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**From:** Morris, Julie  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 03, 2003 1:20 PM  
**To:** All DPA Statewide Staff  
**Subject:** HIPAA Privacy Notice

**A BROADCAST TO ALL DPA STAFF  
FROM THE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE AND FIELD SERVICES**

The federal Department of Health and Human Services passed new regulations called the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (**HIPAA**) a little over a year ago. HIPAA regulations require health care organizations (both health care providers and health care payers) to comply with new standards addressing the confidentiality and security of an individual's health care information. DPA is considered a covered entity under these regulations.

An important aspect of HIPAA compliance requires health care organizations to distribute a "Privacy Notice" that informs individuals about how their health care information may be used and disclosed as part of providing treatment, paying for health care services, and as part of normal business operations. The attached "**NOTICE OF USE OF PRIVATE HEALTH CARE INFORMATION**" (Privacy Notice) will be sent out to all State of Alaska Medicaid and CAMA recipients in April, as required by regulation. DHSS programs that have provider functions are also required to distribute the notice to clients utilizing our services.

The department is in the process of planning and implementing HIPAA awareness and training programs to educate the DHSS workforce and address questions and concerns about HIPAA. As you can imagine, with the size of our workforce and the changes that are currently taking place, training will take some time.

We have also appointed a Privacy Official at the department-level and in each division to handle HIPAA-related questions from clients and from the workforce. Our Privacy Notice advertises (as required by regulation) that clients may contact the DHSS Privacy Official to have their questions and complaints addressed. You may direct clients to the DHSS Privacy Official if they have questions about the Privacy Notice or have concerns about HIPAA, information privacy, security or access rights.

DHSS Privacy Official  
PO Box 110650  
Juneau, AK 99811-0650  
(907) 465-2150  
[PrivacyOfficial@health.state.ak.us](mailto:PrivacyOfficial@health.state.ak.us)

Julie Morris  
DPA Privacy Official  
P.O. Box 110640  
Juneau, AK. 99811-0640  
Phone: (907) 465-1754  
Fax: (907) 465-5154



## State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services NOTICE OF USE OF PRIVATE HEALTH CARE INFORMATION

Effective Date April 14, 2003

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### For Your Protection

**THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.**

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### Your Health Care Information Is Private

We understand that information we collect about you and your health is personal. Keeping your health care information private is one of our most important responsibilities. We are committed to protecting your health care information and following all laws about its use. You have the right to discuss with the privacy officer your concerns about how your health care information is shared. The law says:

1. We must keep your health care information from others who do not need it.
  2. You may ask us not to share certain health care information. Sometimes, we may not be able to agree to your request.
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### Who Sees And Shares My Health Care Information?

Your health caregivers, such as nurses, doctors, therapists and social workers may see, use and share your health care information to determine your plan of care. This use may cover health care services you had before now or may have later.

We review your health care information and bills (claims) to make sure that you get quality care and that all laws about providing and paying for your health care are being followed. We may also use your information to remind you about appointments or to tell you about treatment alternatives.

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### How Is Payment Made?

We may share your health care information with health plans, insurance companies, tribal or government programs to help you get your benefits and so that we can be paid or pay for your health care services.

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### May I See My Health Care Information?

In most cases, you may see your health care information. There may be legal reasons or safety concerns that may limit the amount of information that you may see. You may ask in writing to receive a copy of your health care information. We may charge a small amount for copying costs.

If you think some of your health care information is wrong, you may ask in writing that we correct or add to it. You may ask that the corrected or new information be sent to others who have received your health care information from us. You may ask us for a list of where we sent your health care information.

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**What If My Health Care Information Needs To Go Somewhere Else?**

You may ask to have your health care information sent to others. You will be asked to sign a separate form, called an authorization form, permitting your health care information to go to them.

The authorization form tells us what, where and to whom the information must be sent. You can stop or limit the amount of information sent at any time by letting us know in writing.

Note: If you are younger than 18 years old **and, by law, you are able to give consent for your own health care**, then your health care information is kept private from others unless you sign an authorization form.

