

State of Alaska
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Sarah Palin, Governor

Karleen Jackson
Commissioner
P.O. Box 110601
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0601

FACT SHEET



Sherry Hill
Communications Officer
/Legislative Liaison
907-465-1618

FAX: 907-465-3068
www.hss.state.ak.us

January 2007

SeniorCare Survey of Alaska's Seniors

Background

In 2003, the state implemented SeniorCare (cash) program that provides \$120 a month to low-income seniors. In January 2006, the program was expanded to include a SeniorCare drug (RX) program to help low income seniors with Medicare Part D premium and deductible payments.

Last year, the SeniorCare cash program was anticipated to serve 7,000 of Alaska's over 40,000 seniors and ultimately served an average of about 7,000 seniors each month. The SeniorCare RX program was anticipated to serve 4,000 seniors but never topped the 200 mark, prompting questions about why the program was not being used. Note that the SeniorCare RX program was launched around the same time as Medicare Part D and the federal ExtraHelp program.

To promote the SeniorCare drug program, DHSS launched two advertising campaigns (Nov. 2005 – Jan. 2006 and Nov. 2006 – Jan. 2007) coupled with extensive outreach programs by SeniorCare office information staff who offered numerous presentations around the state. It is likely that many of the survey respondents were not aware of the program because they also did not participate in Medicare Part D, and therefore did not pay attention to the outreach efforts.

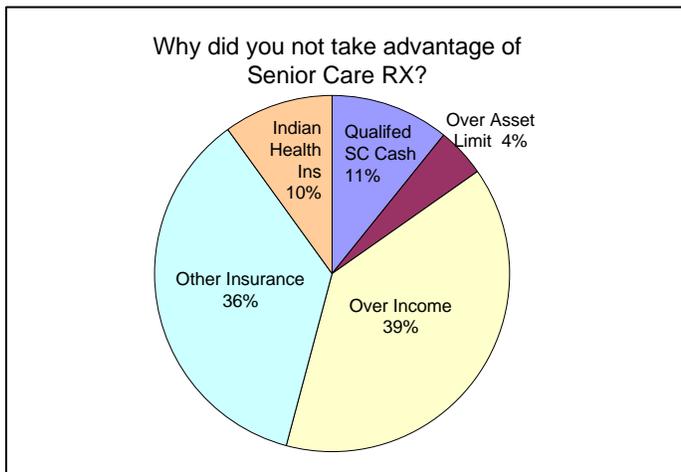
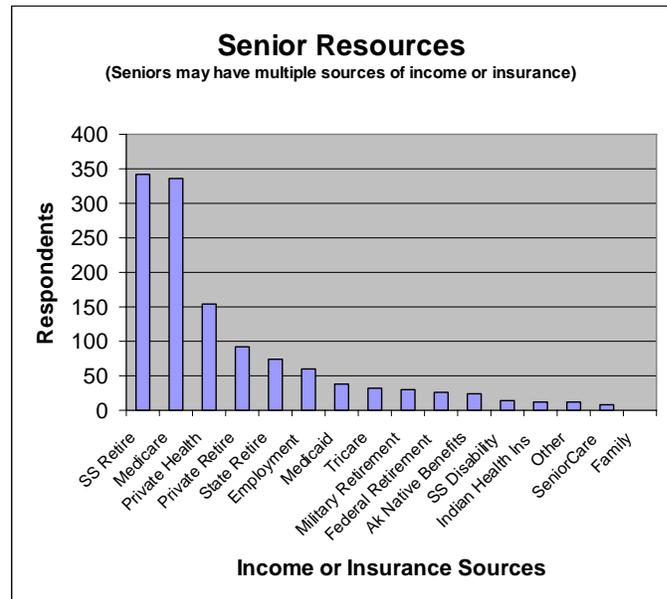
In December 2006 DHSS launched a survey of seniors to glean advice and input on the SeniorCare program, particularly the SeniorCare drug program, which had been underutilized based on DHSS estimates. The Department's contractor surveyed 386 Alaskan Seniors, a randomly selected, statistically valid percentage of Alaska's senior population in communities across the state from Kwethluk to Hoonah to the Mat-Su. The survey intentionally excluded those on multiple assistance programs as these seniors.

