

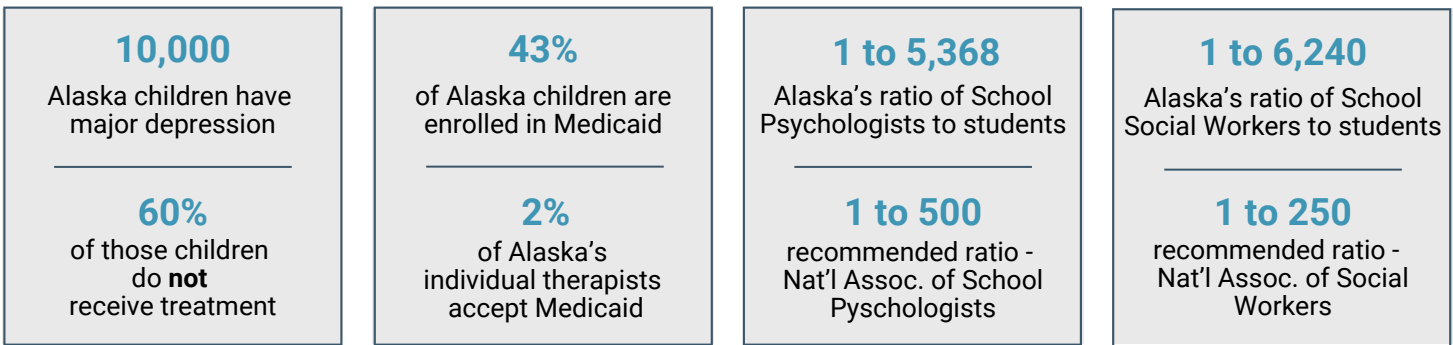
**A Broken System**

Over the past five years, two collaborative projects led by the Alaska Hospital & Healthcare Association (AHHA) have engaged a wide range of stakeholders in examining behavioral health services in Alaska and developing strategies to address the huge gaps and delays in availability and integration of services.

The work identified the need for increased access to basic resources, respite care, and specialized residential settings or group homes, and an investment in a range of strategies to prevent, intervene early, and divert youth from the ED and highest-level behavioral health settings.

**We're not Serving Alaska's Youth**

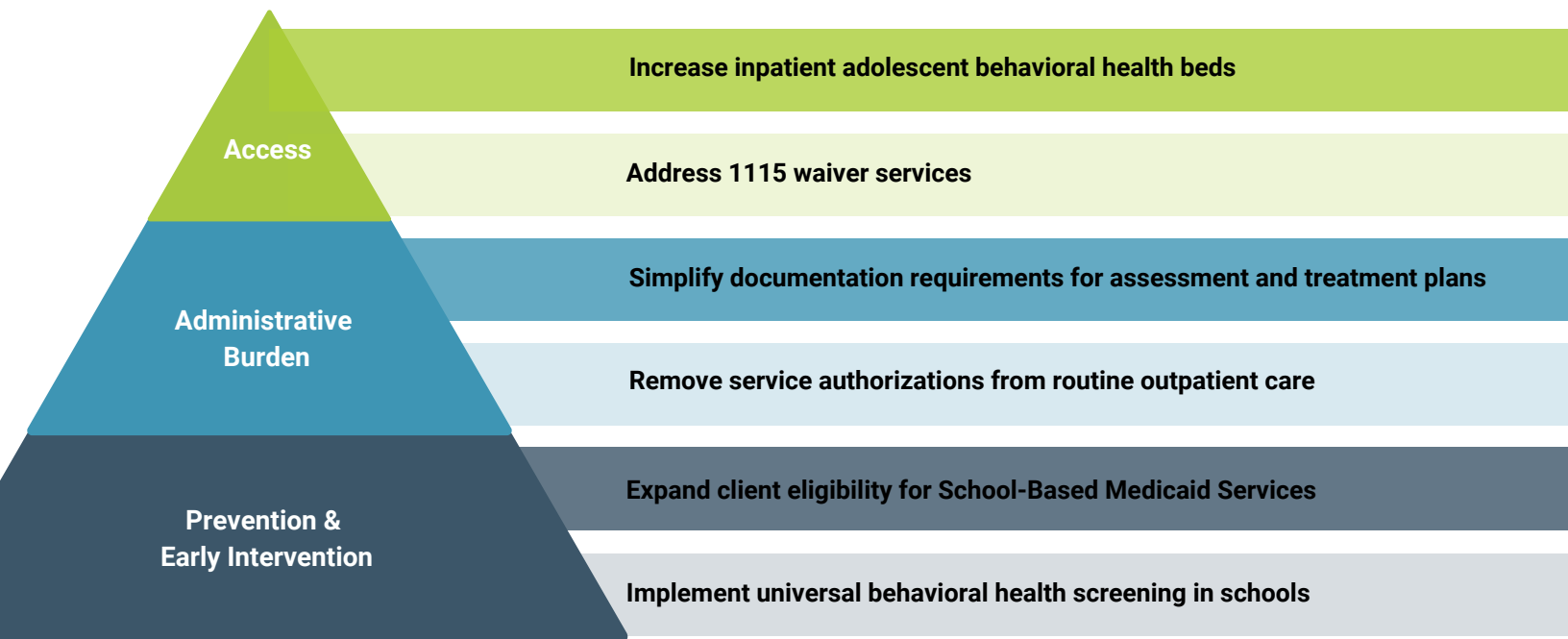
Alaska's adolescent suicide rate is 3 times the national average - our state lacks critical services and supports to protect our young people.



