



Alaska Seeds of Change

*Growing Hope in Our Youth...
A Program of Anchorage Urban League*

Alaska Seeds of Change Transitional-Age Youth Program

Program Description: The need in Alaska for effective services for at-risk youth who are transitioning out of the children's behavioral health, foster and juvenile justice systems is significant. Alaska Seeds of Change (SOC) is a youth program sponsored by the Anchorage Urban League that will help at-risk youth (ages 17-22) make a successful transition into productive adult lives. Youth who have been involved in the Bring the Kids Home Initiative, and in particular youth from rural communities, will be targeted.

Alaska Seeds of Change will provide youth with the chance to discover their ability to change not only their own lives, but also contribute meaningfully to the larger community. SOC will run a social enterprise business that grows, markets and sells fresh vegetables in Anchorage. Youth will become involved in all aspects of running the business. SOC will work to develop community gardens in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, and will contribute a portion of the food that they grow to local hunger reduction efforts. As SOC moves forward, leadership and peer mentoring opportunities for program graduates will be available in a summer program that involves other youth from the community in our efforts at growing the local food system.

SOC has developed a 5-year plan for implementing the Transition to Independence Process (TIP) System, an evidence-supported approach to work with transition-aged youth. SOC will work with the National Network on Youth Transition for Behavioral Health (NNYT) in achieving program fidelity. The TIP System provides 7 guidelines that serve as a framework for working with transitional-age youth, and it also identifies core competencies for program staff.

Financial sustainability will be achieved through earned income, which will allow SOC to offer needed services to youth. Approximately 60-70% of our operating costs will be met through earned income. The project will use waste heat from the Sullivan Generation Plant to heat a hydroponic greenhouse, and will incorporate other energy-reduction technologies in a year-round growing operation.

Program Highlights:

1. SOC will provide youth with formal and informal supports and services in the transition domains of employment, education, living situation, personal effectiveness and wellbeing, and community- life functioning.
1. SOC will provide a real-world, normalized setting where youth are challenged to assume significant roles and responsibilities, and where they discover that they can contribute to their own personal as well as community wellbeing.
2. Behavioral health, educational, vocational and independent living skills training will occur on-site. SOC transition facilitators will work with youth in the community to help in the generalization of knowledge and skills.
3. Through use of the Transition to Adulthood Program Information System (TAPIS), SOC will track progress on each youth's individualized goals, associated tasks or steps in achieving these goals, progress or difficulty over time in each transition domain, and satisfaction/helpfulness with services received.

4. SOC will collaborate with Anchorage NeighborWorks to provide safe and stable housing.
5. SOC will collaborate with other youth-serving organizations to provide for the behavioral health, educational, vocational and social needs of at-risk youth.
6. SOC will provide practicum placements for students from the University of Alaska Anchorage in social service fields to help promote workforce development. Program outcome research will be conducted.
7. SOC youth will develop local community gardens in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, and donate fresh food to local hunger prevention efforts.

Program Outcomes:

1. Higher rates of permanent employment and increased job retention.
2. Higher rates of educational achievement and vocational training.
3. Fewer homeless youth.
4. Reduced reliance upon public assistance, including fewer hospital emergency room visits.
5. Reduced involvement with the legal system.
6. Less disruption in daily functioning due to mental health and substance abuse problems.
7. Less victimization of transitional age youth.
8. More active involvement of youth in the community.
9. Increased food security for Alaska through contribution to local food production system.

Project Updates:

1. Predevelopment process through The Mental Health Trust Authority, The Foraker Group, and the Denali Commission.
2. Engineering study completed by Richard Armstrong.
3. Site plan and floor plan drawings completed by KPB Architects.
4. Construction conceptual design costs estimates being revised by HMS, Inc.
5. MOA Assembly Resolution passed on August 25 granting SOC a long-term \$1/year lease on land in the Centennial Park area, adjacent to the George Sullivan Generation Plant. Resolution also gave SOC free access to use of waste heat from the generation plant.
6. McDowell Marketing Group demand study completed, which included 45 interviews with growers, retailers, wholesalers, institutional buyers, farmer's markets, restaurants.
7. Anchorage NeighborWorks is applying for HUD funding for construction of dedicated housing for SOC youth. Timeline is to complete construction by November, 2011. Interim facilities are being explored through Anchorage NeighborWorks.
8. SOC is actively pursuing capital funding for the greenhouse from various sources, with the goal of construction in summer of 2010.