

# Grant Approval Memo



**Grantee:** Iliuliuk Family and Health Services, Inc.  
**Request Amount:** \$500,000.00  
**Project Title:** Iliuliuk Family & Health Services Behavioral Health Safe Room  
**Grant Term:** 7/1/2026 to 6/30/2027  
**Trust Staff:** Samantha Ponts

## **Staff Analysis:**

- **What does this project do?**  
Trust funds will support direct capital development costs associated with constructing a behavioral health and trauma “Safe Room” suite within the Emergency Department at Iliuliuk Family Health Services (IFHS) in Unalaska. This project seeks funding to complete the construction and safety enhancements necessary for the behavioral health Safe Room. These improvements are essential for a trauma-informed, secure environment that supports short-term behavioral health assessment, stabilization, and monitoring while individuals await transfer, tele-behavioral health, or safe discharge. Trust funds will support the capital costs for the construction of the behavioral suites.
- **Who is receiving the funds?**  
Iliuliuk Family and Health Services, Inc. (IFHS) is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) and a Frontier Extended Stay Clinic (FESC) serving the remote community of Unalaska. It is the only facility in the state with a Level V Trauma designation. IFHS is the sole provider of urgent, emergent, and primary medical care for Unalaska and the surrounding Aleutian Island communities, including a large transient population connected to the commercial fishing industry. Because of Unalaska’s geographic isolation, frequent severe weather, and distance from off-island behavioral health facilities, IFHS serves as the primary point of contact for individuals experiencing behavioral health crises who require both medical stabilization and behavioral health assessment.
- **Why is staff recommending this project?**  
Unalaska currently lacks any dedicated, safe, and clinically appropriate space for individuals experiencing acute behavioral health crises. Individuals presenting with severe emotional distress, suicidal ideation, intoxication, or other psychiatric emergencies are often managed in standard medical exam rooms or, when they cannot safely return home, held in the Unalaska correctional facility. Technical assistance provided by Agnew::Beck confirmed that IFHS and its partners experience approximately 150 behavioral health crisis encounters annually. Of these, over 100 require a safe, supervised setting, and about 35–40 cases each year need off-island transfer. Frequent transport delays due to weather mean individuals may wait 24–48 hours or longer for appropriate placement or evaluation. Agnew::Beck’s findings highlight the absence of a “safe place for help” as the most significant gap in Unalaska’s behavioral health crisis response system. Community support for this project is extensive and well documented. IFHS collaborated with the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association (APIA), City of Unalaska officials, law enforcement, and other community stakeholders during the Agnew::Beck technical assistance process
- **Will this be a multi-year project?**  
This is a one-year (12-month) funding request.

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## **Trust Five Year Funding History**

No previous Trust grants.

## **Comp Plan Identification**

Area of Focus	Objective	Comments
Area of Focus 7: Services in the Least Restrictive Environment	7.3 Reduce the number of Trust beneficiaries entering or becoming involved with Alaska's criminal justice or juvenile justice system	

## **Trust Focus Area Connection**

Budget Area	Strategy	Comments
Mental Health & Addiction Intervention	MHAI - Ensure Alaskans have access to comprehensive crisis services and supports	

## **Project Description (from grant application)**

Iliuliuk Family and Health Services, Inc. (IFHS) is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) and Frontier Extended Stay Clinic (FESC) serving the remote community of Unalaska, Alaska, and is the only facility in the State of Alaska with a Level V Trauma designation. A Level V Trauma designation signifies the capability to provide initial evaluation, stabilization, and life-saving emergency care for traumatic injuries, including advanced assessment and resuscitation, prior to transfer to higher-level trauma centers when necessary. This trauma capability is closely linked to behavioral health crisis response, as individuals experiencing acute behavioral health emergencies often present with self-inflicted injuries, substance-related trauma, severe agitation, or co-occurring medical instability that require immediate trauma-informed medical intervention. IFHS is the sole provider of urgent, emergent, and primary medical care for Unalaska and surrounding Aleutian Island communities, including a large transient population associated with the commercial fishing industry. Due to Unalaska's geographic isolation, frequent severe weather, and distance from off-island behavioral health facilities, IFHS functions as the primary point of contact for individuals experiencing behavioral health crises who require both medical stabilization and behavioral health assessment.