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**Could My Health Care Information Be Released Without My Authorization?**

We follow laws that tell us when we have to share health care information, even if you do not sign an authorization form. We always report:

1. contagious diseases, birth defects and cancer;
2. firearm injuries and other trauma events;
3. reactions to problems with medicines or defective medical equipment;
4. to the police when required by law;
5. when the court orders us to;
6. to the government to review how our programs are working;
7. to a provider or insurance company who needs to know if you are enrolled in one of our programs;
8. to Workers Compensation for work related injuries;
9. birth, death and immunization information;
10. to the federal government when they are investigating something important to protect our country, the President and other government workers;
11. abuse, neglect and domestic violence, if related to child protection or vulnerable adults.

We may also share health care information for permitted research purposes, for matters concerning organ donations and for serious threats to public health or safety.

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**May I Have a Copy of this Notice?**

This notice is yours. You may ask for a copy at any time. If there are important changes to this notice, you will get a new one within 60 days if you are enrolled in a health plan, such as Medicaid. An electronic version of this notice is available at [www.hss.state.ak.us](http://www.hss.state.ak.us).

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**Questions or Complaints?**

If you have questions or feel your privacy rights have been violated you can contact the Department Privacy Official by calling 907-465-2150, or by writing to State of Alaska, DHSS Privacy Official, PO Box 110650, Juneau, AK 99811-0650, or by e-mailing [PrivacyOfficial@health.state.ak.us](mailto:PrivacyOfficial@health.state.ak.us).

You can also complain to the federal government Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) or to the HHS Office of Civil Rights. **Your health care services will not be affected by any complaint made to the Department Privacy Official, Secretary of Health and Human Services or Office of Civil Rights.**

**Monthly Message to Staff from DPA Director's Office**  
**Chris Ashenbrenner**  
**November 2002**

What a month this has been with elections, planning for change of administration rolling along on EOIP implementation, Ticket-to-Work, ice storms, Juneau fog, earthquakes and too much turkey (for some of us). Here are few of this month's highlights.

**Administration Transition**

The Murkowski administration has appointed our transition team and was busy taking public comment around the state this week. Alaska's transition time is very short and the teams are quickly gathering information about our budget, program needs and operations that will help them determine their priorities. The team members are striving for the transition to have a minimal as possible disruption to state services. The Governor will be sworn in next Monday, Dec. 2 at noon. We will keep you updated about key DHSS appointments as the information becomes available.

**WorkStar Awards**

Governor Knowles presented the 2002 WorkStar awards to at the Muldoon Job Center on Tuesday, Nov. 26. This annual event is not only a testimony to the efforts and successes of our welfare-to-work employers and employees, but to those of you who have provided the opportunity for these successes. Award recipients offered thanks and appreciation to Job Center staff in Juneau, Anchorage, Kenai and Fairbanks. The Governor was visited the Muldoon Resource Room and DPA reception desk and was very impressed. Thanks to the Muldoon staff for hosting us and other Central Region staff for helping. Great job, everyone!

For more information and pictures go to <http://dpaweb.hss.state.ak.us> (The pictures will be updated with the names of the people next week.)

**Long-Term Temporary Assistance Recipients Study Released**

Last week we released *Facing the Final Countdown: A Study of Long-Term Temporary Assistance Recipients* that was done for us by the University of Alaska, Institute of Circumpolar Health Studies. We asked them to do the study so we could validate (or not) our perceptions about our long-term clients in order to design the best services to help them move forward. Many of our busy case managers took a good amount of their time to participate in the survey by answering questions about the clients in the survey. Thanks so much, case managers, for our input into this important survey.

For more information, and a [link](#) to the report, see this attachment:

**Extraordinary Service**

It was my great pleasure again to present service awards to staff. I was in Mat-Su to present a 10-year award to Cindy Rausa, ET II, and 15-year awards, to ET III's Neena Levan and Teresa Hicks. All three started with DPA in the clerical unit and are now some of our strongest ET's! Congratulations and many, many thanks for your great work. And thanks to the Mat-Su staff for an open, honest and invigorating policy discussion (on PFD Hold Harmless among other things).

