



ALASKA AHEC PROGRAM 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



UAA Alaska Center for
Rural Health and Health Workforce
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE



GLORIA BURNETT

LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR

In 2024, Alaska AHEC continued to strengthen healthcare workforce development across the state, working through our regional AHEC Centers and strategic partnerships.

The Alaska AHEC program remained focused on building a robust healthcare workforce. A highlight of 2024 was the revival of the Della Keats program, secured with a five-year American Indians into Medicine grant from the Indian Health Service to support the recruitment of Native Alaskan students into healthcare careers.

Our continuing education program also saw growth, fueled by funding from the State of Alaska's Department of Behavioral Health and the Office of Substance Misuse and Addiction Prevention. This support enabled the development of an Academic Detailing curriculum—an evidence-based outreach initiative designed to equip healthcare professionals with the latest information on medications and treatments.

As we move into 2025, we are aware that federal shifts, including the formation of the Administration for a Healthy America (AHA), may bring changes to healthcare programs and policies. While these changes may influence the landscape in the coming years, Alaska AHEC remains committed to our mission. We will continue to engage Alaskans in healthcare career pathways, provide exposure to rural health practice for students, and offer critical training and continuing education to healthcare professionals statewide.

Gloria Burnett, MS

Director, Alaska Center for Rural Health & Health Workforce
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MISSION AND ORGANIZATION

Together, we build
Alaska's Health Workforce.



Students participate in interactive healthcare demonstrations, gaining early exposure to medical tools and potential career paths in Alaska's rural health workforce.

The Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) program, created by Congress in 1971, is dedicated to recruiting, training, and retaining a health professions workforce committed to serving underserved

populations. The mission of AHEC is to enhance access to high-quality healthcare, particularly in primary and preventive care, by improving the supply and distribution of healthcare professionals through strategic partnerships with academic institutions, communities, and professional organizations.



Alaska AHEC
Area Health Education Centers

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), under the direction of the Bureau of Health Workforce (BHW), provides funding to support AHEC programs across the country.

The Alaska AHEC Program supports the BHW with three main goals:

- Workforce Development:** Strengthening the healthcare workforce through education and training initiatives.
- Rural and Underserved Support:** Expanding healthcare access by improving workforce distribution.
- Practice Transformation:** Advancing primary care models to enhance healthcare delivery in underserved communities.



Alaska AHEC History

The Alaska Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Program was established in 2005 when the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) received its first five-year award. Notably, it became the first AHEC program in the nation to be housed within a School of Nursing rather than a School of Medicine, a testament to Alaska's unique healthcare landscape and its emphasis on community-based training.

Since its inception, the Alaska AHEC has expanded its reach through a network of six regional centers, each strategically positioned to address the healthcare workforce needs of Alaska's diverse and often remote communities. These centers play a critical role in strengthening the state's healthcare system by implementing programs that recruit, train, and retain health professionals.

One of Alaska AHEC's core missions is to inspire and support students interested in health careers. Through hands-on learning experiences, career exposure programs, and academic support, AHEC helps guide students toward pathways in healthcare. Additionally, AHEC facilitates clinical rotations and immersive experiences in rural and underserved areas, ensuring that future healthcare providers understand the challenges and rewards of practicing in these settings.

Beyond student engagement, Alaska AHEC also plays a vital role in professional development, offering continuing education opportunities for healthcare workers and community members. These programs help providers stay up to date on best practices, address emerging health concerns, and adapt to the evolving demands of Alaska's healthcare system.

As Alaska continues to face workforce shortages and healthcare disparities, AHEC remains committed to its mission of building a well-trained, resilient, and community-focused healthcare workforce. Through collaboration with academic institutions, healthcare organizations, and local communities, Alaska AHEC continues to serve as a driving force in improving healthcare access and quality across the state.

Celebrating 20 Years



Students in the Summer High School Internship Program (SHIP), hosted by Foundation Health Partners and Interior AHEC, explore hands-on training opportunities that introduce them to healthcare careers and skills development

Over the past 20 years, Alaska AHEC has played a pivotal role in strengthening the state's healthcare workforce by connecting over 54,000 youth to health career pathways, graduating 180 AHEC Scholars, and facilitating more than 10,000 clinical rotations statewide.

With a focus on rural and frontier communities, Alaska AHEC has provided vital continuing education to 68,000 health professionals and community members, ensuring the healthcare workforce is well-prepared to address the unique challenges of Alaska's diverse population.

Programs like the Rural Immersion Institute and AHEC Scholars have equipped students with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in Alaskan healthcare settings, particularly in underserved and geographically isolated regions.

Alaska AHEC's success in both recruiting and retaining healthcare professionals is central to its mission. With an emphasis on retention, the program has fostered an environment where students trained in Alaska stay to serve their communities, ensuring long-term healthcare access.