### **Problem Addressed**

Unalaska currently lacks any dedicated, safe, and clinically appropriate space for individuals experiencing acute behavioral health crises. Individuals presenting with severe emotional distress, suicidal ideation, intoxication, or other psychiatric emergencies are often managed in standard medical exam rooms or, when they cannot safely return home, held in the Unalaska correctional facility. This practice places an inappropriate burden on law enforcement and corrections personnel and is not conducive to effective behavioral health assessment, stabilization, or trauma-informed care.

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Technical assistance provided by Agnew::Beck Consulting, funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, confirmed that IFHS and its community partners experience approximately 150 behavioral health crisis encounters annually, with an estimated 100+ episodes per year requiring a safe, supervised setting and approximately 35–40 cases annually requiring off-island transfer. Transport delays due to weather frequently result in individuals waiting 24–48 hours or longer for appropriate placement or evaluation. Agnew::Beck’s findings further identified the absence of a “safe place for help” as the most significant gap in Unalaska’s behavioral health crisis response system.

## Project Description

IFHS is undertaking a State-funded renovation and expansion of its existing clinic, scheduled for completion in late 2026, to modernize services and address long-standing infrastructure limitations. As part of this expansion, IFHS has designed a behavioral health and trauma “Safe Room” suite within the Emergency Department, built to hospital-grade behavioral health and safety standards. One emergency room will function as a dedicated behavioral health safe space, with additional emergency rooms incorporating behavioral safety design features to support crisis care.

The proposed project seeks funding to complete the specialized construction and safety enhancements required for the behavioral health Safe Room and associated emergency treatment spaces. These enhancements are essential to ensure the space functions as intended: a trauma-informed, secure, and clinically appropriate environment for short-term behavioral health assessment, stabilization, and monitoring while individuals await transfer, connection to tele-behavioral health services, or safe discharge.

The Safe Room is not intended to function as an inpatient psychiatric unit, but rather as a critical stabilization environment aligned with national best practices, including Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) crisis continuum framework, which emphasizes access to someone to contact, someone to respond, and a safe place for help. This project directly addresses the “safe place” component that is currently missing in Unalaska.

## Target Population and Geographic Area Served

The primary beneficiaries are individuals experiencing behavioral health crises in Unalaska and surrounding Aleutian Island communities, including:

Year-round residents

Seasonal and transient commercial fishing workers

Individuals with co-occurring substance use and mental health conditions

Unalaska has a year-round population of approximately 4,000 residents, with an additional 8,000–9,000 seasonal workers, resulting in a service population that exceeds 12,000 people for much of the year.

## Expected Outcomes

The project will result in:

A dedicated behavioral health Safe Room built to hospital and behavioral safety standards

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- Reduced reliance on law enforcement and correctional facilities for behavioral health holds
- Improved safety and dignity for individuals in crisis
- Enhanced ability for IFHS staff to provide trauma-informed stabilization care
- More efficient coordination with tele-behavioral health providers and off-island transfer partners
- Improved system capacity to manage increasing behavioral health crisis volume

## Community Support and Collaboration

Community support for this project is extensive and well documented. IFHS collaborated with the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association (APIA), City of Unalaska officials, law enforcement, and other community stakeholders during the Agnew::Beck technical assistance process. APIA, which provides outpatient behavioral health services, lacks appropriate facilities for acute crisis stabilization and has identified the IFHS Safe Room as a critical complement to its services.

Local government, schools, tribal organizations, the U.S. Coast Guard, and local businesses consistently identify the lack of behavioral health crisis infrastructure as a major community concern. The Safe Room project reflects broad community consensus and represents a coordinated, systems-based response to a long-standing gap in care.