**Holiday Season**

I hope everyone had a good Thanksgiving holiday. Mine was quiet and I used it to reflect on being thankful. One thing I am thankful for is the opportunity to work in a job that helps so many people and to have a chance to work with you – dedicated, professional and caring people. I hope you will take time this season to be thankful, to relax with family and friends and to not let the perceived stress of the season overtake you. Take care.

State of Alaska  
**Department of Health and Social Services**

**Tony Knowles**  
Governor  
P.O. Box 110001  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0001  
**NEWS RELEASE**



**Jay Livey**  
Commissioner  
**907-465-3030**  
**FAX: 907-465-3068**  
[www.hss.state.ak.us](http://www.hss.state.ak.us)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 21, 2002

## **Study of long-term Temporary Assistance recipients released**

***Recipients: strong work ethic, many are working, work often not sufficient for family to reach self-sufficiency.***

The Department of Health and Social Services recently released *Facing the Final Countdown: A Study of Long-Term Temporary Assistance Recipients*. The Division of Public Assistance (DPA) collaborated with the University of Alaska Anchorage Institute for Circumpolar Health Studies on *Facing the Final Countdown*, which describes the characteristics of families who have received Temporary Assistance for at least 41 months, and are at highest risk of reaching the 60-month limit on benefits.

“The Division of Public Assistance undertook this study to understand why some families have a long-term reliance on Temporary Assistance, so that we can continue to develop effective policies and provide a pathway to self-sufficiency,” Chris Ashenbrenner, Director of Public Assistance said.

The study found that long-term recipients possess a strong work ethic and that many are working. But work is often low paying, part-time or seasonal, and not sufficient for the family to reach self-sufficiency. Although many recipients face severe challenges to sustainable employment, nearly all prefer to leave the welfare system and become self-supporting. The great majority of long-term recipients believe they should be required to work and feel their case manager helps them figure out what to do to support their families, Ashenbrenner said.

### **Findings**

- 35% of those surveyed were currently working, 55% had worked during the past year, and 97% had worked at some time in their life;
- The mean reported hourly was \$8.57, but few worked regular, full-time hours;
- 50% of those surveyed did not finish high school;
- 32% reported a mental health problem, and 50% reported being treated for depression;
- 40% reported that health problems kept them from working;
- 50% reported lack of transportation as a challenge to employment;
- 75% felt that their case manager did a good job helping them develop a good plan for getting off assistance;
- 95% agree that they would rather be employed than receive welfare.

-more-

“These findings reveal that while long-term recipients face challenges to employment, by and large this is a resilient population that would prefer to work than be on welfare,” Ashenbrenner said. “Many have taken steps to complete their education, and most have been cooperative with the demands placed on them to participate in the work-oriented activities of the Alaska Temporary Assistance Program.”

### **Online Information**

“Facing the Final Countdown: A Study of Long-Term Temporary Assistance Recipients”, [PDF]  
<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dpa>

“Reaching for Independence: A Study of Families That Have Left the Alaska Temporary Assistance Program”  
<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dpa>

Find out if you're eligible for Food Stamps  
Food Stamps Eligibility Calculator <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dpa/>

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*For more information, please contact*

Ross Soboleff  
Public Information Officer  
Department of Health and Social Services  
(907) 465-1611  
Email: [ross\\_soboleff@health.state.ak.us](mailto:ross_soboleff@health.state.ak.us)

Or

Chris Ashenbrenner, Director, Public Assistance  
(907) 465-3347

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**From:** Ashenbrenner, Chris  
**Sent:** Monday, November 25, 2002 2:51 PM  
**To:** ALL DPA Statewide Staff  
**Subject:** November **\*\*DPASStars\*\***

**This is a message to all DPA staff from Chris Ashenbrenner, Director.**

I'm pleased to announce our **\*\*DPASStars\*\*** for November 2002. These two special people are among the many in DPA who are dedicated to our mission. As you will see from the nominations, and as you know from your personal experience with them, they provide the very best in customer service and we are fortunate to have them. Thank you and congratulations, **\*\*DPASStars\*\***!

