



# ALASKA AHEC PROGRAM 2019 ANNUAL REPORT



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



## MISSION AND ORGANIZATION

Area Health Education Centers (AHECs) are academic and community-based partnerships engaged in primary care workforce engagement, training, recruiting and retention activities to improve the distribution, diversity, supply and quality of the healthcare workforce.

The national AHEC Program is funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Workforce (HRSA). The Alaska AHEC began at the University of Alaska Anchorage in 2005 and was the first in the country to be awarded to a School of Nursing, rather than a School of Medicine. There are now six regional centers in the state that conduct educational activities to engage and expose students to primary care delivery in rural or underserved settings, and to provide Continuing Education/ Professional Development (CE/PD) to current health professionals.



## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

This year marked the launch of our Alaska AHEC Scholars Program! I wanted to take a moment to thank our AHEC staff, health program faculty, community partners and AHEC Scholars. Without your collective efforts, this wonderful program would never have come to fruition. In 2019, we had the pleasure of working with 87 AHEC Scholars from 19 disciplines. We are very proud of all our AHEC Scholars and look forward to the future of this program and evaluation of its impact on health workforce development in the state of Alaska.

The Alaska AHEC continues to serve as a conduit for community partnerships. In 2019, AHECs across the nation received supplemental funding to aid in community-driven responsiveness to the national opioid epidemic. Here in Alaska, we were able to partner with the State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services to increase provider education on opioid prescription guidelines. Simultaneously, our regional centers worked on a grassroots effort to increase access to Mental Health First Aid training for youth, community members, and rural healthcare professionals. This initiative aimed to increase awareness surrounding substance use disorders and overdose prevention.

This year also marks a shift in two of our regional AHEC host organizations. Our NW AHEC will now be hosted by NACTEC in Nome after being hosted for the past 9 years by Ilisagvik College in Utqiagvik. Our SW AHEC will now be hosted by the Aleutian Pribilof Island Association after being hosted for the past 2 years by Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation in Dillingham. Regardless of this shift, these organizations will continue to work together to improve health workforce development in their respective regions. Thank you all for your hard work and dedication to the AHEC network!

Gloria Burnett, MS  
Director, Alaska's AHEC  
907-786-6705  
[gburnett3@alaska.edu](mailto:gburnett3@alaska.edu)

## MEET OUR NEWEST RURAL HEALTH CARE ADVOCATES



### SHARON NICHOLAS

Sharon Nicholas, Interior AHEC Director is from Kaltag, a small village along the Yukon River. She has her BA in Health Service

Administration and is close to completing her MBA. Her love for the state of Alaska and the people she serves is apparent in her work and personal life.



### AMELIA BUDD

Amelia grew up in southeast Alaska and graduated from Mt. Edgecumbe High School. She studied English at Southern Oregon University

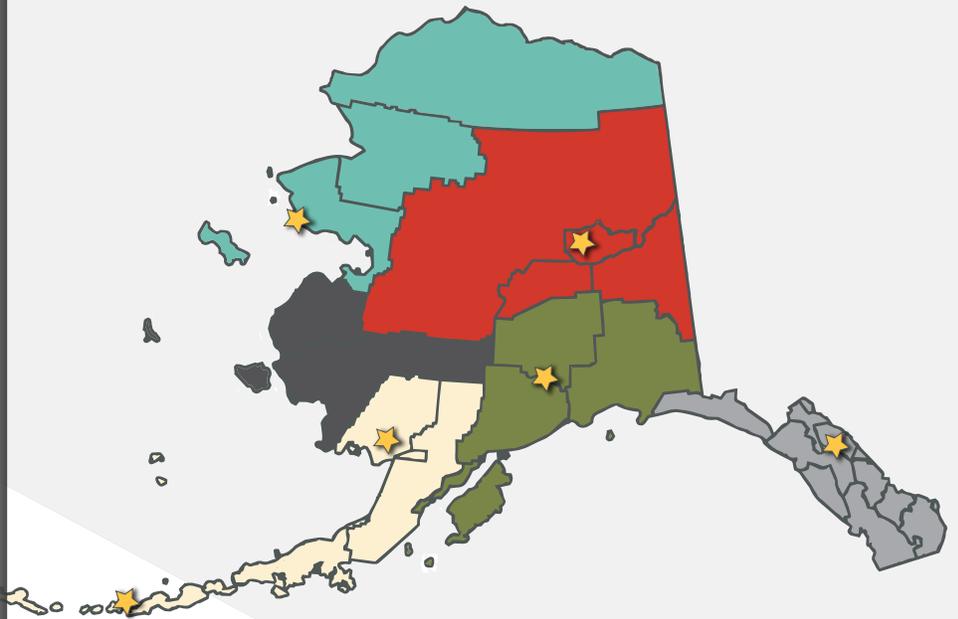
and later earned her Masters of Arts in Teaching from the University of Alaska Southeast. Amelia has joined the AHEC team after several years working in public education and the university system. She looks forward to collaborating with communities, non-profits, educational institutions, and healthcare professionals around the state.



