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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Health officials prepare medical response to opioid enforcement action**

October 11, 2019 ANCHORAGE – Following the arrest this week of two opioid prescribers in Alaska by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services is coordinating with state, federal, tribal and local partners and Alaska’s medical community to assist in addressing the physical and behavioral health needs for individuals with discontinued prescriptions.

“The health and well-being of Alaskans is our mission. We are working with local, state, tribal and federal partners to support affected patients, families and the medical community. This includes supporting patients in chronic pain, providing information about pain management, helping to prevent and treat opioid misuse and supporting our community through this transition in care delivery,” said Alaska’s Chief Medical Officer Dr. Anne Zink. “We’re aware of the concerns of both patients and providers and we’re working to address questions and issues as quickly as possible.”

While we don’t know exactly how many patients may be affected, we do know that the two arrested providers served approximately 2,000 patients, some of whom traveled from remote communities to visit these providers.

Patients and health care providers should also know that the DEA licenses for these two prescribers have been deactivated. That means opioid prescriptions from these prescribers, and in some cases other prescriptions, will not be filled by pharmacies.

The patients who visited these clinics may have a wide array of medical needs including chronic pain. Moving forward, these patients will need to discuss their options with a health care provider. Patients are encouraged to contact their insurance provider to find a new health care provider, if needed.

Patients should be aware of the following resources:

- Always call 911 if it’s a life-threatening emergency.
- To find supportive services, dial 2-1-1 to call United Way. Operational hours are 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday – Friday. If you call after hours, please leave a message. Phone calls will be returned the next business day. 2-1-1 provides information and referral service that connect

people to vital community, health and social services provided by a range of nonprofit, government and tribal agencies.

- SAMHSA has a national helpline to assist with finding behavioral health support or substance use management, 800-662-HELP (4357), TTY: 800-487-4889. These calls are manned 24/7 and are routed to the DHSS Division of Behavioral Health during DHSS operational hours.
- Help is available 24/7 through Alaska's crisis hotline, Careline. Call 1-877-266-HELP (4357).

The [Opioids in Alaska](#) website offers information on opioids education, preventing opioid overdose with naloxone, non-opioid pain management and more.

In some cases, anticipation of withdrawal may result in efforts to obtain opioids through other means, and can lead to increased risk-taking and the possibility of overdoses or other medical emergencies. To learn more about how to prevent an opioid overdose, visit the [DHSS Project Hope website](#).

If you know someone who you think needs help with a possible substance use disorder, here are some additional informational resources:

- The National Institute on Drug Abuse provides tips for supporting friends or family members.
- The Partnership for Drug-Free Kids offers suggestions for [encouraging young people to get help](#) with substance use.

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