SeniorCare Survey Outcomes:

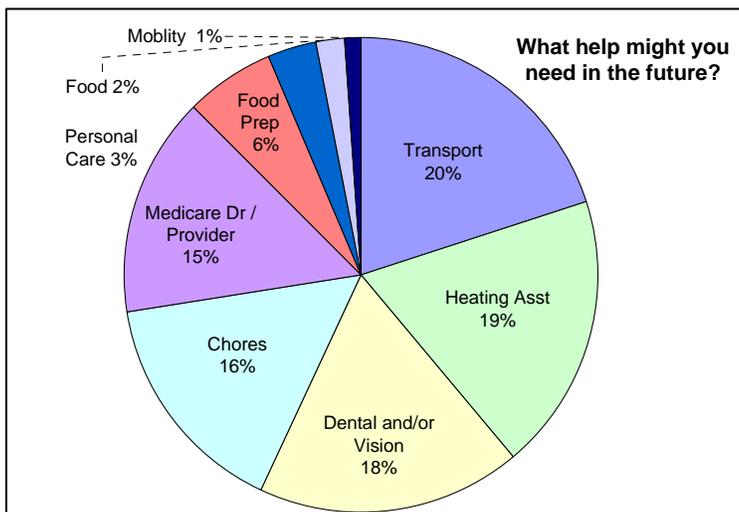
- Surveyors commented that seniors frequently expressed their delight at being asked their opinions and appreciation that the administration valued their input.
- Despite a lengthy and comprehensive SeniorCare marketing campaign in 2005 and 2006, only one third of survey participants had heard of the program.

-- More --

- Of the two thirds that had not heard of the program, a surprisingly high 74 percent were employed and/or enjoyed multiple sources of retirement income (Social Security and State, Federal, Military and private retirement).



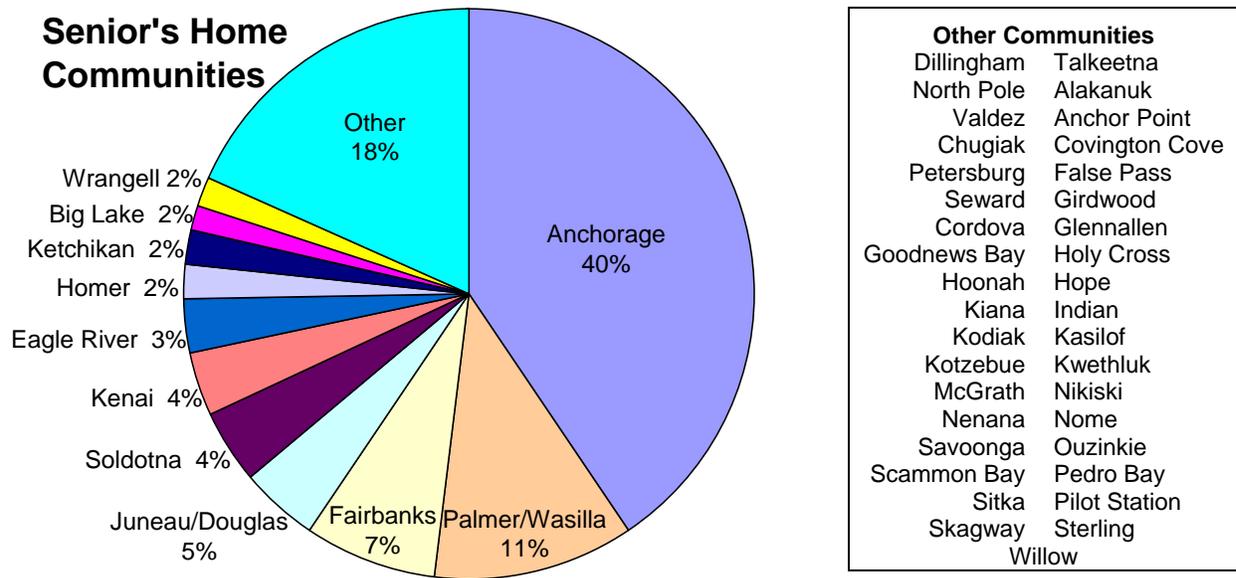
- While 99 percent of those surveyed had enrolled in the Senior Care drug program, those that responded to this question reported that they were over the income threshold for the program (39 percent), had other drug insurance coverage (36 percent), had Indian Health Service coverage (10 percent), had already qualified for SeniorCare cash (11 percent) or were over the asset limit (4 percent).



- When asked if seniors had inquired about receiving any services in the last two years, a surprising 87 percent said they'd not sought assistance and 87 percent also indicated that they lived near family or friends who could help if needed. 20 percent of respondents indicated a need for transportation assistance, 19 percent were concerned with heating assistance, 18 percent suggested dental and/or vision coverage and 16 percent would like assistance with chores.

- The survey indicates that Alaska's seniors continue to strive to remain independent and would like more services oriented toward continued independence.

- Additionally, the SeniorCare drug program may have served too narrow of a population to be as useful as originally intended and may have been confusing with the concurrent start up of the Medicare Part D program.
- Lastly, the SeniorCare cash program appears to be very accessible to low income seniors who most need it.
- The following information graphically represents the array of communities represented by Senior citizens that responded to the survey. The chart lists those communities included in the “other” category.



Contact: Sherry Hill, (907) 465-1618, Cell (907) 321-2838
 Jeff Kasper, (907) 465-8194, Cell (907) 321-3158