

Point of care HCV RNA testing in Alaska

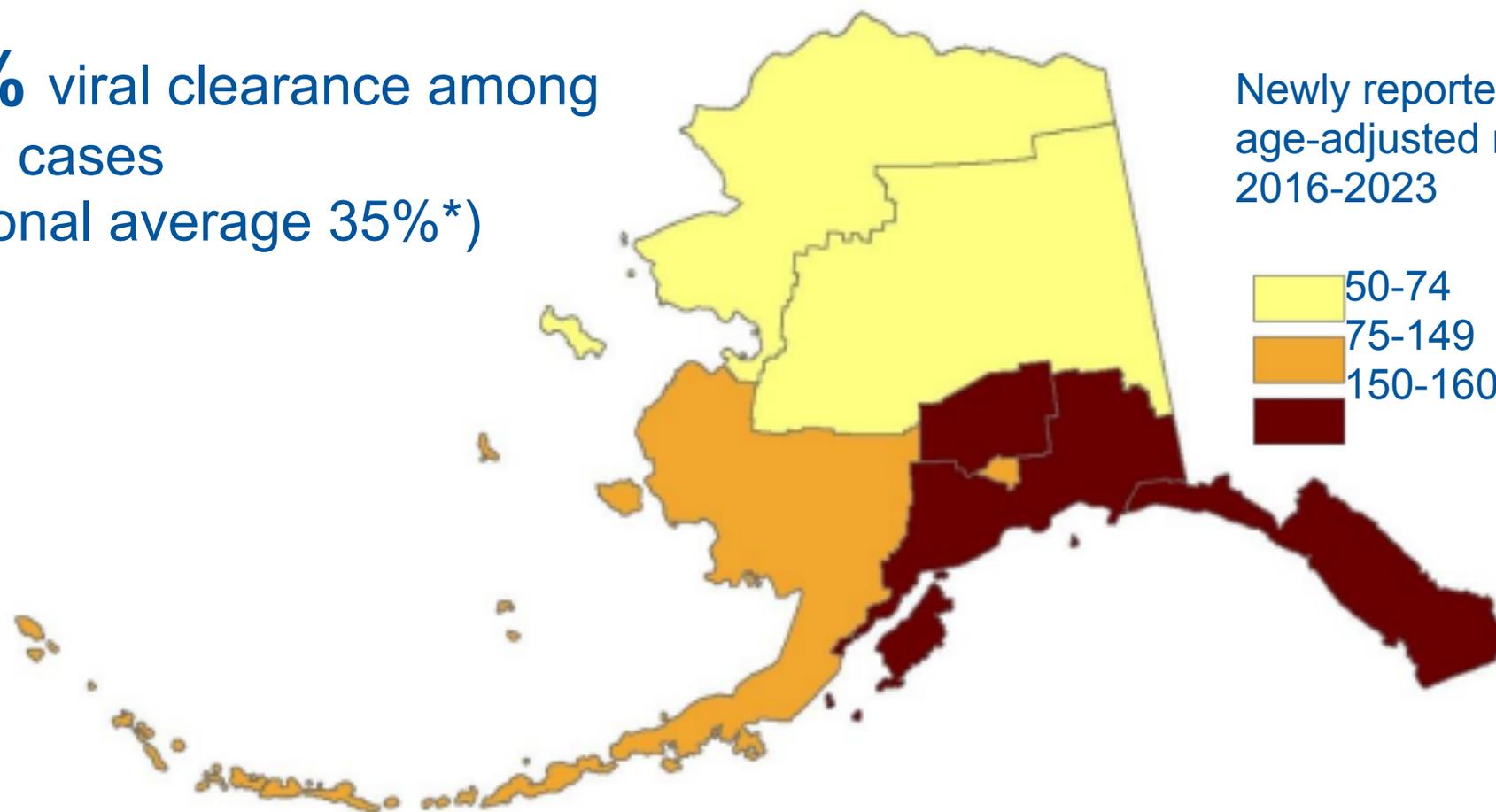
NASTAD VLC July 2025

Elizabeth Ohlsen, MD, MSc
Alaska Division of Public Health

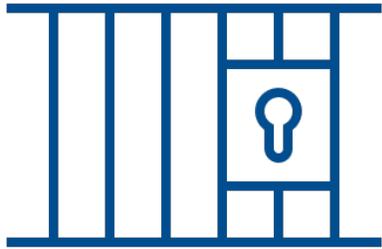


Hepatitis C in Alaska

32% viral clearance among
2023 cases
(national average 35%*)