By bridging gaps between students, communities, and healthcare providers, Alaska AHEC continues to be a vital force in changing the trajectory of healthcare access in Alaska, building a resilient and culturally responsive healthcare workforce for the future.



AHEC Partnerships & Updates

Alaska's Strengthening Healthcare Access Recruitment Program (SHARP) supports the healthcare workforce through student loan repayment and direct financial incentives. Alaska's AHEC and SHARP share similar goals: to improve the quality of and access to healthcare, especially in rural and underserved areas.

SHARP

*Strengthening Healthcare Access
Recruitment Program*

Alaska's AHEC is proud to partner and collaborate with SHARP. Gloria Burnett, Director of Alaska's AHEC Program Office, serves as Co-Chair of the SHARP Advisory Council and provides staff who directly support SHARP through data management, communications, and marketing. Looking ahead, the SHARP team will transition to housing all data, communications, and marketing staff within the Department of Health and employing its own direct staff. Alaska AHEC will continue to promote the utilization of this valuable program by Alaska's healthcare workforce.

New AHEC Database

After nearly 15 years of using the same custom-built database to track participant and activity data, Alaska AHEC transitioned in 2024 to a new Salesforce-based system developed by IT Savvy. This tool, designed specifically for AHEC's reporting needs, replaces the legacy system and enhances data management capabilities.

The Health Education Tracking Resource System (HETRS) is currently used by nearly half of the AHEC programs across the country. It is customizable, integrates with forms, and simplifies required reporting—making data management more efficient. This transition will streamline multiple processes and significantly improve data tracking and reporting for Alaska AHEC.

New Grant: Indians Into Medicine (INMED)

The Indian Health Service's Indians Into Medicine (INMED) grant was awarded to ACRH-HW and the WWAMI School of Medical Education starting in July 2024. This five-year grant helps maintain and expand programs that support Alaska Native and American Indian youth and young adults in exploring—and ultimately pursuing—careers in medicine and healthcare.

One of the key programs funded by the INMED grant is the Della Keats Health Sciences (DKHS) Program. Restarted in 2024 as a joint effort between ACRH-HW and WWAMI, this four-week summer residential program is designed for rising high school seniors and recent graduates. Hosted at the UAA Anchorage campus, students take college-level introductory healthcare courses and gain invaluable hands-on experience in a collegiate setting.

The program is named after Della Keats, an Alaska Native Iñupiaq healer from the Noatak region. She blended Indigenous traditional knowledge with modern medical techniques to provide both educational and healthcare services to her community and beyond. The Della Keats Health Sciences Program aims to enhance academic readiness, cultural preparedness, and career exploration, all while honoring Della Keats' legacy and Indigenous ways of knowing.

A student from the **2024 cohort** shared:

"After Della Keats, I have come back to my rural community with tons of great memories, knowledge, and relationships that are unforgettable. The experience was amazing, and I would strongly recommend it to any high school student from a community like mine who is interested in healthcare."

Students leave the program with renewed confidence in their abilities and the knowledge that a career in healthcare is within their reach.



Students in the Della Keats Health Sciences Program gain hands-on experience in healthcare, learning from both Indigenous and modern medical perspectives.



CACHE Program Updates

The Clearinghouse for Alaska's Continuing Health Education (CACHE) is more than just a catalog—it's the central hub for continuing education (CE) at the Alaska Center for Rural Health and Health Workforce (ACRH-HW) and the Alaska AHEC Program Office. While the catalog remains a vital resource, CACHE has expanded to house all CE activities at ACRH-HW, strengthening our role in supporting healthcare providers across Alaska.



Our Mission: Elevating Healthcare Through Education

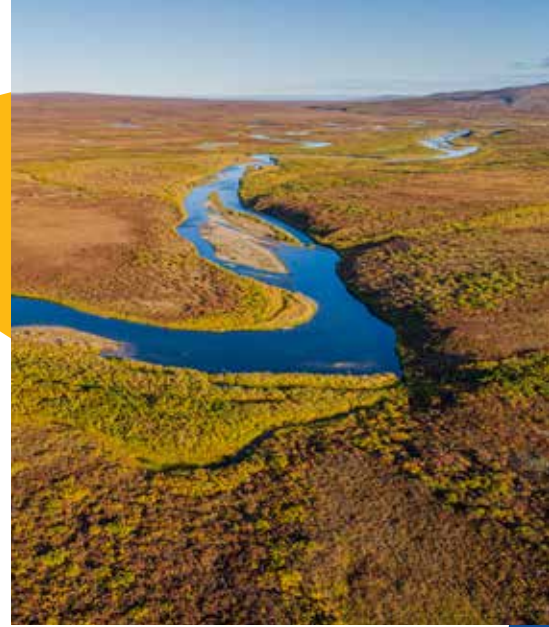
CACHE is dedicated to strengthening Alaska's healthcare workforce by providing comprehensive interprofessional continuing education and professional development that enhances provider knowledge and integrates evidence-based learning into practice.

