

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



SENATOR ELVI GRAY-JACKSON
SENATE DISTRICT G

Sponsor Statement for SB 24

SB 24 amends the existing health education curriculum statute to include mental health curriculum in all K-12 health classrooms to adequately educate students on vital information pertaining to mental health symptoms, resources, and treatment.

The Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development and the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) will develop guidelines for instruction in mental health in consultation with numerous stakeholders. Such organizations include, but are not limited to, the National Council for Behavioral Health, Providence Health and Services Alaska, Southcentral Foundation, Anchorage Community Mental Health Services, Inc., North Star Behavioral Health System, and the National Alliance on Mental Health Illness Alaska. The standards will be developed in consultation with counselors, educators, students, administrators, and other mental health organizations to form effective guidelines for school boards, teachers, and students.

After standards have been developed, the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development and DEED will be responsible for implementation throughout the Alaska school system. As with existing health education curriculum, the DEED, the Department of Health, and the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault will provide technical assistance to school districts in the development of personal safety curricula. An existing school health education specialist position will assist in coordinating the program statewide.

SB 24 aims to decrease the stigma surrounding mental illnesses and increase students' knowledge of mental health, encouraging conversation around and understanding of the issue.