

# Developing Partnerships with Healthcare Organizations in Alaska


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A 1705 NACDD Success Story



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
**CHRONIC DISEASE DIRECTORS**

Promoting Health. Preventing Disease.



**SUMMARY:** NACDD was awarded a five-year cooperative agreement from CDC (DP17-1705) to scale the National Diabetes Prevention Program (National DPP) in underserved areas. NACDD supported the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) to increase access to the National DPP by piloting a telephonic National DPP in the Kenai Peninsula Borough. One approach taken to increase enrollment was to identify a local champion within each healthcare organization to provide outreach to their organization's providers. Using this approach, we were able to achieve provider referrals from four healthcare organizations in the Kenai Peninsula Borough.

**CHALLENGE:** Obtaining provider referrals to the telephonic National DPP is a key aspect of increasing enrollment in the program. However, conducting outreach activities with healthcare providers proved difficult. Initial efforts of this pilot project to engage directly with healthcare providers via email, phone calls, and in-person meetings proved to be unproductive, as healthcare providers were generally unresponsive to these efforts, due to lack of time and competing priorities. Healthcare providers were our target audience to help increase referrals to the program, so a different approach to reaching them had to be implemented

**SOLUTION:** Outreach efforts were much more successful once a local champion within each healthcare organization was identified. The local champions included healthcare professionals with priorities and goals that aligned with the project, such as Registered Dietitians and Diabetes Educators. These local champions were provided information about the telephonic National DPP and how to refer to the program, which they then distributed to healthcare providers within their organizations. Different methods of distributing the information to healthcare providers were used, including presentations at regular provider meetings, mass emails to providers, and one-on-one interactions. Utilizing local champions was an effective approach to providing direct outreach to healthcare providers.

**RESULTS:** Identifying local champions within healthcare organizations has resulted in provider referrals to the telephonic National DPP from numerous healthcare organizations across the Kenai Peninsula Borough, including South Peninsula Hospital and Central Peninsula Hospital – the two largest healthcare organizations in the Kenai Peninsula Borough. Local champions identified at two smaller healthcare organizations – Homer Medical Center and Peninsula Internal Medicine, resulting in additional provider referrals. The effectiveness of utilizing local champions will continue to be studied throughout the remainder of this project. As more data become available, we hope to better quantify the results of this approach.

**YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY:** The Alaska DHSS partnered with the University of Alaska Cooperative Extension Service to provide outreach to healthcare providers and community organizations to increase enrollment in the telephonic National DPP in the Kenai Peninsula Borough. This partnership has proven to be very valuable, as participation in the program continues to increase. For more information about the telephonic National DPP in Alaska, please contact either Leslie Shallcross at (907) 474-2426, [lashallcross@alaska.edu](mailto:lashallcross@alaska.edu) or Mary Schneider at (907) 269-3454, [mary.schneider@alaska.gov](mailto:mary.schneider@alaska.gov).

**SUSTAINING SUCCESS:** To build upon the success of the provider referrals in the Kenai Peninsula Borough, we will encourage healthcare organizations to enter into a formal agreement with the telephonic National DPP provider to allow for a bi-directional referral system. The formal agreement will allow healthcare providers to receive patient participation information so that they can track the success of their patients throughout the duration of the program. Implementing a bi-directional referral will help formalize the partnerships between the referring providers and the telephonic National DPP provider.