in their personal and professional journeys but also in the ongoing effort to enhance healthcare delivery in rural Alaska. Their dedication to completing the rigorous training and acquiring the necessary skills highlights their commitment to serving their communities with excellence and compassion. Their role is not just vital; it is indispensable for ensuring equitable access to healthcare services and promoting health and safety to the region.

Congratulations to the graduates of the Community Health Aide Program! Your dedication, skills, and compassion will continue to make a tangible difference in the lives of those you serve, embodying YKHC's mission of Working Together to Achieve Excellent Health.

HEALTH AIDE EMERGENCY FUND CELEBRATES FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

The Community Health Aide Emergency Fund celebrated its fifth anniversary earlier this year. Coordinators and members of the committee along with administration and staff at the Bethel Community Services Foundation celebrated the success of the program with a luncheon.

The fund assists current or former health aides who have worked a minimum of two years as a health aide or trainee in the YK Delta with a personal or family emergency. The fund is managed by the Bethel Community Services Foundation. To date, emergency funds totaling more than $95,000 have been awarded to over 180 applicants. More information and the application for funds are available at www.bcsfoundation.org.



Luncheon for the fifth anniversary of the Health Aide Emergency Fund.

SECOND WELLNESS RETREAT SUPPORTS OUR HEALTH AIDES

In April, ten dedicated health aides from across YKHC's service area gathered with experienced facilitators for the second Health Aide Retreat.



Health Aides and facilitators at retreat.

At the retreat they explored culturally relevant coping strategies for dealing with stress and trauma and emphasized the importance of cultural resilience for the Alaska Native employed as Community Health Aides.

Health aides explored topics and activities to support well-being, such as resilience and cultural connection to the YK Delta Region, emotional intelligence, mindfulness, stress management with a positive attitude, self-care exercises, life balance, and more. The evaluations from participants were overwhelmingly positive, with attendees expressing feeling refreshed, inspired, and better equipped for their work.

This retreat is part of YKHC's ongoing efforts to support village-based staff in their own care and the care of their patients. Quyana to everyone who participated in this event!



Groups participated in activities to support well-being.



Become a Community Health Aide

Provide primary care and emergency care to those seeking health services at the village clinic.



Work Responsibilities

- Work 30–40 hours per week in clinic seeing patients
- Be on-call after Session II field follow-up
- Clinic administrative duties
- Training in Bethel for 4–5 weeks at a time

Qualifications

- At least 18 years old
- High school diploma or equivalent
- Positive work history
- Demonstrate required math and reading skills

$5,000 sign-on bonus offered with a 2-year contract.

Training provided at no cost to you.

Great benefits!

Positions are now open

Call the Community Health Aide Program 1-800-478-4471 / 907-543-6160

CONGRATULATIONS

YKHC ELDERS HOME ACHIEVES 4-STAR RATING

The YK Elders Home has been recognized for the second year in a row by the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) as a Four-Star Overall Rated facility. According to CMS, a rating of four stars means that quality is "above average."

The Five-Star Quality Rating System is a tool to help consumers select and compare nursing care centers. Nursing homes are rated from 1–5 stars based on health inspections, staffing, and quality measures. The ratings for health inspections contains information from the last three years of onsite inspections. The ratings for staffing depict the hours of care given to each resident per day by RNs, LPNs, and CNAs. The ratings for quality measures are based on the facility's performance on different physical and clinical measures. For more information about YK Elder's Home Star Rating, please visit **https://www.medicare.gov/care-compare/**

This award would not have been possible without the support of many different departments within YKHC and the hard-working staff at the Home.



YK Elders Home

YKHC is proud to offer a safe and highly rated facility where elders can live and thrive! YK Elders Home opened in October 2013 and provides 24-hour nursing care for up to 18 residents. To speak with a staff member, learn more about becoming a resident of YK Elders Home or request a pre-admission application, call 907-543-6780. Pre-admission applications or questions can also be submitted to **ykeh_admissions@ykhc.org**.

YKHC EMPLOYEES AMONG CNA SPRING 2024 GRADUATES

YKHC employees Madison Fox and Lisa Jenkins successfully completed the Certified Nursing Assistant course at Yuut Elitnaurviat earlier this year. After graduation, they begin preparing for their state certification exam, passing which will earn them the designation of certified nursing assistants.



Madison Fox and Lisa Jenkins.

