

## Southeast Senior Services

South East Senior Services is proud to “help the elders to remain in their traditional communities for as long as possible.”

– *Marianne Mills, Director, SESS*

### Program Description

Southeast Senior Services (SESS) partners with nine tribal organizations in Southeast Alaska to provide caregiver support services tailored to fit each community’s needs. SESS manages Title VI, Part C grant funds for each tribal community and coordinates with the tribal staff at senior centers to provide caregiver support services, which include:

- Chore services
- Caregiver advocacy
- Information and referral
- Support groups
- Respite services
- Transportation
- Equipment

### Successful Strategies

SESS collaborates with tribal partners to provide caregiver support services specific to each community’s needs. Given the rural geography of Southeast Alaska, many tribes live in areas with low populations that can only be reached by plane or boat, making each community and program unique in its approach to caregiver support.

Understanding the unique character of each community is essential to a successful program. Recognizing this allows SESS to better coordinate planning and partnership relationships between various agencies, like tribal organizations and local non-profits.

**Operated by:** Catholic Community Services

**Location:** Juneau, AK

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**Community:** SESS is the largest of three program divisions within the private, non-profit organization Catholic Community Services. SESS manages a variety of home- and community-based services for older Alaskans and their family caregivers throughout Southeast Alaska. SESS collaborates with the following organizations to provide caregiver support services tailored to each community’s needs:

- Kootznoowoo, Inc.
- Craig Tribal Association
- Skagway Traditional Council
- Yakutat Tlingit Tribe
- Wrangell Cooperative Association
- Sitka Tribe of Alaska
- Organized Village of Kake
- Hoonah Indian Association
- Klawock Cooperative Association

### Partnership

SESS connects each partner tribal organization with local agencies that provide caregiver support services to avoid programmatic duplication, a requirement of Title VI grant funding. Each tribal community has a specialist who identifies needs or access to services. These employees are:

- Family Caregiver Support Specialists
- Caregiver Advocates
- Expert support providers for the SESS Regional Family Support toll-free hotline

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“Alaska has the fastest growing senior population in the country and the public needs to have a greater appreciation of the situation of family members caring for aging loved ones. Also, there is a need for family caregivers to identify themselves as such...they are worthy of support services and that they are not alone.”

– Marianne Mills, Director, SESS

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### Cultural Considerations

Most staff who manage tribal community senior centers and provide direct services are Alaska Natives. To provide cultural consideration in the services, SESS:

- Encourage community members to provide traditional foods and transportation to cultural events
- Realize tribal communities prefer outside professional counselors to come into the community to maintain confidentiality
- Host open houses, public discussions with tribal communities, and one-on-one discussions with tribal leaders to identify needs
- Keep communication with tribal communities open through annual satisfaction surveys, using pre-stamped, pre-addressed envelopes, and bi-annual site visits

### Training

SESS host monthly teleconference meetings with staff to discuss challenges and solutions, during which an invited trainer or guest speaker presents on topics like legal paperwork or Medicare benefits. SESS have also sent staff to national conferences to learn more about trends and training related to family caregiver support.

### Funding

SESS manages funding from Title III E and Title VI, Part C, which fund tribal communities' services. Title III funds are used to support services like respite care, chore services, or emergency response systems.

### Lessons Learned

SESS recognize that caregiver support is a concept that communities are not familiar with. Many family caregivers do not recognize themselves as caregivers or take advantage of resources and services available to them. SESS recommends raising awareness and understanding of who could be considered a family caregiver.