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Q1 What is your name? Which office are you running for and which district do you hope to represent?

Mike Dunleavy, Governor of Alaska

Q2 What is your vision for Alaska when it comes to reducing sexual assault and domestic violence? What steps are you prepared to take to get there?

Recently, our state declared a state of emergency regarding the opioid epidemic, and it certainly is a crisis. Alaska has had shockingly high rates of sexual violence for decades, yet the problem has never been elevated to the status of “emergency.” Alaskans are being victimized by child abuse, maltreatment, neglect, child sexual abuse, domestic violence, and sexual violence at alarming rates. Substance abuse and childhood trauma are often root causes that perpetuate these problems through generational cycles.

We must focus on supporting primary prevention efforts. We need to provide comprehensive support to child victims. We must also change our criminal justice system, which has failed victims, and our communities, for far too long. Whether it’s plea deals that allow violent sexual offenders to walk with no jail time or failing to prosecute a staggering number of reported sexual assaults, the problems in our current system need to be fixed. It is the fundamental responsibility of government to protect the safety of Alaskans, and right now the government is failing in this mission.

Q3 Are you familiar with local programs that provide domestic violence and sexual assault services to victims across Alaska? Have you recently visited your local domestic violence/sexual assault shelter or victim services program? What is your plan to support these programs?

Yes, I am familiar with the almost two dozen shelter programs statewide. I have visited my local program, and many others throughout the state. I have also met individually and in group settings with forensic nurses, crimes against children investigators, special victims’ unit investigators, cyber crime investigators, child advocacy centers, rape crisis counselors, survivors of trauma, prosecuting attorneys, victim’s rights agencies, and crime lab employees.

I’ve also met with many Alaskan families who have experienced a loss due to domestic violence, or a failure of the system to protect them or their loved ones.

Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA)

Q4 What responsibilities do you believe the Legislature and our elected officials hold in advancing efforts to prevent domestic violence and sexual assault? Would you be willing to maintain or increase the current level of funding for prevention and victims services?

I believe that all elected officials have a serious obligation to support and advocate on behalf of programs that prevent sexual assault and domestic violence. Protecting public safety is the highest responsibility of state government. As for funding – I would like an audit of all state-funded programs that focus on interpersonal violence. We must have adequate resources committed to primary prevention, domestic violence, and sexual violence. However, these areas of focus are not the same—and I want to examine whether it would be beneficial to have separate funding streams and separate, measurable goals for each area.

Q5 Alaska's 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey reports that 1 in 10 Alaskan students had experienced sexual violence (being forced by anyone to do sexual acts) during the past year. Do you feel that sexual assault, sexual abuse, and dating violence prevention education should take place in our schools and in what way would you suggest enhancing efforts to educate Alaska's youth on these important subjects? Who do you think shares this responsibility?

As a former teacher, and a father of three daughters, these findings are extremely disturbing to me. Our teachers must be well equipped, supported, and have a strong system in place if they receive a disclosure of harm from a student. The response of our criminal justice system must also be swift. It is essential to engage with our youth on violence prevention, but always with an eye on the interrelation of suicide and substance abuse. The passage of Bree's Law, which I voted for, is geared toward providing teen dating violence education in our schools. I support providing the funding necessary to ensure that Bree's Law accomplishes its intended purpose.