CE By the Numbers: A Year of Unprecedented Growth

In 2024, CACHE shattered previous records, becoming a leading force in healthcare continuing education across Alaska. From expanding course offerings to welcoming thousands of new participants, every metric surged.

These numbers reflect not just growth—but impact. CACHE is reaching more providers, offering richer content, and building stronger networks to support lifelong learning in Alaska's health workforce.

Achievements: CACHE Shows Unprecedented Growth in 2024



In 2024, CACHE saw record-breaking expansion across every key metric:

Metric	2023	2024	Percent Increase
Number of CE Events	46	127	176%
CE Credit Hours	114.5	300.25	162%
Total Attendance	1,834	7714	321%
Unique Participants	983	3,029	208%
Total Contact Hours	133.75	369.25	176%
CE Events Listed in CACHE Catalog	126	238	89%
Organizations Featured in CACHE Catalog	72	106	47%

What Do These Numbers Mean?

- More Events, More Access** – We tripled the number of CE events, expanding learning opportunities for healthcare professionals statewide.
- Engagement is Soaring** – Attendance has skyrocketed, proving CACHE is a trusted and essential resource for continuing education.
- Diverse Participation** – Over 3,000 unique participants engaged in CACHE programming, spanning disciplines, communities, and healthcare roles.



Achievements: Joint Accreditation

A huge milestone this year was submitting our Joint Accreditation for Interprofessional Continuing Education (IPCE) application—a major step in advancing team-based learning across healthcare disciplines.

Before submitting, we:

- Conducted a statewide CE accreditation needs assessment to identify priorities.
- Developed an internal proposal for UAA Academic Affairs leadership.
- Secured 19 letters of support from UAA, healthcare facilities, and community partners.



IPCE CREDIT™

Currently, we are in the review phase, working through an activity report that includes nine selected past activities for in-depth evaluation. Pending final approval by December 31, 2025, we'll be fully accredited to provide interprofessional CE starting January 1, 2026!

What is Joint Accreditation?

Established in 1998, Joint Accreditation for Interprofessional Continuing Education was founded by the ACCME, ACPE, and ANCC and has since expanded to include 10 accrediting bodies. Learn more at [jointaccreditation.org](https://www.jointaccreditation.org).



JOINT ACCREDITATION™
INTERPROFESSIONAL CONTINUING EDUCATION

Achievements: Expanding Interprofessional CE



Powering CE with an Interprofessional Review Team

Our Interprofessional Continuing Education Review team ensures high-quality, accredited learning by reviewing and approving activities that meet Joint Accreditation standards. The team includes:

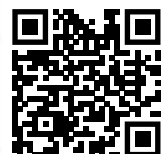
Name	Profession	Credentials
Barb Doty	Physician	MD
Angelia Trujillio	Nursing	APRN, DNP, WHNP-BC
Patrick Campaign	Optometry	OD
Steffi Kim	Psychology	PhD, Licensed Clinical Psychologist
Teagan Presler	Social Work	LMSW, CDC
Courtney Schwartz	Dental	DDS
Teresa Lowe	Physician Assistant - Certified	PA-C
Coleman Cutchings	Pharmacy	PharmD, BCPS
Becca Kirian	Dietetics and Nutrition	MFN, RDN-AP

Growing Fast & Strengthening Partnerships

This past year, we saw a major increase in CE activities—both in-house and co-provided—thanks to our partnership with the State of Alaska Division of Public Health. By expanding outreach and marketing efforts, we're reaching more providers than ever before and ensuring high-quality continuing education is widely available.

Get Involved!

Want to partner with us, co-provide an activity, explore our CE catalog, or submit an event to the CACHE? Visit us at uaa.alaska.edu/CACHE to see how we can support your CE needs!





SPOTLIGHT: AHEC SCHOLAR ALUMNI



Olivia Bridges, AHEC Scholar, credits rural training with inspiring her public health career and future NP goals.

Olivia Bridges' journey through the Alaska AHEC Scholars program ignited her passion for public health and serving rural communities. During her Community-Based Experiential Learning in Nome, she collaborated with Public Health Nurses at the Nome Public Health Center, gaining firsthand experience in rural healthcare. Their mentorship shaped her commitment to improving health outcomes in underserved areas.

