

Statewide Suicide Prevention Council

Quarterly Meeting

October 23, 2013, Fairbanks

Minutes

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The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bill Martin at 9 a.m.

Roll call:

Present: Martin, Fred Glenn, Sharon Fishel, Meghan Crow, Brenda Moore, Barbara Franks, Sen. Berta Gardner, Alana Humphrey, Melissa Stone, Sharon Strutz Norton, Sue May, Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins

Absent: Tessa Baldwin, Christine Moses, Lowell Sage, Rep. Benjamin Nageak (excused), Sen. Anna Fairclough (excused)

Staff: Kate Burkhart, executive director; Eric Morrison, council assistant

Approval of agenda:

Martin asked for amendments to the agenda. Burkhart was contacted by the Center for Alaska Native Health Research requesting a letter of support for a grant application. The project proposal and request need to be added to the agenda for discussion sometime after lunch. Burkhart suggested 2:30 p.m. Morrison said Daniel Bill from the Alaska Village Council Presidents will call in to present about their Garrett Lee Smith grant and requests being first on the agenda. The agenda as amended was approved without objection.

Approval of minutes:

Senator Gardner moved to approve the minutes as presented. Humphrey seconded the motion. The minutes were approved without objection.

Ethics Disclosure:

Martin reported that he serves on Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium's suicide prevention taskforce, funded by a Garrett Lee Smith grant from the State of Alaska.

Franks works for Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, serves on the Alaska Psychiatric Institute Advisory Board, and is a member of the National Suicide Prevention LifeLine advisory committee.

Humphrey works for the Boys and Girls Club of Alaska, which receives state grants.

Moore is associated with Christian Health Associates, Inc., which receives state funding.

Crow is a member of the SAIPH coalition in Bethel and works for the Lower Kuskokwim School District, which has requested state funding for suicide prevention.

Fishel manages the Division of Behavioral Health school suicide prevention grant for the Department of Education and Early Development.

Announcements:

Senator Gardner asked if anyone saw the article about the youth suicide prevention presentation at the Elders and Youth Conference from earlier in the week. Martin said he was surprised to hear about the presentation because he originally requested that the Council present to that group rather than at AFN.

Burkhart said staff has received the official Alaska suicide rate data for 2011. The preliminary data showed a small decline in the numbers, which the official data confirms. Alaska is not seeing a substantial trend yet, but the age group from 15-19 is showing a decrease. From 2008-2010 the rate was 28.6/100,000 and from 2009-2011 the figure was 22.9/100,000. That is a six point decrease. There was substantial improvement in the Northwest Arctic and the Mat-Su areas, where there have been substantial suicide prevention efforts. While the overall number is going down, though not over a long enough timeperiod to cheer (yet), the trend in the high risk population is looking really good.

Alaska Village Council Presidents Garrett Lee Smith Grant Presentation, Daniel Bill:

Morrison introduced Daniel Bill, who manages the Garrett Lee Smith for the Alaska Village Council Presidents (AVCP). Bill said he is grateful for the opportunity to talk to the Council about the work AVCP is doing in Southwest Alaska. He is the program director for the grant. They are focusing on providing services for individuals between 15 and 25 in Hooper Bay, Chevak, Scammon Bay, and Alakanuk. The grant is for three years, funded at \$477,755 per year. They plan to create a suicide coalition in each of the villages, advocate for the Zuni Life Skills curriculum in each village school, and have ASIST or Gatekeeper training in each village. The grant also allows for cultural life skills training to be taught and revived in each village. They plan to have Memoranda of Agreements with the health providers in each of the villages and will advocate for mental health screenings in each of the villages. The activities carried out so far have been very interesting.

In Hooper Bay they are working with the Native Aspirations coordinator that has weekly activities with youth and have added suicide awareness and education to the activities. Bill provided suicide prevention training to all of the junior high and high school students there. They have taken youth on traditional hunts to experience the first harvest. They have recruited other adults in other agencies to help, as well as women teaching young girls how to prepare the first catch and how to celebrate the occasion for participating.