## Beneficiary Groups

- Individuals experiencing behavioral health crises
- Families and caregivers
- Commercial fishing workforce
- City of Unalaska and local law enforcement
- APIA and other behavioral health partners
- The broader Unalaska community

## **Grantee Proposed Evaluation Measures (from grant application)**

IFHS will measure project success using a combination of service utilization data, clinical process indicators, and system-level outcomes, collected through IFHS's electronic health record (Epic) and operational tracking systems. Data will be aggregated and reported in compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), with no individually identifiable patient information shared.

### How much did we do? (Outputs)

IFHS will track the volume of behavioral health crisis services supported by the Safe Room, including:

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Number of individuals served annually in the Safe Room for behavioral health concerns

Number of behavioral health crisis encounters requiring supervised stabilization

Length of stay in the Safe Room (hours/days awaiting transfer or safe discharge)

Number of crisis encounters involving coordination with APIA, law enforcement, or medevac services

These measures will document the scale of service delivery and utilization of the Safe Room as a critical crisis stabilization resource.

How well did we do? (Quality and Effectiveness)  
To assess quality and effectiveness, IFHS will track:

Percentage of individuals successfully transferred to appropriate off-island care when required

Timeliness of behavioral health assessment and initiation of stabilization following arrival

These measures will demonstrate whether the Safe Room is functioning as intended: providing timely, trauma-informed, and clinically appropriate crisis care.

Is anyone better off as a result? (Outcomes)  
To assess beneficiary impact, IFHS will monitor:

Reduction in repeat behavioral health crisis visits for the same individuals over time (where applicable and measurable in aggregate)

Improved continuity of care through documented referrals to APIA or tele-behavioral health services following stabilization

Qualitative feedback from clinical staff and partner agencies regarding safety, appropriateness of care, and system coordination

Collectively, these outcomes will indicate improved safety, dignity, and effectiveness for individuals experiencing behavioral health crises, as well as reduced strain on law enforcement and corrections systems.

## Data Management and Reporting

Epic's reporting and research modules will be used to generate aggregate reports on behavioral health crisis encounters, service utilization, and outcomes. IFHS has experience using Epic data for quality improvement, compliance reporting, and grant evaluation, and will use these same processes to document progress and outcomes associated with this project.

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## **Proposed Project Performance Measures (developed by the Trust)**

Provide a narrative describing the timeline, activities, successes, challenges, and any lessons learned during the construction and safety enhancements for the behavioral health Safe Room. Be sure to include electronic photographs of the space prior to construction, as well as upon completion of the construction and safety enhancements. Additionally, provide a final list of other funding sources for the Safe Room project.

## **Sustainability (from grant application)**

Trust Partnership grant funding will be used as one-time capital support to complete the specialized construction and safety enhancements required for the behavioral health Safe Room within the IFHS Emergency Department. Once constructed, the Safe Room will be fully integrated into IFHS's ongoing clinical operations and sustained without reliance on continued Trust funding.

IFHS will sustain the Safe Room through its existing healthcare operations and diversified revenue base, including Medicare, Medicaid, private commercial insurance (including plans commonly used by the fishing industry), and federal reimbursement associated with IFHS's status as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) and Frontier Extended Stay Clinic (FESC). These revenue sources currently support 24/7 urgent and emergency medical services, facility operations, staffing, and maintenance at the existing clinic and will similarly support the ongoing operation of the Safe Room.

Importantly, the Safe Room is designed to support short-term assessment, stabilization, and monitoring, rather than inpatient psychiatric treatment. As such, it does not require the addition of new licensed service lines or specialized staffing beyond what IFHS already maintains for emergency and urgent care. Ongoing costs associated with the Safe Room—such as routine maintenance, utilities, and standard clinical staffing—will be absorbed into IFHS's existing operational budget.