**DOJ Investigation**

On December 15, 2022, the U.S. Department of Justice announced that it found reasonable cause to believe that the State of Alaska violates the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by failing to provide community-based services to children with behavioral health disabilities - legal action will be taken if a resolution can't be reached.

**AHHA's Plan of Action - What We Can Do Today**



## AHHA's Plan of Action

### ACCESS

- ✓ **Increase inpatient adolescent behavioral health beds.**  
The development of additional inpatient adolescent behavioral health beds is critical to filling harmful gaps in service delivery, especially for our youth. Supporting projects to enhance this capacity in hospitals in the interior and throughout Alaska will allow for timely access to services for our most vulnerable population.
- ✓ **Address 1115 waiver services.**  
1115 waiver services have the potential to help stabilize Alaska's behavioral health system and move patient care to appropriate, lower-cost settings outside of emergency rooms. However, there is little to no incentive for healthcare providers to provide these services. Pricing and administrative requirements need to be realigned to incentivize service delivery, realize actual savings, and allow patients to access the care they need.

### ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

- ✓ **Simplify documentation requirements for assessment and treatment plans.**  
Regulations mandating documentation components in excess of regular medical practice create unnecessary burden for providers and interfere with patient care.
- ✓ **Remove service authorizations from routine outpatient care.**  
Requiring service authorizations for routine care to verify the necessity for services not only puts undue burden on the behavioral health clinician, but also works as a barrier to care.

### PREVENTION & EARLY INTERVENTION

- ✓ **Expand client eligibility for School-Based Medicaid services.**  
This would allow for expansion of school-based behavioral health services which would support schools in providing a full spectrum of services including prevention to all students.
- ✓ **Implement universal behavioral health screening in schools.**  
Amend Alaska Statute 14.03.110 to allow schools to screen and assess for behavioral health needs in the same way they are currently able to screen and assess student hearing, vision, and other health concerns. Behavioral health needs equally impact students' ability to learn.

## The BIRCH Vision

AHHA's action strategies are aligned with the BIRCH vision (Behavioral Health Investment for Resilient Community Health) and support the development of a continuum of care where Alaskans can move easily between levels of service intensity. Achieving this action plan will help bring us closer to meeting the goals for this vision which include:

- Robust Behavioral Health System of Care
- Universal Access to Primary Behavioral Health Services
- Thriving Community Behavioral Health & Specialty Providers
- Connecting People to Care When/Where They Need It

For more information on AHHA's behavioral health initiatives and to download reports for the *Acute Behavioral Health Improvement Project* and the *Child and Adolescent Behavioral Healthcare Improvement Project*, please visit [alaskahha.org/behavioralhealth](http://alaskahha.org/behavioralhealth) or contact Elizabeth King, Senior Director of Behavioral Health, at [eking@alaskahha.org](mailto:eking@alaskahha.org).