### CARL WHITE

Carl White, Northwest AHEC Director, has been in educational programs as a teacher, principal, trainer and central

office administrator, primarily in rural Alaska, for 40 years. Most recently he served as the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder Diagnostic Team Coordinator for Norton Sound Health Corporation-Behavioral Health in Nome.



### NORTHWEST AHEC

Formerly Hosted by Ilisagvik College  
Now Hosted By NACTEC in Nome  
Carl White, Director  
[cwhite@bssd.org](mailto:cwhite@bssd.org)

### INTERIOR AHEC

Hosted by Foundation Health Partners  
Sharon Nicholas, Director  
[Sharon.nicholas@foundationhealth.org](mailto:Sharon.nicholas@foundationhealth.org)

### YUKON KUSKOKWIM AHEC

Hosted by YKHC

### SOUTH CENTRAL AHEC

Hosted by Alaska Primary Care Association  
Mariko Selle, Director  
[MariS@alaskapca.org](mailto:MariS@alaskapca.org)

### SOUTHEAST AHEC

Hosted by SERRC  
Amelia Budd, incoming director November 2019  
[ameliab@serrc.org](mailto:ameliab@serrc.org)

### SOUTHWEST AHEC

Formerly Hosted by BBAHC  
Now Hosted By APIA

## STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### VERNÉ BOERNER

President/CEO, Alaska Native Health Board

### SHEILA BOX

State CTE Administrator, AK Career and Technical Education, State of Alaska, Department of Education & Early Development

### RAHNNIA BOYER

Vice President, Village Health  
Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation

### KATHY CRAFT

Associate Dean of Planning, Development and Partnerships  
COH Dean's Office, University of Alaska Anchorage

### NATHAN DAHL

Administrator, Maple Springs of Alaska

### BARBARA DOTY, MD

Assistant Dean, Alaska WWAMI Regional Affairs, UW School of Medicine

### TERI DOUGHFMAN-BILLING

Assistant Director of Nursing, Maniilaq Health Center

### TRICIA FRANKLIN

Health Program Manager III,  
Office of Healthcare Access,  
State of Alaska Division of Public Health

### NAT HALL

Chief Human Resources Officer, Human Resources, Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation

### DALLAS HARGRAVE

Director, Human Resources, Bartlett Regional Hospital

### JENNIFER HOSKINS

Talent Acquisition Manager, Foundation Health Partners, Fairbanks Memorial Hospital

### BIRGIT MEANY

Dean of Instruction, Ilisagvik College

### JOHN MCCARTHY

WWAMI AHEC Director, Regional Affairs and Rural Health (WWAMI Rep), University of Washington, School of Medicine

### NANCY MERRIMAN

Executive Director, Alaska Primary Care Association (temporary)

### CHRISTINE MICHEL

Interim Director School of Nursing, University of Alaska Anchorage

### JEANNIE MONK

Senior Program Officer, Alaska State Hospitals and Nursing Homes Association

### ANNETTE REARDEN

Director, RRANN, University of Alaska Anchorage

### DOUG WALRATH

Director, NACTEC

### SHERYL WEINBERG

Executive Director, SERRC

## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CAMPS (BHCs)