Current efforts



Department of
Corrections opt-out
testing; treatment



Public health
center testing



Clinician
communication





Strategic Expansion Efforts

Pilot: public health center-led outreach with HCV RNA rapid testing

Used CDC HCV UOB to purchase two Cepheid GeneXpert machines, HCV RNA cartridges, controls, and supplies





Center 1

City of ~31,000 population, >200 PEH

SSP co-located with homeless shelter and mobile outreach clinic

Public health center with PHN champion, member of state hepatitis working group and also on the board of the homeless shelter





Center 1

Machine located in the homeless shelter initially, then moved to the SSP across the parking lot

Mobile clinic available for follow-up labs, HCV treatment initiation

PHNs help with labs, case management, incentives





Center 1

Since March 2025, 33 clients tested: 8 positive (24%), 11 negative, 14 indeterminate*

Of the 8 positives:

- 1 lost to follow up, 3 have outreach in progress
- 2 were linked to care at a partner clinic
- 1 is in process of starting treatment at the PHC
- 1 has started treatment through the PHC

*Cartridge issues in first two months of pilot resolved after a new lot was used





Center 2

City of ~286,000 population, >2,000 PEH

Public health center is increasing outreach to homeless encampments and shelters

Working towards HCV treatment and launching SSP; currently referring for HCV treatment and MOUD, providing HCV and STI testing and STI treatment





Center 2

Machine located in the mobile outreach van

HCV RNA testing done simultaneously with rapid HIV/
syphilis testing & collecting samples for HCV viral
load, gonorrhea, chlamydia

Incentives offered for testing and treatment





Center 2

Outreach in a large encampment in early June:

8 tests, 2 positive, 2 negative, 4 indeterminate. Labs including HBV drawn at the time of testing.

None of the positive patients have been able to be located for treatment.

City evicted the encampment in mid-June.





New opportunities

Tribal health consortium starting a similar model

The largest FQHC adopting HCV RNA testing

Other clinics interested



Common Challenges



Cost



Provider
confidence

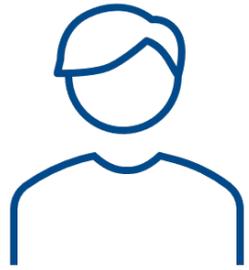


Access



Acceptability

Challenges with HCV RNA testing



Engaging
patients



Obtaining
samples



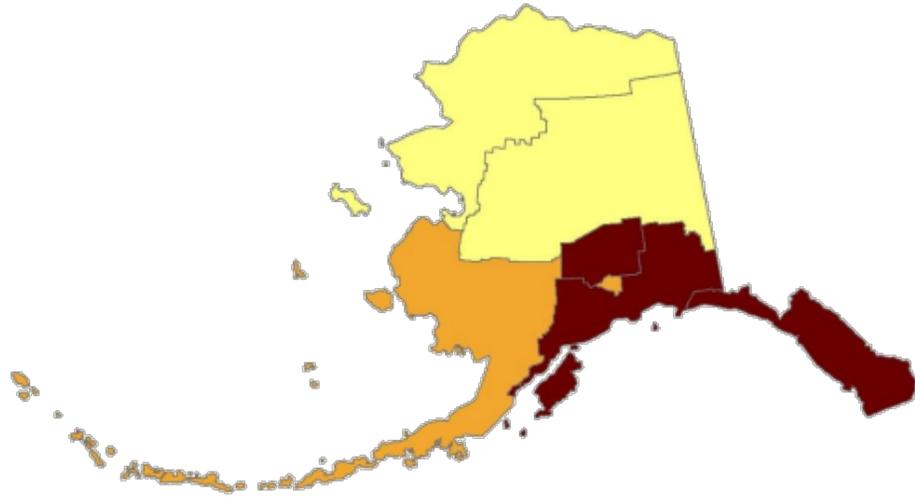
*HBV status**



Follow-up

**Now resolved with new AASLD guidelines on the [hcvguidelines.org](https://www.hcvguidelines.org) front page: <https://www.hcvguidelines.org/sites/default/files/full-guidance-pdf/HCV%20Test%20and%20Treat%20Final%20011725.pdf>*





Questions?

Alaska Division of Public Health Hepatitis Team

Elizabeth Ohlsen, MD, MSc elizabeth.ohlsen@alaska.gov

Kira England, PhD kira.england@alaska.gov

Kumi Rattenbury, RN kumi.rattenbury@alaska.gov

Niko Masters nicholas.masters@alaska.gov