In Scammon Bay they have worked closely with the behavioral health aide to engage the youth in different activities. They have had trainings on suicide prevention. They have also worked with the school counselor and have had suicide awareness and prevention activities. They have suicide prevention posters for the village that include the local numbers.

In Alakanuk they are working with the Native Aspirations program. Each week there is a different project like arts and crafts and traditional Native culture to promote health in the village. They encourage that suicide prevention be addressed before each activity. Young people as well as parents attend these activities.

In Chevak they developed a Facebook page for suicide prevention. Young people use it and drive the content, but the advisor monitors it. They have done a radio public service announcement on the local station that also reaches other villages in the area.

Bill said each of the villages was given information on how to recognize depression. They are working with the young people to do a depression screening with their youth groups. They ask the permission of the parents first. If someone is identified as being suicidal, they and their parents are referred to a person that works in behavioral health in that village. Then they encourage the individual to follow up with their counseling appointments.

There is a youth council in Bethel that includes parents and community leaders who support the youth. There are high school students and young adults of different ages in that group. They are also doing a healthy families program in Bethel that covers a variety of topics including historical trauma and contemporary issues like alcohol abuse and domestic violence, so the communities can heal.

Moore asked how AVCP is evaluating their programs and what kind of outcomes they are looking for.

Bill said there is an evaluator at the University of Alaska Anchorage that is looking at all of these different programs. The outcomes are to establish these programs and see results in the youth leading healthy and productive lives.

Senator Gardner asked if the Zuni program is the same as the 30 week program recommended through their website, or is it some kind of modification. She knows there is a shortage of mental health providers in the state and asked if there are enough mental health providers in that region to address the needs of the youth that may be identified. She looked at the Chevak Facebook page and noticed that the majority of the youth using it are girls. Is there difficulty getting the boys to participate as much as the girls do?

Bill answered that, for years, there has been more participation from the girls than from the boys in these villages at community activities other than dances. He has been talking to the coordinators of the events and asking for them to work on recruiting more boys to participate. Most of the activities for the boys are hunting and fishing, so they are expanding those activities with the youth. There is a shortage of mental health providers in the region, with a lot of turnover. Behavioral health aides often have to reach out to the regional office in Bethel to deal with mental health issues. They work with the elders to help provide traditional counseling. The Zuni program is something they are working toward implementing, but it is not yet in place yet.

Crow recommends that the Council advocate for the Healthy Families program for other rural Alaska communities in the future. She went through the training last year and found it very rewarding for the

participants. Most were families with children that have been involved in the Office of Children Services in one way or another. The training discussed historical trauma and it seemed to have a big impact on the participants. .

Bill thanked the Council for the opportunity to present and is happy for the leadership it has shown with the statewide plan.

Preparation for Alaska Federation of Natives Convention Presentation

The AFN board gave the Council 15 minutes to address the delegates on suicide prevention and the work being done. Martin said he wants to talk about the changes in lifestyles for the youth today, compared to when he was growing up. He said times have really changed and the youth need to know that their families love them.

Moore asked if it will be a call to action.

Martin said yes. He said Representative Nageak will start and talk about the effects of suicide on a family and tell people that they need to ask people if they are doing OK, rather than ignoring the subject.

Martin said he is disappointed that there is only 15 minutes available, but said he is grateful that AFN is willing to give time to this subject. Stone said she saw the youth from the Tanana 4-H group who spoke at the Elders and Youth Conference and wondered if they were going to be at AFN, too.

Morrison has been in contact with them and they plan to spend one day at the Council's table during AFN to have people sign their pledge cards. The youth will also spend one day at the Alaska State Troopers' table. Council members that are still in town are welcome to help staff the table. Careline representatives will also be helping staff the table over the course of the three days.

Burkhart said the 4-H pledge is similar to what the Council discussed at its last meeting for an idea at AFN. It was exciting when they reached out to the Council to ask for help.

Stone said they also reached out to the Division of Behavioral Health and the Division is helping with printing costs for their pledge cards.