"After working for YKHC in Payroll and then as a Psychiatric Technician at McCaan Treatment Center, I saw an advertisement at Yuut promoting CNA classes and I really was inspired to take the class, making my grandma and aunt super proud of me. I am so grateful to YKHC for funding my CNA program and I can proudly say that I graduated! Always know that your dreams can come true and don't let finances get in the way of your learning and spreading your wings."

—Madison Fox, Yuut CNA Graduate, Spring 2024

"The highlights from the CNA program were making new friends from different villages with students who desire to become nurses as well learning new skills, getting my first scrubs, and my first-time experience working with residents at the long-term care facility. Doing my clinical rotations in OB and Inpatient were also highlights for me.

What was very rewarding during the four days of clinicals was when some patients would say, 'I'm glad we have people from our region working in the healthcare field.' Some of the elders at the long-term care would tell us they are happy they have new Yup'ik speakers pursuing nursing careers. Seeing their smiles and hearing them say they are happy we are getting our CNA credential was very encouraging."

—Lisa Jenkins, Yuut CNA Graduate, Spring 2024

As part of YKHC's commitment to developing a strong Alaska Native workforce, we partner with community programs and offer a variety of educational opportunities and scholarships. Learn more at ykhc.org/education.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT: DOLLY BONEY

Dolly Boney is our Accounts Payable Manager. She shares her story.

I grew up in Bethel and am a proud graduate of Bethel Regional High School. I am also very grateful to be the mother of three Bethel Warriors, whom I share with my husband Steven. My parents are Sam and Carrie Herman from Nunivak.

Camping, subsistence activities, beading, cheering for our Warriors, and spending quality time with people I love make me happy. My daughters' accomplishments make me proud. Two of my daughters currently work for YKHC. My oldest, Brittney, is a registered nurse for the Inpatient Clinic and my middle child, Payton, is a student hire in obstetrics.

My career with YKHC started as an Operating Room scheduler. I have been very fortunate to have had the mentorship and leadership of others along my journey at YKHC. These individuals helped and encouraged me to grow and fulfill the roles and responsibilities of the various positions I have had along the way. I am close to reaching the 18-year mark of working at YKHC. As I reflect on my career, I am grateful that during my time here, I have expanded my skills and knowledge and have been able to help others learn and grow within the corporation, as others have helped me.

The different positions I have held have helped me gain a lot of knowledge and have provided me with opportunities to contribute to the department and organization. These positions include working for Payroll and Behavioral Health as finance and compliance officer. In this position, I was able to be part of the RAVEN build up and introduction into the corporation. This was definitely an opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge about our healthcare system starting from when an appointment is made to how revenue is generated.

Jennifer Volkman played a huge role as my mentor during my time in the Behavioral Health department. I was chosen as one of the first candidates for the Compass Program, a leadership program that taught me how to manage difficult situations and how to build teams. I was also part of the Finance team and was able to learn about budget development and assist managers in optimizing the use of financial tools and resources to better align with the organization's vision and mission. During my time as a finance administrator, it was a privilege to be part of our corporate-wide customer service training team. This program helped us guide employees in building connections and better relationships with each other, which translates to better service to both internal and external clients, especially to our valued patients.



Dolly, center, with family.

I currently serve as the accounts payable manager, a position that has helped me grow both personally and professionally as I advance my knowledge of accounting functions and leadership skills and consistently maintain a balance between the two components.

The most rewarding aspect of my role is witnessing my team grow and accomplish tasks and projects that nurture and improve their skills. Seeing my team enhance their knowledge, skills, and abilities as they work conscientiously to support each other and the department is very gratifying for me.

My career has given me the tools, personally and professionally, to step out of my comfort zone and show my children and team members that growth is not always comfortable. We should always be open and willing to learn and to figure out ways to improve processes and outcomes. I feel my work has impacted YKHC positively and especially as I see my team grow as we consistently strive as a team and as individuals to provide the best service to others.

My advice to students and residents in our communities who are aspiring to explore a career at YKHC is to always do your best when you are offered a position and be willing to work hard, learn and grow and the rewards will come.

TOP TIPS TO MAKE YOUR NEXT MEDICAL TRIP EASIER

Use this information to help make travel to and from your medical appointments as convenient as possible. Please read through all the information below. Still have questions? Reach out to YKHC Travel at 833-543-6625, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m, any day of the week.



BEFORE YOU TRAVEL

REVIEW YOUR APPOINTMENTS

Make sure that you review appointment dates and times at your destination. If you have questions about your medical situation, speak with your case manager.

