



For immediate release: June 7, 2017

Contact: Kate Burkhart 907 465-8920, kate.burkhart@alaska.gov
Sharon Fishel 907 465-6523, sharon.fishel@alaska.gov
Patrick Sidmore 907 465-3072, patrick.sidmore@alaska.gov

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council, the Alaska Mental Health Board, and the Advisory Board on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse announce the release of an eLearning module for school staff: **Overcoming ACEs in Alaskan Schools: Childhood Trauma and Its Impact on Learning**. This online course is the latest addition to the Department of Education and Early Development’s eLearning program, which provides professional development to more than 16,000 Alaska educators and other stakeholders on many critical health and safety issues that affect student well-being. See the eLearning [website](#).

The new eLearning course, the first in a series, is born out of an interdepartmental partnership of the Department of Education and Early Development, Department of Health and Social Services Divisions of Public Health and Behavioral Health, the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, and the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council to coordinate prevention and intervention practices to leverage resources more efficiently. The background and recommendations from this Interagency Prevention Workgroup can be found [here](#).

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) include abuse, neglect, and other household and community dysfunctions that may lead to biological changes in the brain and body of developing children and youth. These changes may make learning more difficult and have the potential to lead to life-long health problems.

The new eLearning module provides an overview of ACEs for school staff, including the Alaska data, which demonstrates that ACEs are common. The module gives school personnel insight into how certain behaviors in the classroom are influenced by trauma exposure. This knowledge will help them consider more effective disciplinary interventions based on the science of the brain and the stress response.

The eLearning module includes content grounded in the research and work of the Interagency Prevention Workgroup, the Alaska Mental Health Board, and Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, with additional expertise from the Office of Children’s Services and graduate school internship support from the University of Alaska Fairbanks School of Social Work.



Kate Burkhart, Executive Director of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council, said, “This eLearning module is an excellent example of how state partners are collaborating on evidence-based interventions to target multiple shared objectives. Mitigating the impact of ACEs can improve students’ physical and behavioral health and educational achievement, as well as reduce the risk of suicide. Research also suggests it could have a significant impact on reducing crime and other costly social problems as well.”

###