In December 2024, Olivia earned her Master of Public Health from the University of Alaska Anchorage's Division of Population Health Sciences. For her Applied Practicum Experience, she partnered with a staff epidemiologist in Eastern Washington, utilizing the programming language "R" to develop an animal bite report. Her Integrative Learning Experience Capstone Project focused on a health impact assessment supporting a homeless ID initiative program.

Now, as a Syphilis Disease Intervention Specialist in Eastern Washington, Olivia is actively engaged in disease investigation, community outreach, STI testing, and risk reduction efforts. Her role allows her to make a meaningful impact on public health through prevention and intervention strategies. Looking ahead, she aspires to become a Nurse Practitioner and return to Alaska to serve a rural community, continuing her commitment to accessible and equitable healthcare.



REGIONAL AHEC CENTERS



Northwest AHEC (Nome)

Norton Sound Health Corporation (NSHC) delivers comprehensive medical services to Alaska Native communities across the Bering Strait region, ensuring culturally responsive care and training for rural healthcare professionals.



Interior AHEC (Fairbanks)

Foundation Health Partners (FHP) operates key medical facilities in Fairbanks, providing hospital-based education, workforce development, and clinical training for Interior Alaska.



Yukon-Kuskokwim AHEC (Bethel)

Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC) supports over 50 remote villages with hospital care, village clinics, and training programs that build a strong, locally rooted healthcare workforce.



South Central AHEC (Anchorage)

Alaska Primary Care Association (APCA) strengthens Alaska's healthcare system by supporting community health centers with workforce training, policy advocacy, and professional development.



Southeast AHEC (Juneau)

Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC) expands access to healthcare education through workforce training and career development initiatives for students and professionals in Southeast Alaska.



Southwest AHEC (Office in Anchorage)

Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association (APIA) delivers healthcare and educational services to Alaska Native communities in the Aleutians and Pribilofs, helping to build the region's healthcare workforce.

REGIONAL DIRECTORS - ALASKA AHEC CENTERS

NORTHWEST AHEC

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INTERIOR AHEC

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YUKON KUSKOKWIM AHEC

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AHEC STATEWIDE REACH

In 2024, Alaska AHEC engaged with 42 communities across the state—from Utqiagvik to Ketchikan, Nome to Dillingham—delivering vital training, mentorship, and continuing education.

These programs included:

Student Outreach & Training

Hands-on experiences, mentorship programs, and career pathways for youth interested in healthcare.

Rural Community Based Learning Opportunities

Opportunities for healthcare students to train in real-world settings, building connections with rural communities.

Continuing Education (CE)

Specialized training for professionals, ensuring they stay equipped with essential skills and knowledge.

By building strong connections between students, healthcare providers, and community organizations, AHEC is helping ensure long-term healthcare access in every region of Alaska.



Building Alaska's Healthcare Workforce

Alaska AHEC serves communities large and small, with a special focus on rural and underserved areas. Through its regional centers and statewide partnerships, AHEC connects students, professionals, and employers to education, clinical experiences, and career development resources.

By offering career exploration, community-based training, and continuing education, AHEC helps build a diverse and resilient healthcare workforce. These programs reduce barriers, support local hiring, and retain providers where they are needed most.

Whether inspiring future healthcare workers or equipping current professionals with new skills, AHEC's work ensures that quality care reaches every corner of Alaska.



ALASKA AHEC CENTERS:

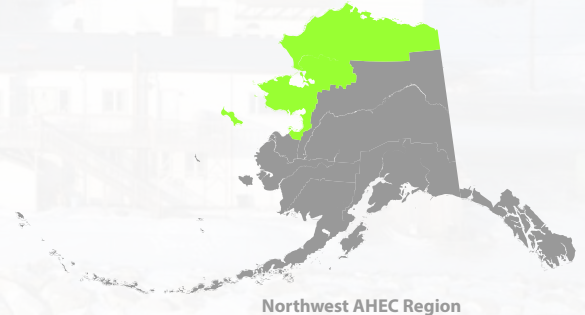
- ♥ Northwest (Nome) is hosted by Norton Sound Health Corporation (NSHC)
- ♥ Interior (Fairbanks) is hosted by Foundation Health Partners (FHP)
- ♥ Yukon-Kuskokwim (Bethel) is hosted by Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC)
- ♥ South Central (Anchorage) is hosted by Alaska Primary Care Association (APCA)
- ♥ Southeast (Juneau) is hosted by Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC)
- ♥ Southwest (Office in Anchorage) is hosted by Aleutian Pribilof Island Association (APIA)



NORTHWEST AHEC

Nome, Alaska

Hosted by Norton Sound Health Corporation (NSHC), this center serves the health education and workforce development needs of the communities in Alaska's northwest region.