PLAN YOUR LODGING

Patients are advised to arrange and confirm lodging prior to travel. While it is sometimes possible to secure lodging on a walk-in basis, reservations are *strongly recommended.*

If traveling under Medicaid:

- Per State of Alaska Medicaid, it is the patient's responsibility to set up their own lodging at an approved Medicaid facility. If you are interested in staying at the Qavartarvik Customer Lodge in Bethel, please let the YKHC Travel Team know in advance and they can assist you with a reservation. Reservations are strongly recommended. Walk-ins will be accommodated as space permits.
- If you are traveling to Alaska Native Medical Center for care, you may be able to arrange to stay in ANMC patient housing. Please confirm before arriving. Housing at ANMC will only provide lodging to patients being seen there or at an appointment originating from an ANMC referral. They will not provide lodging to patients flying from Bethel directly to another healthcare facility in Anchorage.
- For the most current list of Medicaid approved hotels in Anchorage, please consult with YKHC Travel.

If you are traveling on YK Pay or other non-Medicaid travel –

- YKHC does not cover the cost of lodging outside of Bethel for non-Medicaid patients.

Bethel Customer Lodge

Customers must check in at the Qavartarvik Customer Lodge (QCL) in Bethel between 3 and 6 p.m. If you are going to arrive after 6 p.m. for any reason, including flight delay, you must let the lodge know you will be arriving late. The lodge can be reached through the main travel phone number: 833-543-6625.

If you have not checked in by 6 p.m. QCL staff members will attempt to call you for confirmation of arrival. If we are unable to immediately confirm the reservation, the reservation will be canceled so that it can be made available to another customer.

CONSIDER GROUND TRANSPORTATION

In Bethel, the YKHC shuttle runs every 30 minutes and can take you from the airport, lodge and hospital at no cost. Bethel cab companies do not take Medicaid vouchers for taxi rides. The shuttle can be reached at 907-543-0185.

If you are traveling to Anchorage or beyond, please arrange to pick up taxi vouchers at the clinic. Please note that taxi vouchers are only to be used for *medical appointments*. You will not be issued any more if it can't be medically justified.

If you stay at a Medicaid hotel that does not offer meals, you cannot use Medicaid taxi slips to go to the cafeteria at ANMC. If you do, you will not be allotted more taxi slips.

GATHER DOCUMENTS

Visit your local clinic to pick up approved travel vouchers needed for airline reservations, meals, lodging and (if traveling beyond Bethel) taxi for patient (and approved escort).

Make sure you have the following:

- Airline-approved personal identification card for patient and escort (unless under age 18)
- Patient's Medicaid card
- Money for items not covered by Medicaid or for any cost that may occur for loss of Medicaid benefits during travel. (Room service, tips, phone calls, movies, taxi rides for personal use, etc.)
- All clothing and items you need to be comfortable during your travel, appointment and stay

PLAN YOUR CHILDCARE

Due to Medicaid restrictions, patients are strongly encouraged not to bring a lap child.

REVIEW ESCORT GUIDELINES

Escorts must be approved in advance and follow the guidelines outlined below. These guidelines are established by Medicaid and cannot be changed or amended by YKHC.

The escort must be physically and mentally able to transport or assist with all care related to the patient, which in-

cludes being able to push, pull, lift as needed to assist patient; help patient in and out of any aircraft; assist with wheel chair; support personal hygiene needs of patient; and other assistance as needed.

If a person requires an escort themselves, they cannot act as an escort for another patient for any reason.

Escorts cannot bring lap children.

The escort is required to stay with the patient at all times.

- If an escort abandons the patient, Medicaid may ban the escort.
- If patient is admitted, the escort must stay with the patient or contact travel to return home.

Any escort banned by Medicaid will also not be eligible to serve as an escort on any YK Pay travel.



ON YOUR WAY

Check in 2-3 hours before your flight to ensure you make it through security (if applicable). If you miss your check-in for any non-medical reason, Medicaid will not pay to rebook a missed flight.

If you are delayed for any reason and will arrive at Qavartarvik Customer Lodge after 6 p.m., you must let the lodge know you will be arriving late. The lodge can be reached through the main travel phone number: 833-543-6625. Please check late check-in policies at other lodging facilities and adhere to their late check-in policy.

All patients and escorts are required to abide by the code of conduct at the Qavartarvik Customer Lodge or any other lodging establishment.



AT YOUR DESTINATION

Make sure you get to your appointments at or before the required check in time.

Pay close attention to flight reservations. Escorts may be transported home and then back again for the patient's return trip depending on trip duration and cost effectiveness.

Both YKHC and ANMC offer free shuttle from the airport to the hospital. No cab vouchers are available for Bethel.