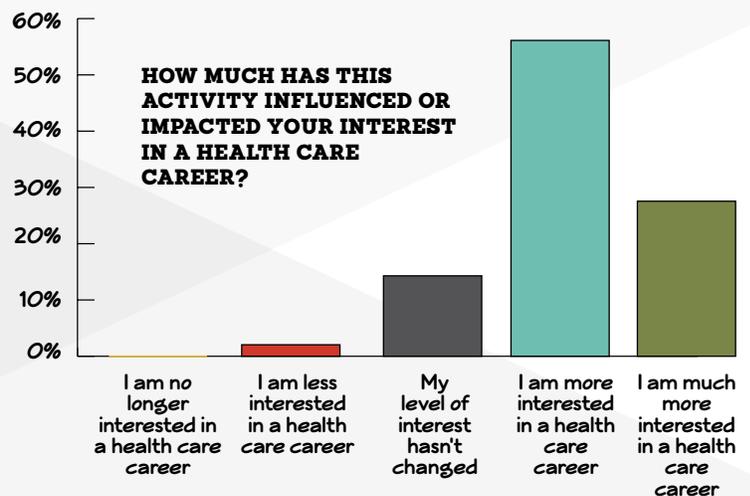
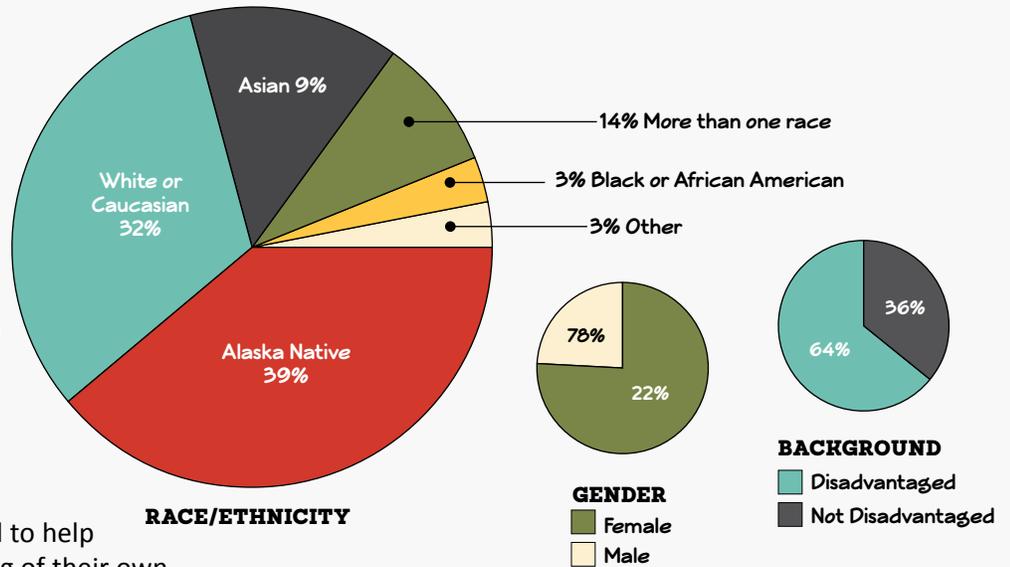
In 2015, in partnership with the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, the Alaska AHEC created and launched the Behavioral Health Career Pathways project. This project aims to increase interest in behavioral health careers based on the current and future need for behavioral health professionals in Alaska, particularly in rural communities. The program consists of weeklong camps for high schoolers held in a variety of communities throughout the state. These Behavioral Health Camps serve as an intensive introductory program to hook student interest in behavioral health careers, and to help students develop a mature understanding of their own mental health as well as strategies for self-care. The curriculum includes Mental Health First Aid certification, dual credit, and experiential learning. The students also get to hear from local behavioral health professionals and take part in facility tours, mock therapy sessions, and projects specific to their community.

To date, 311 students have participated in Behavioral Health Camps. In the 2019 grant year alone, 117 students participated in camps in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Dillingham, Juneau, Kenai, Kodiak, Bethel, and Utqiagvik. Some students live in these communities, but many traveled from smaller villages to these hubs to participate in the camps. These rural students, who traditionally have limited educational opportunities, are given access to high-quality training and career exploration through this program. After the camp, the students maintain connections to the local AHEC office in their region for support as they progress towards a health career.

## BHC MANUAL

As a social enterprise, the South Central Alaska AHEC has developed a helpful BHC Manual in collaboration with the Program AHEC and Statewide partners. The manual is now available for purchase for agencies anywhere. With pilots receiving very favorable feedback, the BHC Manual contains detailed curriculum on mental health support skills for youth, information on various mental health disorders, and behavioral health careers. Skills curriculum include art and music therapy and performing a mock intervention. A sample schedule, PowerPoint presentations, and activity printouts are also part of the manual. Special thanks goes to Karen Chin, South Central AHEC's former AmeriCorps member for her tireless efforts to pull this document together. Please contact Mari Selle at [maris@alaskapca.org](mailto:maris@alaskapca.org) with questions or to purchase the manual.

