

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
AT-A-GLANCE  
2008**

*Introduction: Recognizing the importance and significance of training and education, recruitment and retention for Alaskans serving Trust beneficiaries; the Trust in partnership with the University of Alaska and the Department of Health and Social Services have embarked on a systems change workforce development focus area. The Workforce Development Focus Area concentrates on increasing the volume, caliber, and geographic breadth of professionals serving Trust beneficiaries in long-term care, developmental disabilities, and behavioral health. An initiative of this breadth requires strong partners and a stable flow of resources. The purpose of this At-A Glance is to provide a snapshot of funded activities in place today.*

**Behavioral Health Initiative Project - BHIP**

**Ph.D. Program in Clinical-Community Psychology with Rural, Indigenous Emphasis**

The Ph.D. Program in Clinical-Community Psychology with Rural, Indigenous Emphasis, which is jointly delivered and administered by the Departments of Psychology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the University of Alaska Anchorage and is designed to prepare scientist-practitioners who join theory, practice, and research to meet the behavioral health needs and improve the well-being of Alaskans and their communities. The program integrates clinical and community psychology and focuses on rural, indigenous, and cultural psychology with an applied emphasis. It uniquely combines the spirit of clinical, community, and cultural psychology, placing strong emphasis on non-traditional service delivery and social action, as well as clinical service delivery to individuals, groups, families, and communities. The program is on the forefront of creative and enriching knowledge dissemination that is locally relevant; focused on public service; sensitive to the unique environments of Alaska; and concerned with acknowledging, fostering, and celebrating diversity.

**Children's Residential Services**

The Children's Behavioral Health Services Program is a series of five courses that focus on issues related to children in out-of-home care. Completion of the 16 credits leads to an occupational endorsement from the University of Alaska Anchorage. By completing the five courses, students gain skills essential to become effective members of therapeutic treatment teams.

Student outcomes include:

- Knowledge of system of care approaches, child development, factors that influence treatment outcomes, and culturally responsive care.
- Ability to apply an array of strategies to support and shape behavior of children and youth with challenging behaviors.
- Skills necessary to abide by professional practices accepted in the system of children's care.

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- Ability to blend concepts and skills to develop trauma-informed practices in children's care.

**Distance MSW Program**

The Distance MSW Program was created as the result of a partnership between the University of Alaska (UA) and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA) in FY03. In an effort to substantially increase the number of graduate prepared social workers statewide, the distance MSW program was expanded in 2005 by adding a second cohort to the program, doubling the number of MSW students who are working toward their degrees while living and working in their communities statewide. As the result of program expansion, students are admitted to the distance program every two years, with a total of 30 graduate students working toward their MSW at any given time. A total of 18 students have completed their degrees thus far, with 18 due to graduate in 2009.

The expansion assists Alaska in reaching the WICHE goals of having a larger number of rural residents at higher degree levels, increasing parity with health professions in terms of density of service providers, and increasing better qualified and supported mental health professions at all levels.

**BSW Social Work Cohort**

The University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Social Work Cohort is a unique group of approximately 25 rural Alaska students who are in the process of getting their Bachelor's Degree in Social Work (BSW) through a combination of face-to-face and audio-conference modalities. The students come to Fairbanks for a week at the beginning of each semester and three days at the end of the semester to receive intensive classroom instruction with the rest of the course being completed through audio-conferencing. This method of instruction has been highly successful, as the students form a bond with fellow classmates, receive course instruction not only from the university instructor, but Alaska Native Elders as well, incorporating both western and traditional approaches to learning. The overall mission of this type of delivery is to "grow our own" practitioners; instead of having a revolving door of well-intentioned practitioners in and out of rural Alaska in a year or less, we "grow our own" practitioners from our rural communities. These students know their community intimately and are committed to staying. This method of instruction delivery has been highly successful, due in part to the fact that these students have received their certificate in Rural Human Services (RHS) which then articulates into their two-year degree in Human Services (HUMS) and then they move on to work on their four-year degree in Social Work (BSW). These incremental steps and successful achievements help student plan and attain their next educational step.

**UAA Human Services**

The UAA Human Services Department's Behavioral Health workforce development program will continue its efforts to increase the number of

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skilled Alaskans prepared to enter Alaska's Behavioral Health agencies as Human Service professionals serving mental health beneficiaries and at-risk youth through the following strategies:

1) increase student enrollments, retention and graduate rates in both the Associate and Baccalaureate degree programs offered by the UAA Human Services Department; 2) ensure program curricula includes relevant skill sets appropriate to the behavioral health arena through the recruitment of local behavioral health agencies serving beneficiary group members as practicum placement agencies for UAA Human Service students; 3) maintain program currency and graduate employability through internal research and program development.