Martin called for a break.

School-based Suicide Prevention Grant Program Update, Sharon Fishel

Fishel reported that the Department of Education and Early Development's suicide prevention e-learning module is up and running. It is online and free for educators. She is working on the second part of the module at the time. At the last meeting in May, she reported about 80 people had used the e-learning module; as of last week, there were 875 people that have used it. Of the 54 school districts, 28 have at least one person that has taken the course. The Mat-Su School district has had 480 users. The district has made it mandatory training for teachers and staff and they have a counselor that has been tasked with making sure everyone complies with that requirement. As of last week, there were 510 surveys taken for the module. In September they had a small group work with the department on

development of the second part of the module. That module will have real life situations, similar to Kognito, which is something the department doesn't have currently for any of its other modules.

DEED had the first suicide prevention program grantee meeting with the six school districts that received funding. The districts that received funding are Haines, Petersburg, Anchorage, Mat-Su, North Slope and Northwest Arctic. It was a very productive two days. They discussed what the expectations are, what the reporting requirements are, developing action plans, and making sure that it all makes sense.

Burkhart commented that it was a great meeting. The right people were there and they learned from each other. There seemed to be the beginning of some networking so, along with the Council and DEED, they will also have each other for support, which is very important.

Stone asked what kind of Alaska Native input there was for developing the e-learning modules and if those might be useful for community health aides in the villages.

Fishel said it might be useful, but DEED pays for a certain number of participants and there might not be enough funding to include community health aides. There is the potential to add seats, but it would cost money and would depend on who would be paying for that. There are lots of cultural pieces in the training. She said 95 percent of the feedback from the survey is positive, other than it being too long.

Burkhart said the module has information that is transferable, but it is specifically designed for people working in education. The reviewing team provided input on the cultural aspects of the training, inclusive of lots of cultures and not just Western versus indigenous cultures. It was specifically designed to have images of many different people, so for places like Anchorage, where there are so many cultures, it is also relevant.

Stone asked how long the training is. Fishel answered two and a half hours.

Burkhart commented that Mental Health First Aid or something similar would be more beneficial to the health aides than this module.

Fishel said Burkhart and she will be doing a capacity building and technical assistance training in Anchorage in December for the districts that applied for the grant or expressed interest in the grant but did not receive one. DEED is also supporting alternative schools with mini-grants that are attached to the behavioral health grants. The school counselors conference is Nov. 13-16. The whole conference is focused on trauma in schools.

Fishel provided a Gatekeeper training yesterday with 50 new teacher mentors. Only one person out of 50 in the room had previously had suicide prevention training, and they were all veteran teachers. Fishel shared the PowerPoint slides she used in the training.

Tanana Chiefs Conference GLS Grant Presentation, Cyndi Nation

Cyndi Nation is program coordinator for the Garrett Lee Smith Grant at Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC). They use their grants to leverage different grants for suicide prevention. They also have a grant from Indian Health Services for developing coalitions – wellness teams -- in communities. They ask people in communities what their strengths and weaknesses are and help them develop action plans to address the needs of the community. They also ask communities what is the root of suicide in that particular village. Most communities know what the problems in their own communities are and each community is different. The wellness teams meet at least once a month. They have provided security with that grant, where they ask people to put their guns, rope, medications and other potential lethal means to be locked away.

The GLS grant supports Sources of Strength inr their rural villages. They have been working with the creator of the program to adapt it to each of the communities. They focus on messages of hope, health and strength. They work with youth to have them identify positive aspects of their lives and what they can work on. They are working with behavioral health aides and community leaders to make it sustainable in the villages. They are also looking at ways to involve post high school age youth as adult advisors in these groups. TCC sends staff to the villages periodically to make sure they are keeping up with the reporting requirements, that the activities are going on, and that they have the support and resources that they need.

Nation said they have surpassed their goal for their GLS grant. They initially planned to do 14 villages and are currently at 17.