## BHC STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



Of the past campers who are likely to have graduated high school by now (18+), and for whom long-term tracking data was available, we have found that:

- 70% went on to post-grad
- 47% went on to health-related post-grad
- 10% went on to behavioral-health specific post-grad
- 8% already working at Alaskan health facilities

## Comments from BHC students

“I think this program is an amazing opportunity for rural students to explore their interests and new careers. I really enjoyed the family advocacy and other actual exposure to mental health careers.”

“I think the information was very relevant for my community because of the lack of Mental Health Awareness in my town.”

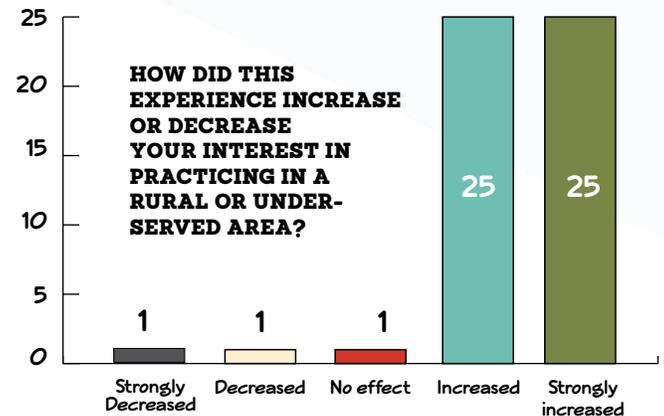
“I felt safe with my emotions in class because everyone was kind and understanding.”

## AHEC SCHOLARS PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

AHEC Scholars is a national program for health professions students interested in enhancing their education by gaining knowledge and experience in rural and/or underserved urban settings. The program is intended to increase diversity and distribution of the healthcare workforce by providing health program students with community based experiential learning in rural and underserved communities. These placements with experienced professionals are arranged through networks that the six AHEC Center Directors cultivate in their regions. As you can see from the list of sites below, the placement sites are as diverse as the state of Alaska.

In addition to a placement in rural and/or underserved locations, AHEC Scholars are required to complete 40 hours of didactic work outside their academic program. The didactic is in six topic areas that help prepare students for placements and careers in rural or underserved areas. Those topic areas are Interprofessional Education, Behavioral Health Education, Social Determinants of Health, Cultural Competency, Practice Transformation, and Current and Emerging Health Issues.

In August 2019, the initial group of students who joined AHEC Scholars in the pilot program completed their second year. The feedback these students have provided continues to help us improve the AHEC Scholars program for the future. The Alaska AHEC program continues to provide these students support in the form of employment information, loan forgiveness programs, and continuing education opportunities. We look forward to seeing all the places in Alaska they go!



### SAMPLE OF SCHOLAR PLACEMENT LOCATIONS:

- Alaska Department of Corrections, Anchorage
- Alaska Native Medical Center, Anchorage
- Alaska Psychiatric Institution, Anchorage
- Bethel Public Health Center, Bethel
- Bristol Bay Area School District, Dillingham
- Craig Emergency Medical Services, Craig
- Dahl Memorial Clinic, Skagway
- Dillingham Public Health, Dillingham
- Maniilaq Health Center, Kotzebue
- Nome Public Health Clinic, Nome
- Norton Sound Health Corporation, Nome
- Peace Health Ketchikan Medical Center, Ketchikan
- Petersburg Medical Center, Petersburg
- Providence Kodiak Island Medical Center, Kodiak
- Sitka School District, Sitka
- Veterans Hospital, Anchorage
- Whites Pharmacy
- Women in Safe Homes, Ketchikan
- Women, Infants, and Children, Wasilla
- Yukon Kuskokwim Health Center, Bethel

### 2019 SCHOLARS DATA

- 87 scholars
- 25 graduated and completed the program
- 35 are continuing to next year
- 77 females
- 10 males
- 54 in Anchorage
- 11 Mat-Su
- 8 Fairbanks
- 12 Juneau
- 12 other rural areas
- 19 degree programs
- 40+ CBEL sites around Alaska

“Even if students take the urban/underserved route, it is still such a great experience to see the variety of needs right in our own backyard.”

