

Adam Crum
Commissioner

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PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Clinton Bennett, DHSS, (907) 269-4996, clinton.bennett@alaska.gov

Alaska's parents share concerns about how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting their families

Next survey has launched, explores impact on physical activity and nutrition

April 27, 2020 ANCHORAGE — In just a week, almost 2,000 Alaska parents responded to the first survey in the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services' (DHSS) series of family surveys to find out how the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting the lives of Alaska families with children.

Alaska families are encouraged to fill out the second survey, call HEALTH. This survey is focused on the impacts of the pandemic on physical activity, nutrition, health insurance and access to prescriptions. Alaskans can participate by texting "health" to 907-269-0344.

The first survey in the series revealed that three out of four Alaska parents are concerned that the COVID-19 pandemic is negatively impacting their child's physical health. Even more parents are concerned about the impact on their child's mental health.

"Daily regular physical activity can make a big difference in how your child feels right now," said Dr. Anne Zink, Alaska's Chief Medical Officer, "Physical activity improves your mood and eases your stress. A simple walk can help you and your children feel less anxious and improve your sleep that night."

Parents stated that spending time outdoors (74%), increased family time (70%) and connecting with friends and family online (69%) have helped them deal with physical distancing measures. DHSS also learned that of those parents seeking care, over half reported difficulties in obtaining medical care (80%) and mental health care (60%).

Families needing help can call 2-1-1, visit [Help Me Grow Alaska](#) or Alaska's [Play Every Day campaign](#) to learn [how to be physically active safely during the pandemic](#). Visit the Office of Children's Services [Child Safety and Well-Being During COVID-19 website](#) for information for youth, families and community members. Resources specifically for parents and caregivers of children with special health care needs are available on the Division of Public Health's [Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs website](#). Parents feeling overwhelmed can call the Alaska Careline at 877-266-4357, text TalkWithUs to 66746 or visit the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#).

The second survey continues to explore challenges families are facing. “We hope parents with children and youth at home will share how their children’s physical activity, screen-time and dietary habits have changed during the pandemic,” said Karol Fink, manager of Alaska’s Physical Activity and Nutrition Unit.

The Physical Activity and Nutrition Unit coordinated with the Maternal Child Health (MCH) Epidemiology Unit to design the second survey.

The link to the second survey and the results from the first survey are posted at the MCH Epidemiology Unit website at dhss.alaska.gov/dph/wcfh/Pages/mchepi/.

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