TCC also has a state grant for digital storytelling to promote hope, health and strength. They have ordered iPads, cameras and headphones and go from village to village to teach youth how to use the equipment. The youth create a story about themselves on whatever they want, then create a story about suicide prevention. They also address other issues, like traumatic brain injuries and substance abuse. They teach youth how to research the issues and create a poster. They have “Choose to Live” walks in the villages as part of the state grant. They are also helping get training for people in the villages, including safeTalk, Gatekeeper QPR, and ASSIST.

Nation tells her own story when she goes out to the villages. She has two daughters whoare heroin addicts. She is not ashamed of them, they just chose different paths. Drugs are becoming a bigger problem in the villages in the Interior. Methamphetamines are showing up in the villages for the first time. People are beginning to ask for drug dogs in the communities and TCC is looking into getting some for their Village Public Safety Officer program.

Franks said she is proud of the work Nation and TCC are doing and appreciates all the work they do over a large area across the interior. Moore commended TCC for their work because there has been so much hopelessness for so long. She is glad to hear about the wellness coalitions in the communities and hopes they will be sustainable.

Nation encourages the villages to take ownership of their wellness teams because they are the ones that have to help their communities from within. Her goal when it comes to suicide, alcohol, domestic violence and drugs is in 15 years the youth will be adults and they will know the tools to live a healthy life. It is okay if they choose a different path, but at least they will have the tools and information to deal with it. **Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation GLS Presentation, Jerrod Moore**

Jerrod Moore assists with the management of the Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation (BBAHC) GLS grant program, Project Zero. The goal is to promote healthy communities using traditional Native Alaskan and best practices to reduce suicide among 12-24 year olds. There are numerous goals, including reducing access to and use of alcohol in the communities. They are providing education and prevention programs in 14 of the villages that still have high schools. They based this off a community needs survey they did at the beginning of the project that shaped the work they are doing now.

Another goal is to prevent, and increase early intervention in cases of, child abuse and child sexual abuse. They work through the Child Advocacy Center in Dillingham. They are trying to find a program that is evidence based where people can get continued education units for taking the course. They are looking at implementing Pathways of Hope by the end of the year. They offer prevention trainings for all the 34 villages the regional hospital serves, not just the 14 communities with high schools. They will go at a tribal council's request or at the communities' request.

The peer prevention program in the 14 schools complements the former Natural Helper program, which is being revived in the communities. They have added suicide prevention as a main topic at some of the culture camps in the region. At the beginning of the school year, two students from each of the 14 schools come to a culture camp and learn the Natural Helper curriculum as well as suicide prevention training and health education. Then the students take that back to their schools. The success of the peer prevention program varies from community to community. They have piloted it in schools and had teachers make it into an entire semester class, while others are volunteer driven. BBAHC is able to provide some stipends for the work, but the communities have to have drive and passion to make it work.

They worked with youth for about a year in Dillingham and the youth decided they wanted to set up a youth court to deal with reoccurring problems like minor consuming. They sent youth to Palmer for training with the Tribal Law and Policy Institute and are now partnering with the tribal court system in Dillingham to set up a youth court.

They have drafted a suicide prevention plan with the hospital on how they will deal with suicide in the region. They are doing digital story telling in some of the communities and plan to do more.

Break for lunch

Martin called the meeting back to order at 1:00 p.m.

Careline Report, Susanna Schackman

Susanna Schackman is the director of the Careline crisis line. It operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. One staff member is on shift at a time, because that is what funding allows. In addition to that person, there is a backup center out of state.

Careline is nationally accredited through the American Association on Suicidology. They have to meet very stringent guidelines on how they operate their program, including how they train the staff, how they record data, how they answer the calls, etc. Careline is part of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline network, which like an old telephone switchboard that can redirect calls to available helpline workers.

One of the misconceptions about Careline is that they only take calls from people that are acutely suicidal, which is not the case. In those cases, that is intervention, but they still prefer to do prevention and work with folks before they get to that escalated place.

Careline began operating a text line in January. It is staffed 40 hours a week. The goal of the text line is to reach the youth because data shows that the 14-24 year old demographic are not using the phone lines. The majority of the people calling are 24-46 years old. They are working to see if it is sustainable and effective and will see where to go in the future.