Northwest AHEC Region

Vince Villella

Northwest AHEC Director

Nome, Alaska

Vince Villella is the Northwest AHEC Director in Nome, Alaska, in partnership with Norton Sound Health Corporation. Over the past five years, he has been teaching American Red Cross First Aid and Mental Health First Aid, along with providing local pathways into more advanced training, such as Emergency Trauma Technician (ETT) and Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA).

For years, Vince has been asked whether anyone he's taught has ever saved someone. Since most of his students are bystanders, rather than medical professionals, the answer had always been no. While he understood that emergencies can happen at any time, he began to view the training mainly as a stepping stone toward future medical careers.

However, in the past few months, four former students reached out to share how they had used their training in real-life emergency situations. They were able to make a significant difference in someone's life and even help save a life.

Vince's reminder to himself—and to others involved in similar training programs—is this: **They are not only providing pathways into medical careers, but they are also equipping people with lifesaving skills that have an immediate and lasting impact on others' lives.**



Empowering Youth Through Life-Saving Skills

Northwest AHEC's American Red Cross First Aid, CPR, and AED training, directed by Vince Villella, provides students in grades 9–12 with hands-on instruction in essential emergency response techniques. This three-week summer program combines classroom learning with interactive sessions, covering skills such as CPR, basic first aid, and effective emergency decision-making to boost students' confidence and preparedness.

Each session accommodates up to 20 participants, with applications opening in early April. The program welcomes students from public, private, and charter schools throughout the region, fostering a diverse learning environment. In American Red Cross First Aid, students learn CPR, AED usage, how to treat sudden illness, respond to choking, and treat life-threatening bleeding. Early sessions focus on building a strong foundation in these core skills. As the program progresses, students participate in workshops that simulate real-world emergency scenarios, allowing them to apply their training in realistic settings.

Since its inception, the program has trained over 150 students, significantly enhancing community awareness and emergency readiness. Beyond imparting life-saving skills, the initiative inspires participants to explore future careers in healthcare, leaving a lasting impact on individuals and the broader community.



Students put their skills to the test in a simulated emergency drill, building confidence in their ability to respond to real-life situations.



Program Director Vince Villella guides students through essential first aid skills, preparing them for real-world emergency situations.



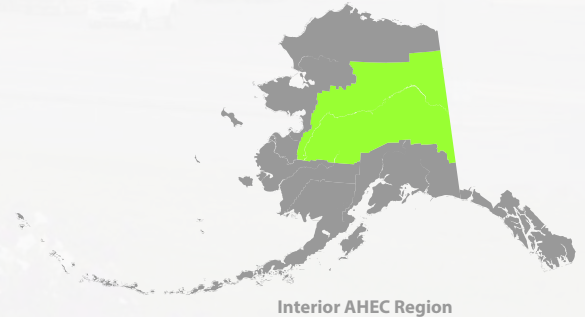
Northwest AHEC's Youth Life-Saving Skills Program participants practice CPR techniques during a hands-on training session



INTERIOR AHEC

Fairbanks, Alaska

Hosted by Foundation Health Partners (FHP), this center supports healthcare workforce training and education for the interior region of Alaska, providing access to resources and opportunities for students and professionals.



Karen Lapp
Interior AHEC Director
Circle Hot Springs, Alaska

Karen Lapp is the Talent Development Program Manager for Foundation Health Partners and the Director for Interior AHEC. Born and raised in Fairbanks, she takes pride in creating training and outreach programs that benefit her community.

These programs offer pathways into healthcare that help reduce student debt and the time it takes to enter a career. Under her leadership, the Foundation Health Partners Talent Development team has developed multiple student-focused paid training and professional development opportunities.

These include allied health and medical student clinical rotations, high school and college internships, education sponsorship for employee professional certifications, Federal Registered Apprenticeship Programs (FRAPs), and more.

In the summer, Karen enjoys spending time at her family home near Circle Hot Springs, exploring from the passenger seat of a side-by-side vehicle. In winter, however, she is still looking for something that will entice her outdoors in the cold.



Summer High School Internship Program (SHIP)

Foundation Health Partners (FHP) Summer High School Internship Program (SHIP), in partnership with Interior AHEC, offers high school students a unique opportunity to gain first-hand experience in healthcare to help them make education and career choices earlier on their career pathways. This five-week, unpaid, intensive program for grades 10-12 allows interns to get an insider's view of specific fields and learn about the educational requirements for healthcare careers. SHIP runs May through June.

SHIP accepts 12 interns per session, with applications open from January to March. Applicants undergo a screening process, including a video interview.

Candidates apply from the local school district, private and charter schools, as well as homeschools.

The first week of SHIP is the Workforce Readiness Boot Camp, created by FHP Human Resources and Interior AHEC staff to develop essential professional skills like personal, people, and time management.

