



## Supporting State Efforts to Address Suicide Prevention among Alaska Native People

**WHEREAS**, Alaska had the second highest suicide rate in the nation in 2015;<sup>1</sup>

**WHEREAS**, suicide was sixth leading cause of death overall in Alaska in 2016;<sup>2</sup>

**WHEREAS**, the overall age-adjusted suicide rate in Alaska was 27.1 per 100,000 persons in 2015, the rate for Alaskans aged 15-24 was 55.4, and for American Indian/Alaska Native people aged 15-24, 151.8;<sup>3</sup>

**WHEREAS**, while in 2015 suicide was the tenth leading cause of death in the U.S., it was the seventh leading cause of death for American Indian/Alaska Native people,<sup>4</sup> and, tragically, the leading cause of death for Alaska Native 15-24 year olds;<sup>5</sup>

**WHEREAS**, Alaska Native suicide was exceedingly rare from 1950 until 1965, then from 1965-70, the rate doubled,<sup>6</sup> then from 1970-74, the rate doubled again<sup>7</sup> and continued so that from 1960-1995, rates increased approximately 500%;<sup>8</sup>

**WHEREAS**, Alaskans have strengths through their self-reliance and their close communities to contribute to the prevention of suicide; and

**WHEREAS**, Alaska Native people and communities have deep sources of cultural strengths to protect youth from suicide;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska Public Health Association will promote and advocate for the actions advanced by community-engaged initiatives to:

- Leverage the strengths of Alaska Native cultures to protect young people from suicide
- Support efforts to foster strengths-based cultural strategies to build wellness and resilience in communities
- Encourage respectful community-research partnerships, such as the Alaska Native Collaborative Hub for Resilience Research (ANCHRR), to develop culturally-attuned initiatives and recommendations followed by

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics (2017). Deaths: Final Data for 2015 National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol. 66, No. 6, November 27, 2017. [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr66/nvsr66\\_06.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr66/nvsr66_06.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Health Analytics and Vital Records (2017). *Alaska Vital Statistics 2016 Annual Report*. Available at [http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/VitalStats/Documents/PDFs/VitalStatistics\\_AnnualReport\\_2016.pdf](http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/VitalStats/Documents/PDFs/VitalStatistics_AnnualReport_2016.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Health Analytics and Vital Records, via AK-IBIS. <http://ibis.dhss.alaska.gov/indicator/view/Suic1524.HAR.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics (2017). Deaths: Final Data for 2015 National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol. 66, No. 6, November 27, 2017. [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr66/nvsr66\\_06.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr66/nvsr66_06.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium Epidemiology Center. Alaska Native Mortality Update: 2009-2013. Age Specific Mortality rates. <http://anthctoday.org/epicenter/publications/Mortality/Alaska-Native-Mortality-Update-Age-Specific-Mortality-Rates-2009-2013.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Kraus R. (1974). Suicidal behavior in north Alaskan Eskimo. *Alaska Medicine*, 16, 2-6.

<sup>7</sup> Kraus R.F., & Buffler, P. A. (1979). Sociocultural stress and the American Native in Alaska: and analysis of changing patterns of psychiatric illness and alcohol abuse among Alaskan natives. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 3(2), 111-51.

<sup>8</sup> Brems C. (1996). Substance use, mental health, and health in Alaska: Emphasis on Alaska Native People. *Arctic Medical Research*. 55, 135-147.



widespread dissemination of lessons learned from community action and appropriate research;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska Public Health Association will, as opportunities arise and as possible, contribute to the suicide prevention efforts around the state; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this resolution shall be the position of the Alaska Public Health Association until it is withdrawn or modified by a subsequent resolution.

**FISCAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT STATEMENT:** This action will result in minor costs associated with sending this resolution to ALPHA's federal, state, tribal and local partners. ALPHA's support for existing and planned initiatives and actions will help to address the substantial human and financial costs of suicide attempts and deaths in the State of Alaska.

*Adopted January 16, 2018*