Moore asked how the staff manages to answer the phones and text at the same time, if there is only one person on duty. Schackman said there is a designated person for the text line that monitors it during the posted hours. When that person is not on duty, there is an automated response that encourages the person to call the Careline number.

Stone asked how they deal with more than one call at a time.

Schackman said if they determine that a call they are on is a crisis, they will remain on the phone and let the call transfer over to the backup center located in New York. That call center is nationally accredited and much larger, so it can deal with the volume. Careline call volume is about 8,000 to 10,000 calls a year, whereas the backup center is taking up to 140,000 a year.

Martin asked what the average call length is.

Schackman said that is difficult to answer because they can vary so much, but 45 minutes if you average it out. Some calls are much shorter, usually the ones that are people with severe mental health issues that call frequently. She said those frequent callers make up for about 50 percent of the yearly call volume. A lot of the resources are going toward people that just need a daily check in. She said they see about 13 to 15 calls a month go to the backup center out of about 700 calls a month, so it is a very small percentage that rolls over.

May said that the Veterans Crisis Line rebranded itself a few years ago from being a suicide hotline and that last year only 20 percent of the callers were in regards to suicide.

Schackman said some people that call the first time are acutely suicidal, and then each time after that say they are suicidal. Once a rapport is established, they feel more comfortable with saying they just need someone to talk to and are not actually acutely suicidal.

Kreiss-Tomkins said he imagines that it is a very emotionally taxing job and asked if there is a lot of turnover at Careline.

Schackman answered there is not. They emphasize self care and they have the backup lines for a reason. If they take a really hard call, they can take a break to calm down and relax. They know the calls will always be handled by someone that is well trained. Each staff member debriefs with the person that relieves them. They have staff meetings monthly, more often if requested. They require training updates to make sure they stay healthy and continue to talk to each other.

Kreiss-Tomkins asked where it is located. Schackman said they rent an office near the airport in Fairbanks.

Glenn asked how someone learns about Careline if they are an average Alaskan.

Schackman said one of the challenges is Careline only has funding for its operations. The money goes toward wages, the phones system, the internet, rent, heat, electricity. Occasionally there is a little bit of extra funding for handouts, like bracelets. So they rely heavily on partners like ANTHC, Alaska Association of Student Governments, DBH, etc. for promotion. Outreach is something that they continue to struggle with. It is a monumental task being a statewide organization and trying to get the word out.

May said promotions are really important to use the crisis lines correctly.

Schackman said they are grateful for all the work people do to help get the Careline number out to Alaskans, and there is a lot of outreach they don't even know about. That is great, but sometimes they will get a spike in calls from an area and they don't know why. If someone is going to do a PSA or poster, it would be helpful if people would include Careline, especially to make sure it is accurate and safe messaging.

Summit Update, Eric Morrison

Morrison said the Department of Health and Social Services provided the Council with \$20,000 extra in funding this year, with the majority to be used for the summit. There is funding from the Alaska Mental Health Trust, so the summit is fully funded at this point. He and James Gallanos have been working to establish communication with all the people at the last summit, the GLS grantees, the state grantees, and others. The invitation and registration materials are almost finalized. The information will be put on the Council's site, the state public notice page, as well as creating a page for www.stopsuicidalaska.org. They are encouraging people who attended last summit to attend again, but also to have new participants in the regional work groups to help bolster the teams and reengage with the regional action plans that began in 2012.

The regional team idea was created as a way to better facilitate communication across the state and within the regions. The idea is to have the Council be the top of the umbrella, the regional teams be the second level of the umbrella, and the community wellness coalitions be the third layer of the umbrella. People from throughout the regions will buy into the teams and understand that they are beneficial to everybody, while still focusing on the community coalitions. This will unify the entire state. The goal is for regional teams to meet on a semi-regular basis to stay in communication. At the summit, teams will focus on the midterm goals in their regional action plans and create better unity within the teams so at the following summit the teams will be well on their way to accomplishing their long term goals. The hope is to use that as momentum and when it is time to create the next 5-year plan beginning in 2017. The real challenge is going to be getting the buy in from the regional teams.

