

**A strong public health system is crucial for protecting and improving the health of Americans.**

### **Alaska's Public Health**

The effectiveness of Alaska's public health system is challenged by the emergence of new public health problems and environmental issues and by changes to health systems, health care financing, and government structures.

Public health has a mission to protect and improve health. To carry out this mission effectively and use its resources wisely, the public health system needs up-to-date information about the diseases, conditions, and other health threats affecting population groups. Among the most significant and persistent public health concerns in Alaska today are tobacco use, alcohol consumption, injuries, suicide, nutrition, and chronic diseases.

Inadequate access to health status statistics and information was identified in the Alaska Public Health Improvement Process as a significant problem in Alaska's public health system. Addressing this deficiency is essential for making progress toward Alaska's health improvement priorities.

Alaska needs a public health information system accessible to all components of our diverse public health system to assist with decision making at all levels.

### **For more information**

Deborah L. Erickson, Deputy Director

Alaska Division of Public Health  
P. O. Box 110610  
Juneau, AK 99811-0610  
907-465-8615  
deb\_erickson@health.state.ak.us

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# Alaska TurningPoint

**Collaborating for a New Century in Public Health**

### **What is Alaska Turning Point?**

The national Turning Point Initiative aims to transform and strengthen the public health system in the United States by making it more community based and collaborative. In Alaska, Turning Point is developing a public health information system. The goals of this project are to:

- Provide information to policy makers, public health system partners, and the general public about the health status of Alaskans
- Provide community-based organizations with the data and information they need, as well as the technical assistance on how to use it, in order to conduct community assessments and plan health improvement initiatives.

### **How is Turning Point in Alaska improving public health?**

- Providing direct access to policy makers, health professionals, and community members needing useful information for their own planning and decision making. Resources developed by Turning Point and now available on the Internet can be used to assess health needs and establish priorities on a state, regional, or local level.
- Establishing a permanent and on-going capacity for data compilation, analysis, and dissemination of public health information. This capacity is important for:
  - Recognizing trends and monitoring health improvement
  - Informing policy making, program management, and program evaluation with current, comprehensive information
  - Identifying and setting goals to be reached among communities throughout Alaska using data to impact key health issues
- Convening Alaskans from rural and urban communities, Native organizations, state and federal agencies, and private businesses to contribute their knowledge and expertise to public health decision making and to setting health goals. Two publications resulting from one such partnership describe the current health status of Alaskans, set targets for health improvement, and describe strategies that have been used in Alaskan communities to address public health problems.

### **What can Alaska Turning Point help you do?**

- Identify specific health issues and barriers to community health in Alaska
- Access data and information for making decisions regarding allocation of resources and the structuring of systems
- Monitor and protect the health status of Alaska residents

### **Support**

The Turning Point Initiative is funded by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The National Program Office is located at the University of Washington School of Public Health and Community Medicine. Contact the National Program Office at 206-616-8410 or visit [www.turningpointprogram.org](http://www.turningpointprogram.org).

