



American Heart Association
Bernard J. Tyson
Office of Health



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Health
**HELP
WANTED**

ALASKA

CHALLENGES WHEN CARE IS FAR AWAY

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Alaska's rugged landscape has created a resilient and fiercely independent population. But access to preventive health care and acute medical interventions is a logistical challenge. This film explores how private and public health care initiatives, tribal councils and community health aides work together to create diverse and reactive systems of care that support and respect Alaskans' individualism and cultural and tribal traditions.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What unique challenges does Alaska face in providing medical care to its residents? How do factors such as geography, climate and population distribution contribute to these challenges?

2. What role do tribal and Indigenous organizations play in improving health care outcomes for Alaska Natives? How can these institutions be better supported and integrated into the broader health care system?
3. How have historical discriminatory practices affected health care access and trust among Alaska Native communities? What steps can help alleviate these issues?
4. How do community health workers contribute to health care delivery in Alaska, particularly in remote areas? What are the benefits and limitations of this model?
5. Why is educational outreach crucial in Alaska's health care system? What approaches could enhance health education in remote communities?
6. How does the concept of place-specific health care models apply to Alaska? What factors should be considered when developing health care strategies for different regions within the state?
7. How does varying local availability of diagnostic tools affect health outcomes in Alaska? What are the challenges in implementing and maintaining these tools in remote areas?
8. What role does interdisciplinary collaboration play in addressing Alaska's complex health care needs? How can partnerships between health care professionals, social services and community organizations be strengthened?



RESOURCES

- American Heart Association rural health portal: <https://www.heart.org/en/about-us/rural-health>
- Rural Health Information Hub: <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/states/alaska>
- Partnership and outreach between the Alaska Department of Health and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium: <https://www.healthyalaskans.org/>
- Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium: <https://www.anthc.org/>
- The challenges of caring for Alaskans: <https://www.heart.org/en/news/2024/06/03/challenges-of-caring-for-alaskans-fewer-people-across-more-miles>
- "The Future of Care in Rural Alaska": <https://digital.akbizmag.com/issue/march-2024/the-future-of-care-in-rural-alaska/>
- "Improving Access to Healthcare in Alaska's Rural Villages": <https://www.aapa.org/news-central/2022/10/improving-access-to-healthcare-in-alaskas-rural-villages/>
- Alaska law expanding access to food stamps, health care: <https://alaskabeacon.com/2024/09/03/expanded-access-to-food-stamps-health-care-becomes-law-in-alaska/>

- Life's Essential 8, the AHA's checklist for lifelong good health: <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/lifes-essential-8>
- Empowered to Serve Health Lessons and Toolkits that include 19 science-based toolkits covering topics such as lifesaving skills, advocacy, healthy living, risk factor management and substance abuse: <https://www.empoweredtoserve.org/en/community-resources/health-lessons>



POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- LifeMed Alaska: <https://lifemedalaska.com/outreach/#Community-Outreach>
- Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium: <https://www.anthc.org/>
- Local and state representatives who work on Alaska health care policy, specifically the expanded access to federal funds for food stamps and health care (see resources), to discuss the process and potential outcomes for such legislation



ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

- Explore the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium's website, noting its community outreach programs and services. <https://www.anthc.org/>
- Obtain and share a large state map and mark the emergency and medical services and remote villages. Using the map, discuss challenges and potential solutions.
- Present or create an opportunity to investigate state and federal policies impacting Alaskans' health and well-being. Offer information about recently passed legislation or policies and upcoming legislation that community members should know about.
- Create emergency and backup plans covering potential health-related crises for residents who live in remote areas or community workers who serve them. Support the development of first-aid kits with life-saving medications, educational information and clear instructions on stabilizing someone with a medical emergency. Create flyers that reflect the plans and provide resource information for the community. Make sure the flyers are translated into the appropriate languages for the community.