Friday workshops, known as WorkSHIPS, expose the interns to various healthcare specialties through hands-on activities. These include using ultrasound machines, experiencing the DaVinci robotic surgical system, and learning about surgical equipment in Sterile Processing and Distribution (SPD).

Since its inception in 2021, 54 SHIP interns have collectively contributed nearly 3,400 hours of work. The program benefits both interns and the community, empowering students to make informed career choices and potentially inspiring them to pursue healthcare careers locally. As of 2024, FHP has hired 18 former SHIP interns to work post-internship. Additional interns are working in local fire departments or are returning to FHP as nursing students on clinical rotations, demonstrating the program's success in preparing students for healthcare careers.



Future healthcare professionals! SHIP interns gain early exposure to medical careers through this immersive five-week program.



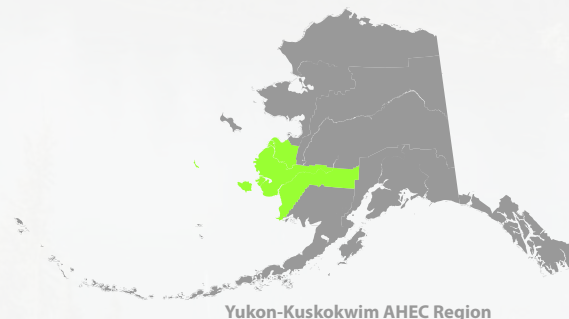
Mentorship in action—SHIP interns connect with experienced healthcare professionals to learn about career pathways.



YUKON-KUSKOKWIM AHEC

BETHEL, ALASKA

Hosted by Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC), this center focuses on addressing the healthcare needs of rural communities in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta by offering educational programs and clinical training.



Naomi Digitaki
Yukon-Kuskokwim AHEC Director
Bethel, Alaska

Naomi Digitaki serves as the Director of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Area Health Education Center (YK AHEC) at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC). In this role, she is committed to enhancing healthcare education and workforce development across the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, a region encompassing 58 rural communities in southwest Alaska.

YK AHEC, sponsored by YKHC, is one of six regional centers in Alaska. The program's goal is to implement educational activities involving health professions and expose students to primary care delivery in rural and underserved areas.

Under Naomi's leadership, YK AHEC focuses on building partnerships with educational institutions, healthcare organizations, and community stakeholders to create pathways into healthcare careers. By immersing students in diverse healthcare settings within the Yukon-Kuskokwim region, the program aims to cultivate a workforce equipped to address the unique health challenges of the area.

Outside of her professional endeavors, Naomi enjoys spending time outdoors and engaging in community activities. Her diverse background and commitment to education and community health make her a valuable asset to YK AHEC and the broader Yukon-Kuskokwim region.



Summer Programs Inspire Future Healthcare Leaders

Summer Hire Program:

Isabella January, a rising senior from Bethel, Alaska, participated as a summer hire with the YKHC Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program, where she gained valuable insights into the harmful effects of tobacco on youth in the region. Already with 99 college credits from the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP), Isabella is on track to earn her bachelor's degree in chemical engineering or biological sciences. She aspires to become a neurosurgeon, a dream sparked during her high school anatomy class. Isabella's experience as a summer hire not only deepened her understanding of public health but also developed essential skills in work ethic, time management, and problem-solving, which she plans to carry forward in her future career.



Isabella January, a 2024 YKHC Summer Hire participant, gained hands-on experience in public health and tobacco prevention.

Healthcare Camp:

The YKHC Healthcare Camp, held from May 27 to June 6, 2024, provided another immersive opportunity for high school students to explore healthcare professions. Over 10 days, students participated in workshops, learned CPR/First Aid, and experienced hands-on demonstrations from professionals like ER nurse/rescue diver Aaron Van Camp and pediatrician Dr. Rotelli. With guidance from instructors such as UAA nursing students Venassa Yazzie and Danika Bailey, the campers explored career paths in nursing, surgery, and more, while also engaging in community service projects, such as cooking meals for YKHC staff.



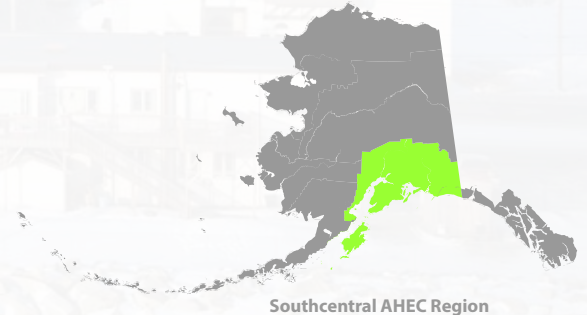
YKHC Healthcare Camp participants engage in interactive discussions, exploring various career paths in healthcare.