**UAF Human Services - CRCRD Rural Behavioral Health Program**

The UAF Human Services (HUMS) cross regional program will continue to develop, coordinate and continue its efforts in the Behavioral Health workforce pathway growing rural clinicians and program managers through both our cohort program and the cross regional distance program. Increasingly students participating in partnership funding now take advantage of both accesses to expedite their degree completion.

**TRAINING and EDUCATION**

**Alaska Rural Behavioral Health Training Academy**

The mission of the Alaska Rural Behavioral Health Training Academy (ARBHTA) is *working together to ensure an effective behavioral health workforce for rural Alaska*. Our definition of rural behavioral health provider includes local village based counselors, clinicians, juvenile justice workers, clinical supervisors, village school teachers and counselors, itinerant counselors and nurses, community health aides, and providers who serve rural Alaskans via tele-behavioral health technology. We are interested in supporting those who are engaged in a helping role on behalf of rural Alaskans. While many programs meet very specific education and training needs for rural behavioral health providers, these providers still face a wide array of unmet needs. The Academy's role is to identify and respond to the vital unmet needs that are being experienced by our rural behavioral health providers. We provide learner-centered continuing education courses for degreed providers, academic credit for non-degreed providers, Alaska Native cultural attunement workshops for non-Native providers, tele-behavioral health education for rural providers and their urban counterparts, a workplace-based learning program, and several conferences each year.

**Trust Training Cooperative**

The purpose of the Trust Training Cooperative is to develop and implement a statewide cooperative that coordinates and provides training, education and career development opportunities for the current and future workforce engaged with Alaska Mental Health Trust Beneficiaries. With staff located in

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Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Sitka the cooperative is able to work with local service providers to coordinate and share training opportunities to address workforce issues.

In FY09 The TTC will pilot and implement a web-based learning management system (LMS) that will host a training calendar, enroll learners in a system that tracks individual training and career development plans, and provides a system for managing content and delivers training via web/e-live and/or audio.

**Geriatric Training**

The Geriatric Education and Training program continues the efforts and successful models funded by the Trust since 2002 to address geriatric education needs for direct care/service workers and care coordinators working with Alaska's older adult population. Through workshops, distance delivered courses, and elder specific training sessions at professional and paraprofessional conferences throughout the state, elder care training opportunities are provided to specifically address the needs of persons with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders (ADRD) and elders with mental health, disabilities, and substance abuse issues. Training topics may include, but are not limited to, health promotion and awareness for seniors; health literacy; nutrition and aging; care coordination or case management for seniors with co-occurring disorders; activities and/or exercise programs that address depression, social isolation, balance and falls; challenging behavior; interdisciplinary team practice; person-centered care.

**Credentialing and Quality Standards Subcommittee (CQSS)**

The primary goal of the CQSS is to support the development of a cross-disability core competency model and credentialing system for the direct care workforce in Alaska. The desired outcome is to improve Alaskan's access to quality care by strengthening the direct care workforce in a broad range of health and human service sectors. This project will occur over a series of phases, the first of which involved a review of the diverse competency sets used nationally and in Alaska for the non-medical direct healthcare positions serving Trust Beneficiary Groups. Subsequent phases will involve development of the Alaskan Core Competency Model and assessment tools for evaluating the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of trainees and employees on the Alaska Core Competencies. Practical, reliable, and valid methods of assessment are essential for evaluating the impact of training and the capacity of employees to perform their duties. They are also an essential precursor to a competency-based credentialing system, which is intended to promote higher standards of care within the workforce and improved career ladders and job opportunities for members of the workforce.

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**Children's Mental Health Certification**

The University of Alaska Behavioral Health Alliance has undertaken significantly increasing the content on early child and children's mental health in all of the UA behavioral health programs- including social work, psychology, human services, justice, nursing, counseling, and special education programs. This multi-campus, multi-disciplinary effort is a coordinated effort with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Workforce Development Focus Group and the State of Alaska Bring the Kids Home initiative. Faculty are working together to infuse content in existing courses and to develop undergraduate and graduate specialty courses to prepare the workforce for the assessment and intervention services needed to serve the children and families of Alaska. Selected faculty are completing a Graduate Certificate in Children's Mental Health from the University of South Florida.

Twelve faculty are participating in intensive training provided by USF and have formed a learning community under the supervision of USF expert faculty. The result will be the development of a certificate in child/early childhood mental health to be offered by the University of Alaska.