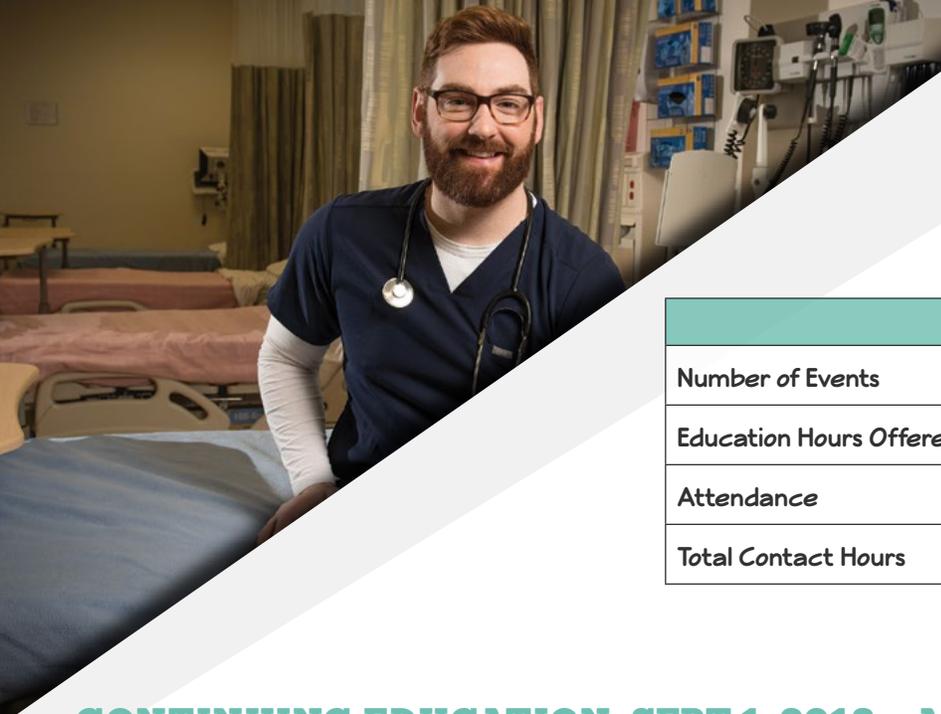
**Erin Worley, AHEC Scholar**

“This site provided a wide range of experiences in a culturally rich environment. Working in this environment provided me with invaluable training and understanding which will greatly improve my interactions with rural and Alaskan Native patients.”

**Christine Michel, AHEC Scholar**

“It was wonderful getting to know the Alaska Natives of Bethel and understanding the cultural differences. It's easy to forget how geographically huge Alaska is and how bigger rural cities like Bethel serves over 53 villages from their facility. YKHC serves an area that's as big as Utah - most of those villages have no road system so their only option is flying in and out. Healthcare really does become different in those kind of settings.”

**Jimin Hwang, AHEC Scholar**



	WEBINARS	IN PERSON	SELF-PACED	TOTAL
Number of Events	15	48	2	65
Education Hours Offered	20	303	2	325
Attendance	984	1,397	1,306	3,687
Total Contact Hours	1,459	11,990	1,306	14,755

## CONTINUING EDUCATION, SEPT 1, 2018 – AUG 31, 2019

ALASKA'S AHEC PROVIDED OR CO-PROVIDED 65 EVENTS TO 2,781 UNIQUE HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WHO ATTENDED MORE THAN 14,000 HOURS OF TRAININGS.

To help retain the healthcare workforce in Alaska, the AHEC provides continuing education and professional development (CE/PD) opportunities through partnerships with other health organizations, associations, and state programs or by developing individual events with the support of UAA faculty. Highlighted topics for FY 2019 included:

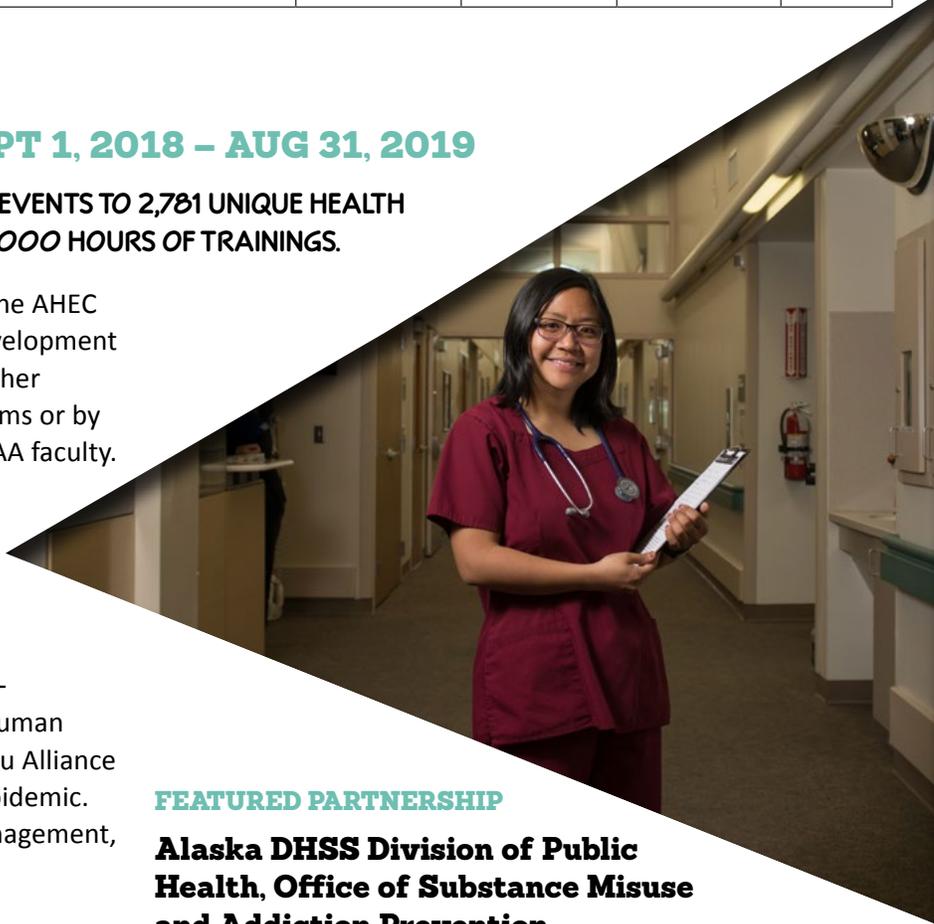
**Emergency Preparedness** – Assisted the Alaska Division of Public Health with the biennial Hale Borealis Forum.

**Opioid Misuse and Addiction Prevention Training** – Continued partnerships with UAA Department of Human Services, Alaska Division of Public Health and Juneau Alliance for Mental Health aim to help reverse the opioid epidemic. This included the launch of the self-paced Pain Management, Opioid Use and Addiction course.

**Geriatric Education** – Annual coordination of webinars broadcast from the University of Washington to host sites across Alaska.

**Mental Health First Aid** – AHEC Centers provided classes for community members and health professionals in skills to recognize and assist others who are dealing with a Mental Health problem or crisis.

**HPV Vaccinations** – Worked with the American Cancer Society, Alaska DHSS and other Alaska Cancer Partnership stakeholders to improve HPV vaccination rates in Alaska. This was the final year for the National AHEC Organization (NAO) project funded by the Center for Disease Control (CDC).