Our first November Super Star is described by her co-workers as dedicated, compassionate, knowledgeable, and extremely thorough. A "dream come true" from a supervisory stand point -- this star gives 150% to get the job done right. No matter how busy this star is they are always available to assist fellow co-workers. A true fan of 'Who's Line is it Anyway' -- this star enjoys spending a little quiet time fishing at their parents cabin and barbecuing. Can you guess who this star is?

<http://dpaweb.hss.state.ak.us/training/dpastars/dpastar13.htm>

Our next exemplary employee is the true definition of team spirit! Always available to pitch-in and take the project to the next level of excellence -- this star truly shines. Described as having the stamina of the energizer bunny - this star is guilty of affecting others with bursts of enthusiasm. Steady, confident, involved, through with an infectious smile are just a few of the words that come to mind when characterizing our star. A bit of a handyman car repair and home remodeling present no challenge to this whirlwind. Can you guess who this star is?

<http://dpaweb.hss.state.ak.us/training/dpastars/dpastar14.htm>

**Do you have a star performer in your office?** Let us know:

<mailto:dpatraining@health.state.ak.us> Our DPASStar recognitions can be put these together in many different ways. A few examples are listed below.

If you would like to remain anonymous please just let us know.

- personal one-to-one thank you's.
- office's, co-workers, and associates contributed list
- bulleted list of qualities and accomplishments



**Monthly Message to Staff from DPA Director, Chris Ashenbrenner  
October 18, 2002**

The last month has zoomed by – DPA has been very productive this fall, as always. Thanks for all your hard work and dedication to the job! Here are some highlights of the month.

**Central Region Shines!**

Central Region received a big compliment from the FNS (Food & Nutrition Services) state agency reviewers. They were so impressed with the newly designed service processes that they plan to tout them nationally as best practices. Thanks, Central Region staff for hosting the reviewers and for being so good at what you do!

**Cool EIS Enhancement**

Systems Ops received more positive feedback on their SSN cut and paste function in the first 10 minutes after the broadcast was sent than on all their enhancements for the past year! This has inspired them to continue to work in quick and easy field enhancements as often as possible. Keep telling them you appreciate them – they do great work for us.

**Food Stamp Accuracy Needs Improvement**

We're not looking too good in our Food Stamp accuracy rate right now. Many of you are working hard to develop improvement plans. I encourage you to think creatively and enthusiastically about how we can beat this thing. We've done it before and I have no doubt we can do it again. Let your leaders know what you think will make a difference and we'll work with you make it happen.

**Congressional Update**

TANF was extended through the end of December 2002. The current best bet is that Congress will probably just extend it with little or no changes through the end of this fiscal year, September 30, 2003, and work on changing it next session.

**Extraordinary Service**

It was my great pleasure to present a number of service awards to staff over the last month. I'm always so impressed with the number of long term DPA staff – it's truly this core of people that help make us so good. Receiving **25 Year (!!)** awards were:

**Randy Moore**, Budget Man Extraordinaire

**Pam Van Kirk**, Director's Most Excellent Secretary

**Margo Nash**, Network Services Fearless Leader

**Ruth McConnell** and **Vicki Harmon**, Our Super Workforce Development Expert PAA's

Thank you all for your dedication and contributions!

## **More Help for Folks**

Many of you may have seen the following in the Anchorage Daily News article. However, I think it's worthy of repeating here because of the positive impact this will have on our customers.

### **Alaska lands millions in federal grants**

Daily News Staff (*Published: September 27, 2002*)

<http://www.adn.com/business/story/1849491p-1964146c.html>

[partial list--see full article for complete list]The Alaska congressional delegation announced recent federal grants, awards and contracts worth tens of millions of dollars:

\$5.8 million to build, renovate and modernize low-income housing in 13 villages: Arctic Village, Curyung, Dillingham, Grayling, Marshall, Diomedes, Ekuk, Kotlik, Kwinhagak, Tatitlek, Newtok, Scammon Bay and Sleetmute.

\$2 million to the state Department of Health and Social Services to fund a Healthy Families home visitation program.

\$1.7 million to the Fairbanks Native Association to fund a year-round part-time early Head Start program.

\$465,000 to the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in Juneau to continue to provide civil legal representation to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking.