**Autism Workforce Development Capacity Building**

This project will bring training and expertise to Alaska on autism intervention strategies and develop a cadre of individuals who can deliver intensive early intervention services. This project will benefit individuals with autism; however, in the first two years, the activities will be primarily oriented toward planning, recruiting, and training. Funds will be used to contract with national experts in both behavioral and developmental evidence-based autism interventions. The national experts will be responsible for assisting the Center for Human Development at the University of Alaska Anchorage to develop an in-state infrastructure for training a core group of at least Master's level providers in fields such as psychology, special education, speech therapy, social work and other related fields. The national experts will maintain clinical oversight of these practitioners until in-state expertise is developed. This trained group will, in turn, be responsible for oversight of paraprofessionals who deliver one-on-one intensive early intervention with young children with autism. This will establish a three-tiered intervention system, used successfully across the country. The Center for Human Development will also establish working relations with the medical community and other service providers so families are informed about the opportunity and models. Intervention services will be phased in. Assuming that families of about half of the children newly identified with autism would choose an intervention program, about 35 new children would benefit each year.

**RECRUITMENT & RETENTION**

**Behavioral Health Loan Repayment Program**

Loan repayment is consistently cited as an important tool to improve the retention of health professionals in underserved sites. The Alaska Mental

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Health Trust Authority has created a pilot Loan Repayment Program for master's prepared behavioral health professionals recently recruited to select organizations in rural and other underserved communities. The program is administered by the Alaska Center for Rural Health – Alaska's AHEC at UAA (ACRH), and funds are let by the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE). Working with \$200,000 a year, one new employee in each of ten selected organizations is eligible for up to \$40,000 over two years, disbursed in quarterly payments of up to \$5,000. Funding started in July 2007 and the program was operational by March 2008. As of September 2008, there are four people in the program. Funds have been approved to continue thru 2011, at \$200,000 per year.

**Annual Vacancy Study**

It is difficult to plan workforce programs or prioritize the allocation of resources in the absence of data demonstrating relative need. These funds will support an in-depth look at behavioral health professional vacancy rates in Alaskan organizations serving Trust beneficiaries. Led by the Alaska Center for Rural Health – Alaska's AHEC at UAA (ACRH), a stratified sample of agencies with appropriate geographic distribution will be selected and interviewed via phone. Potential respondents will be selected from updated lists used in the 2007 study. Results will be analyzed and ready for dissemination by late June 2009.

**Alaska Alliance for Direct Service Careers (AADSC)**

The Alaska Alliance for Direct Service Careers (AADSC) works to improve the flow of information to direct service professionals. Direct Service Professionals are those who work to empower people with disabilities, mental illness, traumatic brain injuries, substance abuse/alcoholism, and/or Alaskan elders. Officially, the definition includes paraprofessionals and professional level staff that spend at least 50% of the day working one-to-one with individuals needing support. AADSC believes that, through better networking and advocacy, we can impact wage and benefits, increase positive public perception of the industry, and the different professions. To do this we partner with organizations, encourage individuals, and implement programs to recruit, retain, and train *qualified* direct service professionals.

**Wages and Benefits**

One of the major reasons for the shortage of direct service staff is inadequate wages and benefits. The very people we count on to provide support and assistance are struggling economically and more than one-third of direct service staff have no health insurance. Several recent studies show that turnover rates fall when workers receive health insurance benefits and better wages. The wages and benefits committee is developing options for increasing wages and benefits provided to direct service staff. Potential options include signing bonuses for new staff, recruitment bonuses for current staff who recruit new direct service staff, paid internship programs, paying for staff to complete degree programs, developing competency-based

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training tied to salary increases; increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates and earmarking these funds for wage increases and/or health benefits improvements; subsidizing small employers' and employees' premiums for private insurance; and increasing eligibility for publicly funded plans.

**“Grow Your Own”**

Working with schools, non-profit organizations, the University, and the Department of Labor, we are trying to increase the number of Alaskans working as Direct Service Professionals and paraprofessionals. It is vital for the well-being of our economy to ensure there are behavioral health professionals and substance abuse counselors available to all Alaskans – as part of industry's health and safety protocols and to family members. It is also vital that we have qualified direct care staff available to our family members with disabilities and our elders – providing all Alaskans with the opportunity to remain as independent as possible for as long as possible. By partnering with other organizations, we continue to highlight the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to become an important part of someone else's life in the hopes of attracting Alaskans with the cultural, ethical, and educational competencies needed to fill these positions.

**Area Health Education Center (AHEC) – “GROW YOUR OWN”**

With generous funding from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, Alaska's four AHEC Centers will continue and expand activities from FY08. Continued activities include: supporting current Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) clubs in six career and technical schools statewide, programming through the Boys and Girls Clubs, a dual-credit course to high school students in the YK Delta, outreach activities to Natives in SE Alaska, support for the Alaska Village Health Careers Opportunity Program in Sitka, Career Days in Bethel, and internships for Fairbanks youth interested in Special Education. New activities include: creation of new HOSA clubs, creation of high school behavioral health and health careers clubs, and support for three community-based health careers academies next summer.

