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Mental Health First Aid Training ♦ Partner Ombudsmen ♦ December Events

Staff Trained in Mental Health First Aid

Ombudsman staff in both Anchorage and Juneau attended Mental Health First Aid training in November. [Mental Health First Aid](#) (MHFA) is an internationally-recognized training that teaches participants to identify, understand, and respond to signs of a behavioral health disorder or crisis. Staff learned how to identify and respond to situations when a person may be experiencing a mental health crisis.



The trainers provided specific questions and scripts that our staff can now use when assessing whether a person is in crisis and in need of immediate professional assistance. Michael Jones, intake assistant, found the training and practice asking uncomfortable questions, such as “Have you been thinking about suicide?” very valuable. He commented, “Just getting that sentence out of your mouth a few times gives a little bit of confidence that I could ask the question when a person really needed me to.”

Staff learned the warning signs for depression, trauma, anxiety and panic attacks, acute psychosis, overdose, and withdrawal. They also learned how to offer Crisis First Aid in those situations. Staff often receive calls or visits from complainants who may be experiencing mental health crises, but had little training in how to approach the issue. After MHFA training, staff understand some warning signs to look for and have tools to use to help. They also learned about some of the resources in Alaska that can help someone experiencing a mental health crisis. Staff have actively put this training to work, using the scripts and resources to better respond to people in crisis.

Our [core values](#) include curiosity, respect, and public service. The MHFA training provided an opportunity to learn more about mental health, gain the skills needed to communicate with and support people who experience mental health disorders or crises, and improve the way we serve Alaskans. For more information about MHFA trainings, contact the Alaska Training Cooperative at 907.264.6244.

More than One Ombudsman in Alaska

Did you know that the State Ombudsman is not the only ombudsman in the Last Frontier? There are several, and each has a unique role and jurisdiction. We often refer complaints to each other, and share knowledge and expertise.

The [Alaska Long-Term Care Ombudsman](#) advocates for the rights, welfare, and dignity of older Alaskans. Federal law requires every state to have a long-term care ombudsman (LTCO). LTCOs investigate complaints related to assisted living and nursing homes and advocate for the residents. In addition to professional LTCOs, there are volunteers who visit with residents in homes and alert the LTCO when there are problems. For more information about the LTCO volunteer program, contact Kathryn Curry at 907.334.2535.

The [Anchorage Municipal Ombudsman](#) is an important resource for people with complaints about local government agencies and the Anchorage School District. Complaints to the Anchorage Ombudsman are confidential. You can file and track your complaint online.

The University of Alaska Anchorage Student Ombudsman is a member of the student government executive team. University of Alaska Fairbanks student government is actively working to establish a student ombudsman position. The student ombudsman advocates for students and can defend students involved in appeals or academic disputes. For more information about the UAA student ombudsman, contact uaa.ombudsman@alaska.edu.



December Events, Schedule

- ♦ The Ombudsman will be presenting November 30 to library staff from around the state, via [Online With Libraries](#). Part of the “Gov Info Without Tears” series, the videoconference is open to all Alaska libraries.
- ♦ The Juneau office is hosting an Open House on Friday December 1, 3:30-4:30 p.m. Join us for holiday refreshments and a tour of our new offices at 130 Seward Street, Suite 501.
- ♦ December 6, the Ombudsman will be speaking with Legislative Information Office staff about the role of the ombudsman and opportunities to refer Alaskans with complaints about state government to the Ombudsman for assistance.
- ♦ Our offices are hosting a “Toasty Fingers and Toes” holiday sock and glove drive in December. We’ll be collecting new socks and gloves/mittens to share with local homeless shelters. Friends and partner organizations are invited to join us as we share the gift of warmth with our neighbors in need.