### FEATURED PARTNERSHIP

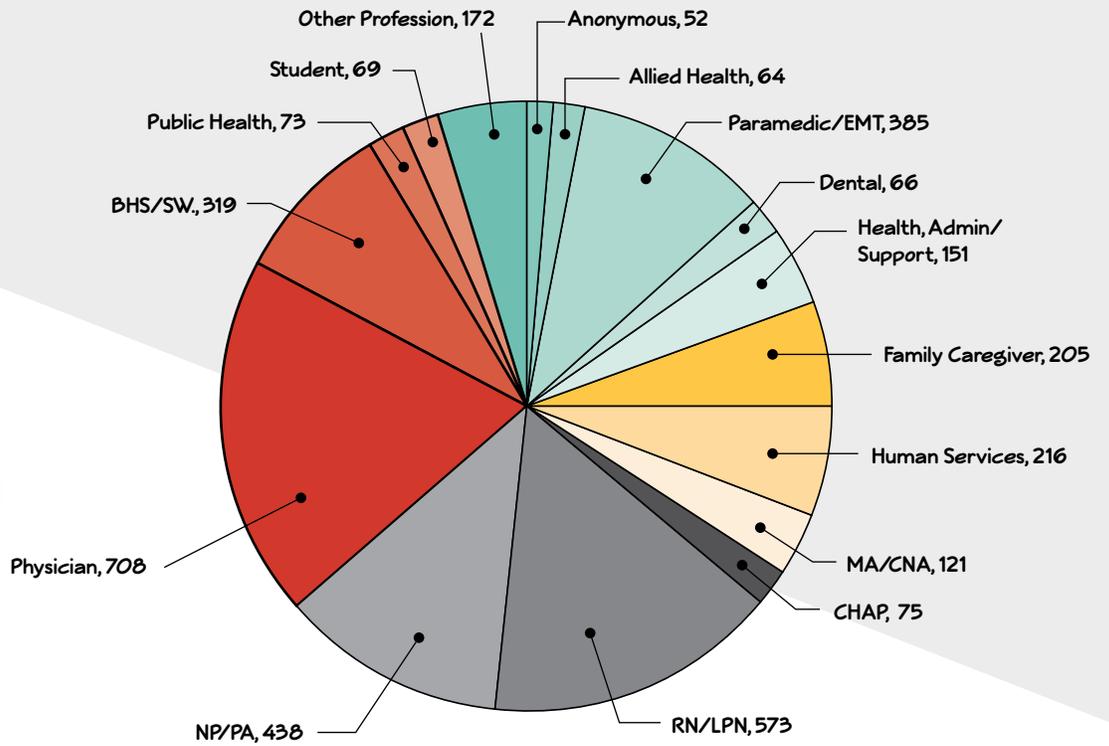
#### Alaska DHSS Division of Public Health, Office of Substance Misuse and Addiction Prevention

This partnership improves access to trainings for providers on opioids, pain management and addiction. A self-paced course called "Pain Management, Opioid Use and Addiction in Alaska" has been taken by over 1,300 health professionals. In 2020, the partnership will allow a course developed by the UAA Human Services Program to be offered to providers in the Department of Health and Social Services learning management system. The Alaska AHEC wishes to thank the Office of Substance Misuse and Addiction and its staff for their dedication to the health and well-being of all Alaskans.

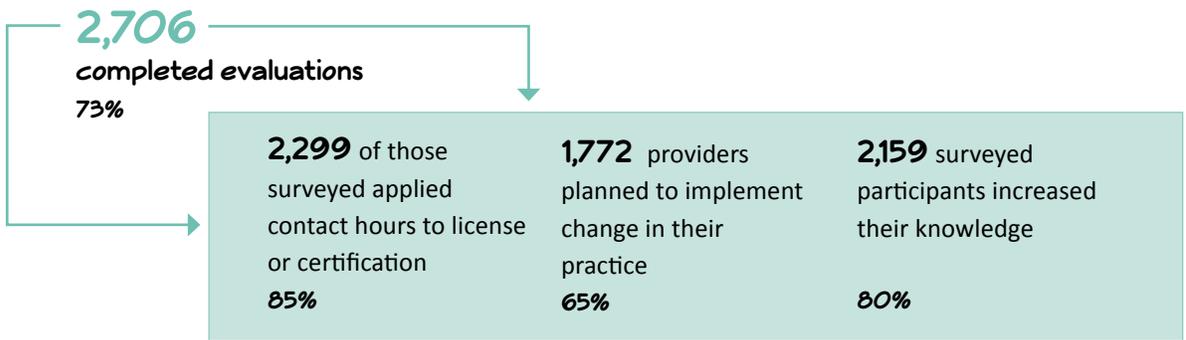


**CONTINUING EDUCATION, CONT.**

**3,687**  
Attendance Total



**WEBINAR AND LIVE TRAINING EVALUATION RESULTS**



Alaska Center for Rural Health and Health Workforce  
University of Alaska, Anchorage  
3211 Providence Drive, BOC3-250  
Anchorage, AK 99508

**Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
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### Continuing Education Opportunities

Alaska AHEC works with the UAA College of Health and our partners to offer continuing education credits for healthcare professionals across Alaska. You can find a list of course offerings as well as registration instructions at <https://uaa-coh.asapconnected.com>.



**UAA College of Health**  
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### Health Careers in Alaska: [bit.ly/healthcareersak](http://bit.ly/healthcareersak)

This website provides information on scholarships, camps, internships and academic programs related to healthcare in Alaska. There are also detailed descriptions of over 50 healthcare careers and links to major employers and job-search services.



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