SSPC Higher Education Subcommittee Update and Report

May reported that the committee has met twice since the last Council meeting.

Humphrey reported that Senator Fairclough will be sending out a letter under her own letterhead seeking feedback on requirements for teachers and other professionals.

May spoke with the UAA School of Social Work, which is going through the process of being reaccredited. They want to strike when the iron is hot and are looking to put some suicide prevention materials into their practicum programs. They are going to have a meeting to discuss this and then get back to the committee.

Center for Alaska Native Health Research Letter of Support Request

Burkhart received an email yesterday from the Center for Alaska Native Health Research requesting a letter of support for funding of the Qungasvik model. The people at CANHR are seeking funding from the Clinical and Translational Research Infrastructure Network, which is part of the process for a larger National Institute of Health application. If this grant request were to be funded, it would allow them to create a data set from the Bureau of Vital Statistics and Trauma Registry and then to apply a vigorous statistical analysis to that data to determine whether or not the suicide prevention model is having an effect on the communities where it is implemented. This is a six month process and it is what is necessary if they want funding from the National Institute of Health.

Crow asked if they are asking for a letter of support to pursue funding and not asking for any funding from the Council.

Burkhart said that is correct. They want a letter from the Council that says it is aware of the model, supports the model, and supports their application to evaluate the effectiveness of the model.

Crow said there isn't an evidence-based model based on the Native community that is by and works for the Native communities. She said she thinks one of the things they are trying to do is get this as an evidence-based best practice.

Burkhart said this would be aligned with goal six of the statewide prevention plan, which is to be supportive of a research base in Alaska. There are community created, culturally relevant programs, but none as rigorously developed and that have had the opportunity for this type of evaluation before. She thinks it is important to support programs becoming evidence-based best practices.

Crow made a motion for staff to write a letter of support for the Center for Alaska Native Health Research. Humphrey seconded the motion. The motion was approved without objection.

Alaska Association of Student Governments Report, Barb Franks

Franks attended the Fall Conference for the Alaska Association of Student Governments. There were 318 students with 35 to 40 chaperones and sponsors and advisors from all over Alaska. There were many young people supported by a number of suicide prevention groups, including the Juneau coalition, DBH, Careline and ANTHC. The kids are very interested in continuing the partnership with ANTHC for the suicide prevention media campaign. There is a new 25 minute film on suicide written by a student. They had a teacher introduce the film as well as a discussion afterward, with health professionals available to talk to. Copies of the movie will be provided to each school in the state and it will be shown at several conferences as well. ANTHC is working to bring it to several schools and introduce it and have a discussion afterward. They have already been invited to Cordova, Chevak, Kodiak, and Ketchikan. Fishel said DEED was able to provide AASG with a small grant to help with travel costs to have the film shown in schools.

The creator of this film is from Klawock and was at the last summit. The legacy she left behind and what there is to work with is amazing. There are a lot of talented kids in Alaska.

Public Comment

Mike Williams Sr. of Akiak is a Chief of the Yupiit Nation and former legislator. He has been a provider and a counselor for suicide prevention in Western Alaska for many years. They have been thinking about having a meeting in Western Alaska to see how they can attack suicide in their villages. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. There are a lot of ways and approaches to help solve this issue. He wants to see tribal leaders come together to find solutions. They plan to have the meeting next spring.

(?????) of Akiak said society has been focusing on the Western way of life too much and not focusing on traditional culture enough. Young people, including his children, are confused because they are living in the middle of two different lives. In his opinion, the federal government can't solve this problem because the villages must take ownership of it and find their way to empower the people to help solve this problem. Some of the road blocks to solving this are the federal regulation regarding subsistence. Those regulations need to be chipped away. The important point is to empower youth. It is important to support each other and love each other in order to stop suicide.

Crow moved to adjourn. Moore seconded. Martin adjourned the meeting.