Both the Healthcare Camp and the Summer Hire program are vital initiatives for inspiring future healthcare professionals in the YK Delta. Through these programs, students like Isabella and others are gaining the skills, knowledge, and connections needed to pursue careers in the medical field. Whether learning about the impacts of tobacco or participating in hands-on activities, these experiences are shaping the next generation of healthcare leaders, preparing them for success in both local and global communities.



SOUTH CENTRAL AHEC ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

Hosted by Alaska Primary Care Association (APCA), this center provides workforce development and health education services to the communities in the South Central region, including Anchorage and surrounding areas.



Tammy Choromanski
South Central AHEC Director
Anchorage, Alaska

We are pleased to welcome Tammy Choromanski as the new Director of the Southcentral Area Health Education Center (SC AHEC) at the Alaska Primary Care Association (APCA). In this role, Tammy leads efforts to strengthen healthcare education and workforce development across Southcentral Alaska, from Talkeetna to Kodiak.

Tammy holds a Master of Public Health, a Bachelor of Science in Natural Science & Medical Technology, and a Bachelor of Medical Technology, all from the University of Alaska Anchorage. She brings a strong background in public health, research, and medical technology to her new role.

Before joining APCA, Tammy served for over 14 years at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), where she focused on community-based research, disease prevention, and culturally responsive care.

At SC AHEC, Tammy partners with healthcare providers, and local organizations to expand access to healthcare careers—especially in rural and underserved areas. Outside of work, Tammy enjoys hiking, fishing, and camping, as well as reading and painting with family and friends.



Alaska Healthcare Workforce Pipeline Project

The Alaska Primary Care Association (APCA) is leading a transformative workforce initiative with funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration's Good Jobs Challenge. The Alaska Healthcare Workforce Pipeline Project is designed to expand job opportunities and improve healthcare services across Alaska, with a focus on Alaska Native communities.

This statewide initiative will train and employ thousands of new healthcare workers through registered apprenticeships and career pathway programs. APCA leverages a network of 60 employer partners, spanning urban, rural, Tribal, and non-Tribal healthcare organizations, to support job training and placement. Key collaborators include Foundation Health Partners, Hope Community Resources, Alaska AFL-CIO, and IBEW, ensuring a comprehensive approach to workforce development.

By strengthening Alaska's fastest-growing industry, this initiative addresses critical workforce shortages, enhances career pathways, and supports the long-term sustainability of Alaska's healthcare economy. The project aligns with APCA's mission to ensure equitable access to healthcare careers and develop a workforce that meets the needs of all Alaskans.



Students explore real-world healthcare settings, gaining early exposure to medical technology and career pathways.



SOUTHEAST AHEC

JUNEAU, ALASKA

Hosted by Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC), this center provides support for healthcare professionals and students in Southeast Alaska, focusing on improving healthcare access and education in remote areas.



Southeast AHEC Region



Mary McEwen
Southeast AHEC Director
Juneau, Alaska

Mary McEwen is the Southeast AHEC Director at the Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC) in Juneau. With over 20 years of experience in health and social services, Mary has built a career dedicated to improving healthcare access in rural and underserved communities.

She holds a BA in Sociology and an MPH in Health Policy, with her graduate work focusing on how healthcare workforce influences global and urban/rural migration. Her early experience as a Peace Corps volunteer in West Africa ignited her passion for developing sustainable healthcare workforce solutions that make a lasting impact.

At Southeast AHEC, Mary leads initiatives that bridge education with practical training, forging partnerships to enhance local health services and build pathways into healthcare careers. Under her leadership, the center has implemented innovative programs that respond directly to community needs, ensuring that rural populations receive both immediate support and long-term benefits. In her free time, Mary enjoys exploring Southeast Alaska's rich natural and cultural landscapes, a passion that mirrors her commitment to fostering resilient, community-focused healthcare systems.



Path to Health: Supporting Learning Beyond Training

Southeast AHEC's PATH Academy, a two-week intensive program designed to prepare adults for entry-level healthcare careers, continues to evolve to meet participant needs. Recognizing that food insecurity was affecting students—many skipping meals during full-day training—Southeast AHEC partnered with the Southeast Regional Eldercare Coalition and Juneau Economic Development Council to provide meals and snacks. With support from local grocery stores, students now have access to nutritious options like soups, sandwiches, fruits, and high-protein meals, ensuring they stay focused and energized throughout the program.

To further strengthen community support, interactive meal-sharing sessions were introduced. Thanks to a donation from the Ketchikan Job Center, staff were able to bring an Instant Pot to rural communities—including Klawock, Kasaan, Ketchikan, and Yakutat—where they prepared and shared meals with students. Cooking together not only provides nourishment but also fosters relationships and a supportive learning environment.

