Background
During 1999–2013, rickets was more common among Alaska Native children than among children in the general US population. One possible reason for this disparity was declining maternal dietary intake of vitamin D-containing foods like salmon. In 2016, the Yup’ik Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC) started routine prenatal vitamin D supplementation for pregnant women with 1,000 IU of vitamin D in addition to routine prenatal vitamins. In 2018, the Alaska Vitamin D Workgroup published Alaska-specific recommendations for vitamin D supplementation in infants and pregnant women (Table). This Bulletin presents findings from a study evaluating the impact of routine YKHC prenatal vitamin D supplementation on 25(OH)D concentrations, a survey of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding supplementation, and an update on rickets cases in Alaska Native children.

Table. Alaska Vitamin D Workgroup Recommendations for Vitamin D Intake and Supplementation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Dietary Intake/Supplementation</th>
<th>Screening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infants (0–12 months)</td>
<td>Exclusively breast-fed</td>
<td>Suppleent with 800 IU/day D-Drops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exclusively formula-fed</td>
<td>Suppleent with 400 IU/day D-Drops in addition to 400 IU/Liter in formula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnant Women</td>
<td></td>
<td>Suppleent with 1,000 IU/day in addition to daily prenatal vitamin containing 400 IU/day (not to exceed 4,000 IU/day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
<td>Follow National Academy of Medicine diet/supplementation intake recommendation of 600 IU/day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Methods
We compared 25-hydroxyvitamin D (25(OH)D) concentrations in Yup’ik Kuskokwim (YK) Delta prenatal women from 2015–2016 (pre-supplementation) with those from 2017–2019 (post-supplementation). YKHC conducted a web-based survey to evaluate knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors about vitamin D supplementation among YK Delta residents. We also reviewed the incidence of childhood rickets (ICD9, ICD10) diagnosed in Alaska Native children aged <10 years at the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) during 2001–2021.

Results
Of the 1,522 prenatal women in the study, 175 (11.5%) were from the pre-supplementation period and 1,347 (88.5%) were from the post-supplementation period. All were evaluated during late pregnancy (>20 weeks gestation). The mean 25(OH)D concentrations increased by 36.5% (from 20.0 ng/ml pre-supplementation to 27.3 ng/ml post-supplementation; p<0.0001) during the study period. The proportion of women with deficient (<12 ng/ml) and insufficient (12 ng/ml–<20 ng/ml) 25(OH)D concentrations decreased by 66.4% and 54.1%, respectively (p<0.0001; Figure).

The late pregnancy mean 25(OH)D level was 35.9 ng/mL for women with >120 days of vitamin D refills versus 25.4 ng/mL for women with 0 days of refills (Kruskal-Wallis Test: Chi-Square 69.16, DF 4, p<0.0001).

Overall, 95 YK Delta residents completed surveys, including 36 (34%) pregnant women, 27 (28%) YKHC employees, 17 (18%) mothers, and 25 (27%) health care providers (more than one response possible). Most respondents (86, 91%) said it was important for pregnant women to take daily vitamin D supplements. Sixty-one (64%) stated that they already knew about prenatal and infant supplementation recommendations. Of these, 31 (51%) had heard from their prenatal provider, 22 (36%) had heard from another provider, and <10% each reported hearing from another source (e.g., pharmacy, WIC flyer). Of the 36 pregnant women who completed the survey, 33 (92%) reported taking daily/near daily vitamin D supplements. Of 32 parents of infants completing the survey, 13 (41%) reported giving their infant daily or near daily vitamin D drops. The incidence of childhood rickets diagnosed in AN children aged <10 years at ANMC decreased 49% from 4.88 cases per 100,000 children during 2001–2016 to 2.51 cases per 100,000 children during 2017–2020.

Discussion
During the study period, 25(OH)D levels increased by 36.5% among prenatal women in the YK Delta after initiation of routine prenatal supplementation with 1,000 IU of vitamin D in addition to routine prenatal vitamins. Moreover, the proportion of prenatal women with deficient 25(OH)D levels decreased by 66.4%. Receiving >120 days of refills (vs. no refills) was also associated with higher vitamin D levels in this population of prenatal women. Awareness of the importance of vitamin D supplementation among pregnant women and infants was high among survey respondents. However, while 92% of pregnant women who responded reported routinely taking vitamin D supplements, only 41% of mothers reported routinely giving their infant vitamin D drops. Finally, the incidence of childhood rickets diagnosed at ANMC appears to be decreasing.

The results of this report provide additional evidence in support of the Alaska Vitamin D Workgroup Recommendations for vitamin D intake and supplementation (Table). Clinicians should educate prenatal women and parents about these recommendations in conjunction with promoting healthy dietary sources of vitamin D.

References