THE STATE of ALASKA
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Education & Early Development

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**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** **Residential School Program Families and Staff**

**FROM:** **Dr. Michael Johnson, Commissioner**

**DATE:** **March 16, 2020**

**SUBJECT:** **Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Residential School Programs Update**

Governor Dunleavy's COVID-19 response team has been meeting regularly to stay apprised of all recommendations made by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and how these may impact our state and our unique system of public residential schools.

The careful planning and consultation we have received from our residential school programs through this COVID-19 public health emergency is commendable. You and your staff continue to build strong relationships with students and have worked to not only prepare for a potential virus outbreak, but to ease anxiety and establish prevention measures.

Given the unpredictability of the rate this virus will spread and the containment measures that may be necessary in our unique state, residential school programs should begin the process of returning students to their families and home communities. This process should be completed by Friday, March 27, 2020.

At this time, our Alaskan communities are in a low risk level, however we cannot predict how long that will remain. Students traveling home in normal circumstances can experience challenges with distance, plane schedules, and weather. The potential management of quarantines or travel restrictions could add further complications. To best keep the residential schools' communities safe and provide assurance that residential school students are able to travel home and be reunited with their families, each residential school program will begin the process of exit travel at this time.

Residential school staff will work toward distance delivery plans to provide continued education through the end of the school year. As available and needed, home community schools with internet access will be made available to residential school students.

At times like these, Alaskans are reminded that our very large state is actually a tight knit community. I am appreciative of a statewide school system that is working to best serve all of our students at this time.