During the February 2024 PATH Academy in Ketchikan, participants toured the Ketchikan Pioneer Home, learning firsthand about the challenges and rewards of caring for elders in a residential setting. Several students were inspired to pursue careers in eldercare and later interviewed for positions. Southeast AHEC also became the first in the state to offer Mental Health First Aid: Older Adults, training 22 participants from at least five communities at the Southeast Regional Eldercare Coalition Summit in Juneau. This initiative expands mental health training specifically tailored to those working with aging populations, ensuring caregivers are equipped with critical skills.

Graduates of PATH Academy have successfully transitioned into healthcare roles in hospitals, long-term care facilities, and human services organizations. By addressing key barriers—such as food security, workforce training, and community support—Southeast AHEC continues to make a lasting impact, helping more Alaskans confidently pursue careers in healthcare.



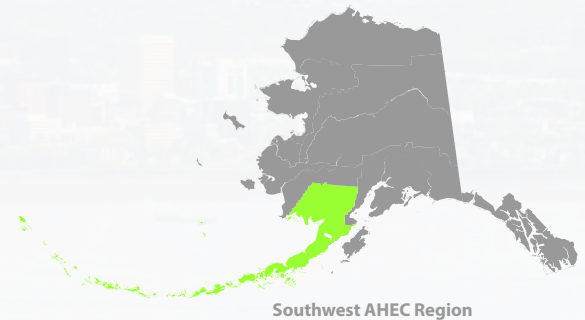
From Ketchikan to Yakutat—PATH Academy travels to rural communities, ensuring every student gets the support they need.



SOUTHWEST AHEC

(Office in Anchorage)

Hosted by Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association (APIA), this center offers healthcare workforce training and educational opportunities, particularly for communities in Alaska's Southwest region, including the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands.



Ian McCarthy
Southwest AHEC Director
Anchorage, Alaska

Ian McCarthy serves as the Southwest Area Health Education Center (SW AHEC) Coordinator at Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, Inc. (APIA), where he works to expand healthcare education opportunities in rural communities. Prior to this role, Ian spent three years at the Alaska AHEC Program Office as a Pathway Programming Education Coordinator, delivering dual credit courses and certificate trainings to youth across the state.

Ian holds a Bachelor of Science in chemistry and has hands-on experience as a medical assistant. His passion for healthcare extends into mental health and wildlife medicine, and he is a certified instructor in multiple critical training programs, including Basic Life Support (BLS)/CPR and First Aid; youth, teen, and adult Mental Health First Aid; Question Persuade Refer (QPR) suicide prevention training; and Narcan Administration and Prevention.

Beyond his professional work, Ian enjoys staying active through running, hiking, and cross-country skiing. He also has a keen interest in podcasts, card games, and experimenting with new recipes in the kitchen.



Expanding Lifesaving Skills in Southwest Alaska

Southwest Alaska AHEC, hosted by the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association's Community Health Services, has been enhancing community health through its partnership with Employment and Training Related Services (ETR). In October, Southwest AHEC Director Ian McCarthy traveled to False Pass to provide CPR and First Aid training to local community members, high school students, and K–8th graders. The training, which included certification in American Heart Association Heartsaver CPR/AED and First Aid, equipped participants with essential skills to respond to emergencies such as cardiac arrest, choking, and severe bleeding. This collaboration exemplifies how AHEC empowers local communities to respond effectively during emergencies.



Hands-on CPR training in a rural Alaska community equips students with lifesaving skills for emergency situations.

In February 2025, Ian returned to St. Paul to offer additional training during the village's local health fair, continuing the commitment to strengthening the health response network in Southwest Alaska. Southwest AHEC extends heartfelt thanks to the entire APIA ETR team for their ongoing partnership, which enables these critical programs to flourish.

In addition to this work, Doug Finney, Nurse Case Manager for APIA and part-time Southwest AHEC staff member, has been instrumental in coordinating Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and Basic Life Support (BLS) training in the region. Doug has worked tirelessly to ensure that local community members are prepared to support healthcare providers during emergencies. His efforts have built a network of trained volunteers who can step up when local clinics face urgent medical situations.



Youth participants at a Southwest AHEC Healthcare Camp explore different career paths in the medical field through engaging activities.

Looking ahead, Southwest AHEC remains committed to building on these partnerships, continuing to bring valuable training and resources to rural communities in Southwest Alaska. Through programs like these, AHEC plays a critical role in shaping a more resilient healthcare workforce, ensuring that local teams are well-equipped to address the healthcare needs of their communities.



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Rural Health and Health Workforce**
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE



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