IF YOUR TRAVEL PLANS CHANGE DURING YOUR TRIP

As soon as your plans change for any reason (e.g. personal, missed flight, medical situation), begin to update your travel plans and cancel reservations you will not be able to keep. You are required to update before proceeding in any personal activities.

In Bethel,

- The Travel Update booths in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Regional Hospital Resource Center are open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- YKHC QCL Travel Update booths on the first floor of the lodge are open daily 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Outside of Bethel,

- Contact the facility where you were seen to update your travel.
- As a reminder, ANMC does not update travel if you were not seen there.

If you miss your flight for any reason that is not medically justified, you may have to pay for the remainder of the trip out of pocket.



CONTACT INFORMATION

The primary phone number for YKHC Travel is 833-543-6625. When you call this number, you will be able to select from options to help with:

- Travel that has already been booked or you are currently traveling on
- New appointments or travel that has not begun.
- Qavartarvik Customer Lodge
- Medicaid enrollment

If you would like to communicate with YKHC Travel Team via text, let your Travel Team member know.

Other useful contact numbers:

- ANMC Care Coordination: 855-482-4382
- ANMC Patient housing/Quyana House: 907-729-2400



SAFE TRAVELS!

Our Travel Team works hard to make your trip as convenient and comfortable as possible. We understand that traveling, weather and illness can be stressful, but customers are expected to be respectful to all staff.

We look forward to serving you! Please reach out with any questions or suggestions on how we can better communicate with you.

KEEP SUGAR OUT OF YOUR SUMMER DRINKS

Summer is here and there will be more opportunities to be outside and active. Whether you are on the river, picking berries, playing out, or riding your bike, you are going to get thirsty. But did you know that many of the most popular drinks, like energy drinks and pop, can contain more sugar in one can than is healthy to drink in a whole day?

Too much sugar increases risks for diabetes, heart disease, dental problems, and overweight/obesity. When we eat too many sugary foods and drink too many sugary drinks, it means we are using less healthful foods in place of nutritious foods that give us nutrients our bodies need.

The U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommend that we consume no more than 10% of our daily calorie needs from added sugars. Added sugars increase calories without offering much in the way of nutrition. Added sugars can be called different names: syrup, nectar, molasses, honey, fructose, sucrose, dextrose, juice. Pop, regular sports drinks, energy drinks, bottled teas and coffees, juice drinks, and drinks made from regular mixes contain added sugars ranging from 22-54 g per serving.

We can be informed consumers by reading labels listing both nutrition facts and ingredients. For nutrition information, be sure to check the serving size first. You may have to do some quick math to make sure you are accounting for all of the sugar in what you are consuming. If the nutrition information given is for an 8 ounce serving and you are drinking 24 ounces, you are having three servings.



Water is the best thing to drink. If you are not too excited by plain water, try a few tips to enhance it. Filter it and serve it cold. Add mashed berries, or steep herbs or spices in your water. Make and drink plain tea or coffee. You may enjoy the carbonation and additional flavor of sparkling waters.

You can use sugar alternatives to add some sweetness without adding sugar to your diet. Sugar-free drinks and drink mixes are good for adding flavor and sweetness without sugar. You may be able to dilute your juice and still enjoy the taste of it and reduce your sugar intake. Finally, moderation is always in order. If you choose to have a sugary drink, set a limit for yourself such as one cup. Then honor your limit.

MEDICAID ★ **Get Ready to Renew!** *Be sure you stay covered*

5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR MEDICAID RENEWAL

1		**Keep your contact information up to date.**	Go to medicaidrenewals.alaska.gov or scan the QR code with your smartphone and follow the "Save time" link to update online. Or, call the Medicaid Information Update Hotline 833-441-1870.
2		**Monitor and respond to mail.**	You may receive mail when it is your turn to renew. Respond quickly to avoid delays in coverage.
3		**The process is easy, with help along the way!**	Most renewal packets come pre-populated with your information. You just need to be sure the information is correct, if it isn't, make corrections. We'll let you know if your renewal packet is missing anything. We'll mail a checklist of missing information to send back within 30 calendar days. Send in your packet even if it's late. If you miss the renewal date, your packet can be used to re-enroll if it's submitted within 180 days of your disenrollment.
4		**Your children may be eligible for Medicaid even if you're not.**	Children under the age of 19 with insurance may be eligible if their household income is under 177% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for Alaska and children under the age of 19 without insurance may be eligible if their household income is under 203% of the FPL for Alaska.
5		**You can appeal if you don't agree.**	A Notice of Action will be mailed regarding your Medicaid coverage and will include information on how to appeal.

