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# Optum

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# Alaska Medicaid Newsletter

*Important information for you as an Alaska Medicaid Participant*

## Introduction: Live and Work Well - A Helpful Resource

Mental health is important to overall health and wellbeing. It is important to know that there is help nearby to support you and your loved ones.

On the [Live and Work Well \(LAWW\)](#) website, you can access a variety of resources including:

- Screening tools, such as the [Live and Work Well: Alcohol Self-Assessment](#). Click “Crisis Support” and “[Addiction](#)” to access this and other helpful tools.
- A Provider Search. Click “Start Now” under “Find Mental Health Support” and use the “Find Providers” link to access a list of available providers who may be right for you.
- Supports on a variety of mental health topics including ADHD, Anger Management, Anxiety, Bipolar Disorder, Depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Schizophrenia, and Stress. Each support topic will have:
  - Guides and Articles
  - Self Help Resources
  - Videos

Call 1-800-225-8764 between the hours of 8am-6pm AK time for confidential help. Press option 2 for participant and option 1 to speak with staff and ask to speak with a Behavioral Healthcare Navigator in Alaska.

**Let’s talk before okay becomes not okay.**

**This service should not be used for a crisis or urgent care need. In an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital.**



# Coping with Mental Illness and Addiction



Mental illness and substance use disorder are each challenging disorders in their own right. When people with a mental illness begin to use alcohol or drugs, the situation becomes even more difficult.

Substance use tends to increase the course of mental illness and makes treatment more challenging. Seeking professional help is the first step towards recovery. Once under the care of a trained professional, there is a lot you can do to ensure your own recovery and mental health. The following are some simple tips.

## HELPFUL STRATEGIES

**Learn all you can about your illness and share the information with your family and support group:** Read books, attend lectures, talk to your doctor and therapist and ask questions. Teach your family and loved ones about the illness. Ask them to support you in your effort toward recovery.

**Get involved in the treatment planning:** Set small realistic goals with the help of your doctor or therapist. If your family is interested in being supportive, make them aware of your goals and tell them how they can help you meet them.

**Work an honest program:** Denying or minimizing the impact of substance use or making excuses are not uncommon, but they do get in the way of treatment. Be honest with yourself and others about the extent of your substance use and your feelings about abstinence and/or medication compliance. Also, be honest about your strengths and weaknesses. It is quite possible that some of your strategies for coping have not been helpful to you.

**Be open to feedback even if it is not particularly positive:** The first step in making serious changes in your life is to accept that you need to do things differently. Be willing to listen to others. Find out what has worked for them. Try new strategies and don't be too proud to change your ways.

**Take your medications as prescribed:** You may want to stop your medications or to not take them as they are prescribed. Not taking your medications as prescribed can put you in danger of worsening symptoms. Always speak to your doctor first before changing or stopping your medicine. Also, be sure to let your counselors and doctors know about your substance use. Ask them not to prescribe medication that would compromise your recovery.

**Stay away from alcohol and drugs:** Substance use makes the symptoms of psychiatric illness and treatment more difficult. It can also lower the effectiveness of your medication. Attend support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous or Dual Recovery Anonymous. Stay away from friends who use drugs or alcohol.

**Know your relapse triggers and warning signs:** Work with your therapist and support group to learn about your warning signs. A relapse starts long before you use a substance or take a drink. There are many warning signs that come before a relapse and may involve slipping back into old habits. Some common examples are: not going to groups and treatment sessions, reconnecting with peers in active addiction, forgetting to tell your doctor about your problems with substance use.

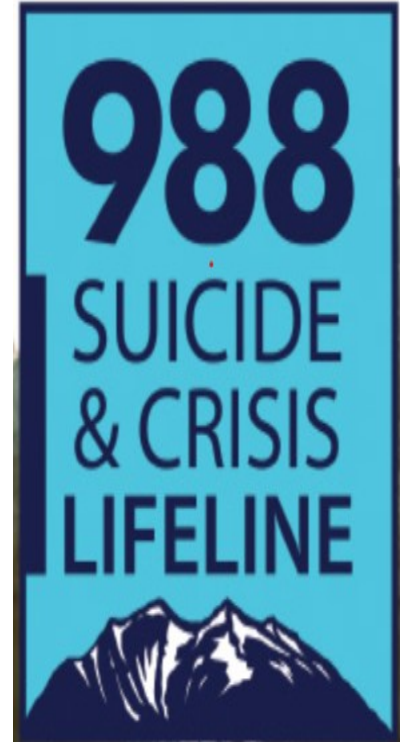
**Structure your day:** Too much idle time can set you up for relapse. Make sure you fill your schedule with healthy, productive activities. If you are not working, think about taking classes, doing volunteer work, or attending a day



## Peer Support Corner

With the changing seasons we can have a lot to do in Alaska. Often, we forget key wellness items that are important for our ability to thrive. Here are some tips to find ways to set goals and talk about challenges and reaching goals.

1. Make connections with people you can trust with your goals. This helps set up the framework of your own Peer Support system in AK. Peer support involves giving, receiving, and sharing support. For more info, you may contact Optum PSS at [caremgmtoptumak@optum.com](mailto:caremgmtoptumak@optum.com). Other resources for PSS: [peer support programs in Anchorage, AK | findhelp.org](#), [Peer Support Partners for Progress \(partnersforprogressak.org\)](#), [Peer Support - Southeast Alaska Independent Living \(SAIL, Inc.\) \(sailinc.org\)](#)
2. Make sure the goals in your group are S.M.A.R.T (Specific. Measurable. Achievable. Relevant. Time-Bound). When you find your peer support system, be sure to share your goals and take the time to hear their goals as well.
3. Track and reflect on your goal progress. This can take many forms. Join others in developing a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (W.R.A.P.) while establishing a support system connection. Use a W.R.A.P. to develop a list of tools to help you be successful in your recovery. For more information and to begin your journey, visit the following site: <https://www.wellnessrecoveryactionplan.com/>
4. To help with motivation and to track goals, you can make a vision board. Here is a helpful link: [How to Make a Vision Board \[The Ultimate 6-Step Guide\] \(developgoodhabits.com\)](#)



Tips courtesy of Optum partners at UnitedHealthcare; both companies are part of UnitedHealth Group.

### Upcoming Events:

**Free Zoom Yoga Class, Monday, October 5 @4:30 pm:** [Yoga for Mental Health](#) with Margi Clifford

**Zoom Mental Health Q & A for Teens and Young Adults, Tuesday, October 6 @5:00 pm:** [Mental Health Q & A for Teens! - Alaska Behavioral Health](#)

**A panel discussion of providers and consumers Wednesday, October 7 @6:00 pm:** [Fight the Stigma](#)  
Register here: <https://akbh-org.zoom.us/j/96667964853>

### Make A Connection

#### Find a Provider:

Participant Access Line: 1-800-225-8764 TDD/TTY dial 711 or visit [alaska.optum.com](http://alaska.optum.com) and click *Find a Provider* on left side of the page.

#### Get Transportation:

For Medicaid travel benefits call the Medicaid Participant Helpline at 800-770-5650, Option 2.

#### Live & Work Well:

You can find information about maintaining your wellness and resources for crisis support.

### Hotlines

#### National Suicide Prevention Line

9-8-8 [988.alaska.gov](http://988.alaska.gov)

#### Veterans Crisis Line

1-800-273-8255 text 838255

#### Careline

1-877-266-4357 (HELP) or text 4help to 839863

#### National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-7233