**Marketing Strategies**

There are a lot of reasons why we need to educate the general population of Alaska about the rewarding and hard work done by professionals and paraprofessionals serving Trust Beneficiaries. Though the work done by direct service professionals and paraprofessionals benefit the individual Trust beneficiary, it also benefits the population as a whole, by giving us a more stable and healthy community. That it gives others the opportunity to live as independently as possible and that can increase the available workforce, enhance a community, and reduce stress for family members. The Trust marketing campaign strives to highlight the work done by direct service professionals and encourages others to become part of the workforce. It sheds a different, positive light on the work done and gives the general population an opportunity to learn the importance of the work.

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**Cash Stipends**

Funding for a cash stipend is one tool for use in recruitment and retention. The stipend can be used to offset the tax liability for the loan repayment program, as an offset for the high cost of housing, or for a recruitment incentive. The funds are targeted at priority areas each year.

**Alaska Psychiatric Residency**

The Psychiatric Residency project is a request for funding the development of an Alaska Psychiatry Residency. These funds would be used to complete a needs assessment, feasibility analysis, and the preliminary steps (business plan) for a psychiatry residency program. These funds would not be operational funds for a psychiatry residency program or psychiatric resident elective. If a decision is made to create an Alaska Psychiatry Residency, there will be a one to two year initial implementation period to complete the necessary infrastructure, organizational agreements, begin the accreditation process (Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education), and recruit the first group of interns/residents. The recruitment cycle begins in the autumn for the following July intern/resident start date. Alaska has a unique opportunity to partner with the University of Washington (UW) to develop an Alaska Psychiatry Residency (APR). Alaska and UW have an established history of working together in medical school education and post graduate training.

**BRING THE KIDS HOME (BTKH)**

**Children's Cultural Competence Training**

This project will establish a training protocol for the Bring the Kids Home (BTKH) work force to encourage culturally-based treatment, especially for Alaska Native youth. The project will be able to report on the number and type of students (social work, counseling psych, whether they are already working in the youth MH services field, etc) who attend and participate in the training. Afterward participants will be surveyed about how much they felt they learned and their satisfaction with the subject matter provided.

**TRUST BENEFICIARY PROJECTS**

**Peer Support**

Peer Support services are emerging as a best practice model in the mental health field—people in recovery from mental illness, helping other people with mental illness on the recovery road. Best practices ensure that people are qualified and possess the skills and competencies necessary to provide these services. Research has shown that the outcome in individual lives yields improvement in psychiatric symptoms, larger social support networks, enhanced self-esteem and social functioning.

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**ADMINISTRATION**

**Behavioral Health Alliance**

The Behavioral Health Alliance (BHA) is a cross-campus University of Alaska task force designed to enhance communication, coordination and collaboration between and within UA academic disciplines. Participants include deans, directors, and faculty from all three University of Alaska campuses. The Alliance works in partnership with the Alaska Mental Health Trust's Authority's Behavioral Health Workforce Initiative.

Alliance members believe that the University should respond with a coordinated effort to industry's needs for a professionally-educated behavioral health workforce. The Alliance seeks service provider and State input to prioritize programs for development. Based on these priorities, in 2008 BHA launched a Children's Mental Health Initiative focused on increasing faculty's capacity to teach content related to children's and families' mental health needs increase professional capacity to serve these populations. Other cross-campus collaborations include expanding the faculty's distance delivery abilities, enhancing the cultural relevance of programs, coordinating practicum experiences across campuses, and improving the marketing of Behavioral Health programs to prospective students.

**Workforce Development Statewide Policy Meeting**

This meeting will review the following policy direction from the 2004 Summit: 1) Increase the supply of workers at all degree levels; 2) Improve course and program articulation across all campuses; 3) Increase cultural competence skills of the workforce, and; 4) Ensure curriculum reflects new practice trends including integration of substance abuse and mental health practices. We will also review the work of the Trust Workforce Development Committees: Training and Education, Recruitment and Retention.

**Workforce Development Manager**

The Workforce Development manager is a share position between the Department of Health and Social Services, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the University of Alaska. The manager is responsible for being the DHSS liaison for the Behavioral Health Workforce Development Initiative including (1) being the primary point of contact between and among the DHSS, the UA and the Trust for the Behavioral Health Workforce Initiative. (2) providing direction and guidance to all Behavioral Health Workforce efforts (3) ensuring successful accomplishment of Initiative goals and achievement of interim benchmarks (4) ensuring proper stewardship of public dollars and accountability for investments made, and (5) helping to chart new directions for the partnership.