\$413,419 to the state government to utilize telephone and Internet technology to administer the unemployment insurance program.

\$302,228 to Safe and Fear-Free Environment in Dillingham to provide services to domestic violence victims in 33 villages in the Bristol Bay region.

\$250,000 to Tanana Chiefs Conference in Fairbanks to fund tribal and state information systems for Native Alaskan children.

\$199,257 to KIDS Are People Inc. in Wasilla to fund a transitional living program.

\$194,835 to Juneau Youth Services Inc. to fund Cornerstone Emergency Services.

\$109,450 to the Cook Inlet Tribal Council Inc. of Anchorage to fund a Health Homes Father Involvement Enhancement program.

\$8,000 to the Rural Alaska Community Action Program Inc. in Anchorage to address social problems, including domestic violence, suicide, alcohol and drug abuse, employment and training, teen pregnancy and corrections, and juvenile delinquency.

### **In summary, some food for thought**

*"Hope isn't about believing that we can change things. Hope is about believing that what we do matters."*

Vaclav Havel, President of the Czech Republic

## **Message from the DPA Director, Chris Ashenbrenner**

September 10, 2001

This is the first edition of a DPA Director's message to staff. Its purpose is to give you quick updates on what's going on from my perspective, acknowledge your good work, and share ideas. I also encourage feedback from you to me.

### **Office Visits**

Over the last month, I visited the Fairbanks, Muldoon, Gambell, Quality Assessment and Fraud Unit offices. As always when I visit staff, I leave energized from your good work and enthusiasm. We have a great range of duties in our agency, and each person has an essential role in making it all come together. Your commitment shines through your work. You have brought this Division great credibility throughout the State – thank you!

### **Employment Outcomes Improvement Project**

Regular updates about this project are posted, so I won't repeat the information. However, I would like to acknowledge the dedication of Mary Rogers and Central Region staff (Jamie Jones-Burch, Suzi Pulczynski, Sue Stone, and Julie Riley to name just a few). These folks have worked untold hours and, despite the enormity of the project, have kept the focus on an outcome to make improvements for both clients and staff.

Here's my quote of the day for this project:

***" Nothing will ever be attempted if all possible objections must be first overcome."***

--- Samuel Johnson

Keep up the good work – and let's all keep an open mind and give EOIP a chance – I think we'll see major positive results soon.

### **Bristol Bay Fishing Income Suit**

Thanks to the Quality Assessment and Coastal Field staff for their patience and time-consuming work on the Bristol Bay fishing cases. As you probably heard, we were sued over our policy on anticipating fishing income. When we looked, we found that fishing families in Bristol Bay no longer have cash draws available to them as in the past (BB region earnings from fishing have declined nearly 80% since 1995). Thus, we were closing cases based on anticipated income that people would not receive for 2 or 3 months. We negotiated with the Food Stamp feds, FNS, and made a change to policy so that the programs now provide support to families when they need it and count the income when actually received.

### **2004 Budget**

Budget development has begun for Fiscal Year 2004 – seems incredible, doesn't it? I am working with the Division sections Chiefs (Mary, Ellie and Jim D.) to put forward a budget that addresses our needs, yet is reasonable in light of the state budget situation. Tough assignment, but I will be advocating for our most basic needs – staffing, equipment and supplies – along with funding to support the growing APA caseload.

### **NEW Conference**

Thanks mostly to food stamp reinvestment and NEW funding, DPA was able to send nine employees to the National Eligibility Workers (NEW) Training Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas. Attendees were Vinita Kunnuk and Helen Scollan, Central; Christine Wheeler, Coastal; Robin Brit, Northern; Morgan Effenberger, Southeast; Clarrissa Ridgway, Field Services; Maria Celli-Miller, SD&T; Gwen McCormick, Sys Ops and National New Board Member; and NEW President JoLynn Cagle, SD&T.

Reports say that learned lots, had fun and were able to support the NEW national president, our very own JoLynn Cagle. If you haven't heard about the conference from one of these folks, be sure to ask them!

