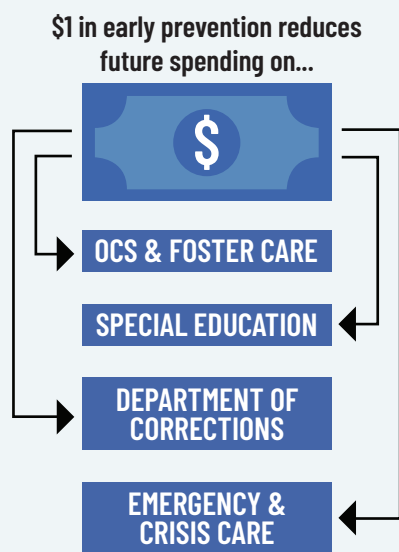




UPSTREAM SUPPORTS. DOWNSTREAM SAVINGS.

Strengthening Alaska's Families and Economy Through Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH)

Investing early isn't just good for families—it's essential for the State of Alaska budget. IECMH is a practical, proactive model that addresses developmental and behavioral challenges before they escalate into high-cost, state-funded liabilities. By equipping caregivers and providers today, we reduce the long-term burden on Alaska's most expensive 'downstream' systems.



A High-Return Investment for Alaska

- **The 13% ROI:** Nobel Laureate James Heckman's research proves that high-quality early childhood interventions provide a **7–13% annual return on investment**.
- **Cost Avoidance:** Every dollar spent on "upstream" prevention reduces future state spending on:
 - **OCS & Foster Care:** Reducing the "Pipeline to OCS" by stabilizing families early.
 - **Special Education:** Lowering the need for intensive K-12 behavioral supports.
 - **Department of Corrections:** Addressing the root causes of later justice involvement.
 - **Emergency & Crisis Care:** Shifting care into communities and away from expensive Emergency Room visits.

AK-AIMH: Building Alaska's Workforce Infrastructure

Upstream investments only work if the workforce is trained, accountable, and stable. AK-AIMH provides this infrastructure through three pillars:

1. **Quality Assurance (The Endorsement®):** We provide the only competency-based credential (IMH-E® / ECMH-E®) that verifies proven skills and on-the-job capabilities across health, mental health, education and related disciplines, and social service workers.
2. **Statewide Training (Project Compass):** We provide proven, Alaska-focused training for workers in both rural and urban areas. We replace disconnected, 'one-time' workshops with coordinated learning opportunities to build and support the skills and competencies necessary for AKAIMH Endorsement.
3. **Workforce Retention (Reflective Supervision/Consultation):** We provide professional "scaffolding" that prevents burnout and turnover in high-stress early childhood roles, keeping Alaskans in the workforce.

**"IECMH is not 'babies in therapy.' It is the architecture
of a healthy brain and a stable Alaska."**

What is IECMH?

Because this is a specialized field, we want to highlight the practical, everyday impact of our work. To be clear, IECMH is a continuum-- **prevention, promotion and intervention.**

It includes:

- **Reducing ACEs:** Actively mitigating Adverse Childhood Experiences and promoting the protective factors that keep families together.
- **Navigating Development:** Helping parents understand and support young children as they learn to navigate intense, developmentally normal feelings.
- **Building Brain Architecture:** Strengthening the foundation for lifelong school readiness, healthy behavior, and resilience.
- **Early Guidance:** Ensuring the workforce can guide families before a child's behavior leads to preschool expulsion or OCS involvement.
- **Early Intervention:** Providing parent-child support to families to strengthen and repair relationships.

Our 2026 Policy Recommendations

1. Better Coordination (The Primary Ask)

- **Fund a State-Wide Position to Coordinate IECMH Services:** Alaska's children and families would benefit from a state-funded leader dedicated to policy and program development related to IECMH who can coordinate efforts and progress to build sustainable infrastructure.
- **High Standards for State Contracts:** Require that state-funded programs (like OCS, Head Start, and early intervention) use workers who have proven, verified skills. This ensures that Alaska's tax dollars are only paying for high-quality care that actually works.
- **A Seat at the Table:** Include infant and early childhood mental health experts in all state planning for rural health and early childhood services. This ensures that emotional and behavioral health are part of the conversation from the very beginning, not an afterthought.

2. Targeted ROI Investment: Grow Alaska's IECMH Workforce

- **Increase support for IECMH Endorsement:** Endorsement creates a pathway for professional development for working in the IECMH field.
- **Build Statewide IECMH Consultation Capacity:** Building the IECMH Consultation workforce is critical to improving factors before they cause acute issues.
- **Measurable Outcomes:** Within 12 months, these investments target:
 - Increased access to qualified IECMH professionals/services.
 - Reduced preschool expulsions and suspensions.
 - Increased retention of early childhood educators.
 - Fewer behavioral escalations requiring crisis intervention.

3. Preserving the Foundation

- **Maintain Capacity:** Protect access to a continuum (promotion, prevention, diagnosis and treatment) of IECMH supports services. Cutting these "upstream" programs and services create immediate, higher-cost "downstream" deficits.

Why This Matters This Session:

- **Supports Rural Health Transformation**
- **Reduces OCS Caseload Pressures**
- **Strengthens the Private Sector Workforce**
- **Evidence-Based & Cost-Effective**

Keeping Alaskans in Alaska



Economic Infrastructure: Early childhood programs are the backbone of our economy. When providers have IECMH support, they can manage challenging behaviors, preventing the expulsions that force parents out of the workforce.



Stabilizing Communities: Families cite high stress and lack of support as primary reasons for outmigration. IECMH creates the stability families need to stay, work, and thrive in Alaska.



Scan to view our Competency Guidelines.