In addition to financial sustainability, the project supports system sustainability by reducing reliance on inappropriate and costly alternatives for behavioral health crisis management, including correctional facilities and extended law enforcement involvement. Findings from the AMHTA-funded Agnew::Beck technical assistance indicate that a dedicated, safe stabilization space will improve coordination with behavioral health partners, facilitate more timely transfers when needed, and reduce strain on local public safety resources.

As IFHS completes its State-funded clinic expansion and continues to collaborate with partners such as the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association (APIA), the Safe Room will function as a permanent component of Unalaska's behavioral health crisis response system. The Trust's one-time investment will therefore yield long-term, sustainable impact by establishing critical infrastructure that can be maintained through existing operations and aligned funding sources.

## **Who We Serve (from grant application)**

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority's beneficiaries include individuals experiencing mental illness, substance use disorders, intellectual and developmental disabilities, Alzheimer's disease and

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related dementias, and traumatic brain injuries. This project is specifically designed to benefit Trust beneficiaries in Unalaska and the surrounding Aleutian Islands who experience acute behavioral health crises and currently lack access to a safe, therapeutic environment for short-term stabilization and observation.

The primary beneficiary group for this project is individuals experiencing serious mental illness and acute behavioral health symptoms, including suicidal ideation, severe emotional distress, psychosis, or co-occurring substance use, who require supervised care but do not have access to an appropriate behavioral health facility in their community. Due to the absence of a dedicated crisis stabilization space, Trust beneficiaries in Unalaska are often managed in standard medical exam rooms or, when they cannot safely return home, held in the local correctional facility—an outcome that is neither clinically appropriate nor trauma-informed.

The proposed behavioral health Safe Room will also benefit Trust beneficiaries experiencing substance use withdrawal, traumatic brain injury, or cognitive impairment related to dementia or Alzheimer’s disease, when symptoms result in confusion, agitation, or risk of harm to self or others. For these individuals, a safe, secure, and medically supervised environment is critical during periods of acute instability, particularly when off-island transfer is delayed by weather or transportation limitations.

Trust beneficiaries will be better off as a result of this project in several specific ways:

Improved safety and dignity, through access to a trauma-informed, clinically appropriate space rather than correctional settings

Timely stabilization and assessment, reducing risk of harm during behavioral health crises

Reduced involvement with law enforcement and corrections, supporting recovery-oriented care rather than criminalization

Improved coordination with behavioral health partners, including referrals to the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association (APIA) and tele-behavioral health services

Continuity of care during transport delays, which are common in this remote region

By establishing the only dedicated behavioral health crisis stabilization space in the Aleutian Islands, this project addresses a critical gap in the local system of care and directly advances the Trust’s mission to improve outcomes for its beneficiaries. The Safe Room will function as a permanent, sustainable resource that ensures Trust beneficiaries in Unalaska have access to safe, appropriate care during moments of greatest vulnerability.

## **Estimated Numbers of Beneficiaries Served Experiencing (from grant application)**

Developmental Disabilities:	3
Alzheimer’s Disease & Related Dementias:	5
Substance Abuse	970
Traumatic Brain Injuries:	1,820

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Secondary Beneficiaries (family members or caregivers providing support to primary beneficiaries):	3,850
Number of people to be trained	11

## **Project Budget (from grant application)**

Space or Facilities Costs	\$500,000.00
Space or Facilities Costs (Other Sources)	\$20,500,000.00
Space or Facilities Narrative	\$500,000 will fund direct capital development costs for the construction of the behavioral suites described in the previous narrative.

Equipment Costs	\$0.00
Equipment Costs (Other Sources)	\$2,705,000.00
Equipment Narrative	There are no direct medical equipment, diagnostic equipment for example, being funded by this request.

## **Other Funding Sources (from grant application)**

State of Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (CCED) Grant Agreement 21-CCP-03, SECURED	\$20,000,000.00
Congressional Directed Spending - Murkowski appropriation, SECURED	\$2,705,000.00
The Rasmuson Foundation, SECURED	\$500,000.00
<b>Total Leveraged Funds</b>	<b>\$23,205,000.00</b>