### **Federal Legislation Updates**

The Farm Bill was signed into law recently and has some very good provisions – more reasonable QA standards and allowing states to choose some options to improve Food Stamp Program support for working recipients. Food Stamp Policy is working with Chief's and other Division folks to sort out the changes we may be making over the next year or so. I think you'll like them, so stay tuned.....

TANF Reauthorization has stalled in Congress. The House passed a bill that looks quite different enough from the Senate's direction. People are concerned that they will not come to agreement this year (they only have until the end of September as that is when the current authorizing legislation expires). It's quite possible that the current program could just be extended for another year. There's an outside chance that there will be a 3-year extension. However, it's very difficult to predict what Congress will do, so we'll just wait and see.

### **Food for Thought:**

***" Great people are those who make others feel that they, too, can become great."***

--- Mark Twain

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**From:** Ashenbrenner, Chris  
**Sent:** Monday, July 15, 2002 1:51 PM  
**To:** ALL DPA Statewide Staff; ALL DPA State Associates  
**Cc:** Livey, Jay A.; Sturrock, Kathy; Melinda M Cavanaugh  
**Subject:** Appreciation

**This is a message from Chris Ashenbrenner, Director  
for all DPA (and some DOL and DMA) staff**

Welcome to Public Assistance Worker Appreciation Week! This week we should all take a few minutes from our busy lives to recognize and appreciate one another and ourselves for the good work we do here at DPA.

Although this is only my second month as Director, I have had the good fortune of working many jobs in DPA from clerk-typist to ET to Program Officer and that experience over the last 20 years gives me a great appreciation for what you all do every day to provide services to people, whether they are "internal" or "external" customers. I also realize that it takes every one of us pulling together to make things work the right way - thanks to all of you for your efforts

**Administrative Clerks and Assistants** are the foundation of our business. You are the people that help people and services get to the right place at the right time. You may be overseeing medical coupon production, processing travel authorizations for your fellow workers, paying child care for families, authorizing Heating Assistance vouchers, or greeting applicants at our front door - these are the essential functions that keep our business going every day, all day. Thank you for all your hard work!

**Eligibility Technicians** are the backbone of the Division. You have the responsibility and reward of getting essential, often life sustaining, benefits to needy families and individuals. It is one of the most important jobs in state government, and you all do it so well. Despite all the change brought by welfare reform and other initiatives over the last few years, you have continued steady on the course to get benefits out that help people so much. Please know that you do meaningful and important work and thank you for keeping it all going during these last five years of constant change!

**Workforce Development Specialists** have the challenging and important job of understanding both eligibility and case management and combining those skills to help people move toward independence. You have done an exceptional job for our Temporary Assistance customers and we are looking forward to using your unique set of skills as we bring up the Employment Outcomes Improvement Project. Thanks for everything you do to help people help themselves!

**Social Workers** help case managers and families deal with some of the tougher issues facing our more challenged Temporary Assistance recipients. Their unique set of skills and qualifications are an important part of case management and is especially needed for families facing the 60-month limit. Thank you, social workers, for your dedication and professional expertise in this area!

Some of you are actually Dept. of Labor workers, but we think of you as our own. Thanks to all **Employment Security Specialists and Vocational Counselors** who help move people from Temporary Assistance and Food Stamps into work and self-sufficiency. What a great job you do for families!

Then there's all you folks who support other workers so they can provide better services - whether you're a **programmer, trainer, network tech, researcher, analyst, quality assurance worker, fraud investigator, or**

other support services worker, the job you do is essential to meeting our goals and ultimately helping our customers. Thanks from me and all your coworkers!

And last but not least, thanks to the Division's supervisors and managers who go the extra mile to ensure that the gazillions of administrative details are done, and still make the time to listen, coach and to reward their staff. Thanks to you for keeping your focus on what you need to do to help DPA workers have satisfying and rewarding work and to meet our mission of helping Alaskans improve their quality of life.

I hope you all have a great week - enjoy your picnics and other celebrations and know that you are truly appreciated in every sense of the word!

One more **BIG** thanks - - to the National Eligibility Worker's, Alaska Chapter, for their support of our mission and for leading the way in establishing Public Assistance Worker Appreciation Week.

*Chris Ashenbrenner*