Staying current with your Medicaid enrollment can help make receiving care easier. For more information and to sign up for email updates with news about renewals, visit medicaidrenewals.alaska.gov. If you have questions or need help with any part of the process, contact YKHC's Medicaid Enrollment Office at 907-543-6470.

WHAT EVERY YKHC CUSTOMER NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT THE PURCHASED AND REFERRED CARE PROGRAM

Eligible Tribal beneficiaries receive medical/dental care provided at an Indian Health Services (IHS) or Tribal healthcare facility at no cost. However, the cost of care received outside of an IHS or Tribal healthcare facility—such as during a visit to a provider not referred by ANMC or to an out-of-region emergency room —is not automatically covered.

An IHS program called **Purchased/Referred Care** (PRC) may help cover the cost of healthcare received outside of an IHS or Tribal facility. However, getting coverage requires the patient to follow the policies and procedures of the IHS PRC program.

It is important to understand the requirements of this program **before** receiving medical care away from an IHS or Tribal healthcare facility.

To be better prepared for the future, take a few moments now to review the information below from Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) about the PRC program.

What is Purchased/Referred Care?

PRC is a benefit to Alaska Native and American Indian people that provides funding for referred medical services not available at ANMC. Following ANMC PRC's policies and procedures may allow ANTHC to assist with the cost of medical services received from non-ANMC facilities and providers.

Who is Eligible?

- Alaska Native and American Indian people who are Alaska residents for 180 days prior to the date of service and have the intent to remain in Alaska indefinitely.
- Alaska Native and American Indian people who meet ANTHC's eligibility policy requirements.
- Non-Alaska Native and American Indian women pregnant with an eligible Alaska Native and American Indian's child.
- Children of an eligible Alaska Native and American Indian people, including non-Alaska Native and American Indian foster children, adopted children, stepchildren, legal wards or orphans, until age 19.

What is the referral process for routine scheduled care?

- Visit your primary care provider and if necessary, they will refer you to ANTHC.
- An ANTHC physician must initiate all non-Tribal health facility referrals.
- All patients are screened for Medicaid, Medicare or private health insurance. If eligible, a Health Benefit Specialist will help patients apply.

What is the process for emergency medical care?

In an emergency, seek medical attention first. It is the responsibility of the patient or the patient's family to notify ANTHC PRC within 72 hours of any treatment received outside of ANMC. Anyone acting on behalf of the patient can make the call. Coverage for those traveling outside of Alaska is limited to emergency medical care.

Emergency medical coverage is provided for:

- Eligible beneficiaries traveling outside of Anchorage who need emergent care at a non-Tribal facility.
- People moving outside Alaska (up to 180 days) other than residents of Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC), Ketchikan Indian Community (KIC), Metlakatla Indian Community (MIC) or SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC).
- Travelers, temporarily outside Alaska, other than residents of TCC, KIC, MIC or SEARHC.
- Full-time students registered with PRC, other than residents of TCC, KIC or MIC.

What is not covered?

- Services from non-Tribal health facilities if an IHS facility or Tribal health facility was open and available to provide the needed care.
- Medical services (including follow-up appointments) provided by a non-Tribal healthcare provider that has not been referred by an ANTHC physician and authorized by PRC.
- Obstetric deliveries at private hospitals not referred by an ANTHC physician and authorized by PRC.
- Inpatient or outpatient mental health services.
- Inpatient or outpatient substance abuse programs.
- Second opinions.
- Medical care considered investigational or experimental.
- Nursing homes or long-term care facilities.
- Routine and emergent dental services.
- Medical services received in other Alaska PRC service areas, such as Fairbanks, Juneau, Sitka, Kenai, Homer, Kodiak, Seward, Ketchikan, Valdez, Palmer, Wasilla, etc., unless authorized by ANTHC PRC. Contact the respective PRC program for that area for assistance.

For questions regarding PRC's Traveler Program, or to provide you 72-hour notice, call the office at 907-729-2470 or 800-478-1636

This information is also available online at https://www.anthc.org/prc/ courtesy of Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium.

Work at YKHC

Be part of your tribal health organization and make a difference in your community.

We offer a wide range of jobs with:

- Good pay and benefits
- Generous time off
- Medical, dental and vision insurance





To apply today or learn more, visit ykhc.org/work or call 907-543-6059.



Regular health care visits keep you *doing what you love.*

Check in with your provider annually.

Yukon-Kuskokwim HEALTH CORPORATION