

Statewide Suicide Prevention Council

Quarterly Meeting

August 26, 2013, Videoconference

Minutes

August 26, 2013

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

Roll call:

Present: Martin, Tessa Baldwin, Sharon Fishel, Meghan Crow, Sen. Anna Fairclough, Barbara Franks, Sen. Berta Gardner, Alana Humphrey, Christine Moses, Lowell Sage, Melissa Stone, Sharon Strutz Norton, Sue May, Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins

Absent: Fred Glenn, Rep. Benjamin Nageak, Brenda Moore (excused)

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

Approval of agenda:

Martin asked for approval of the agenda. Humphrey moved to approve the agenda as presented. Strutz Norton seconded the motion. The agenda was approved without objection.

Approval of minutes:

Martin asked for approval of the minutes of the October meeting. Senator Gardner moved to approve the minutes as presented. Franks seconded the motion. The minutes were approved without objection.

Ethics Disclosure:

Franks works for the Alaska Native Health Consortium, is an Alaska Psychiatric Institute advisory board member, and an advisor for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Humphrey is employed by the Alaska Boys and Girls Club which receives state funding. Martin is a member of the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium suicide prevention task force that receives state funding, and is a member of a Tlingit and Haida tribal council that receives state funding.

Announcements:

Martin said the Alaskan Federation of Natives has agreed to give the Council 15 minutes on the agenda at the annual conference in October to address suicide in Alaska. The presentation will be held on Friday. Martin will present with Representative Nageak.

Burkhart said Moore requested that donations be made to the Alaska prison chaplaincy program in lieu of flowers for her husband's funeral. The Council, the Advisory Board on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, and the Alaska Mental Health Board made a donation in her husband's memory.

Baldwin said she will be speaking on suicide prevention at a youth leaders summit in Kotzebue in September. There will be 100 student leaders from the region and they plan to train them in suicide prevention. She will go to Metlakatla in October to speak on suicide prevention in the schools.

Senator Fairclough asked to have a follow up discussion on getting suicide prevention training in the University of Alaska curriculum for social workers and health related degrees. The university has provided a 10 page response to her inquiry. She would like the Council to adopt a goal to have the training requirements inserted into the curriculum over the next two years. It is a bit complicated so she would like to see a subcommittee created to address the topic.

Martin asked for any objection to creating a subcommittee. Hearing none he called for discussion.

Senator Fairclough would like to see the integration of crisis intervention into the degree programs for medical, social, and mental health fields due to the high rate of suicide, sexual abuse and drug and alcohol abuse in Alaska. It looks possible based on the response from the University, but it will likely take up to or more than a year to accomplish.

Humphrey said she would like to be involved in a subcommittee.

Martin said he thinks it would be a good idea to have a subcommittee to address the topic and bring back information to the whole Council at the meeting in October.

Senator Fairclough made a motion to form a subcommittee to look at accreditation and or licensing practices for how to improve crisis intervention in the University of Alaska curriculum. Humphrey seconded the motion. The motion was approved without objection.

Summit Planning:

Morrison said staff has continued planning the summit, as discussed at the last meeting. The Summit will be held on Thursday, January 9, and Friday, January 10. The Council's regular business meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 8. These dates were selected so that

legislative members can attend the summit and to give people plenty of time to return from holiday travel. The plan is to have the summit downtown and a venue is still being considered.

The summit structure will be similar to the last summit. The theme will be “Tending the Net.” The previous summit was the introduction of the five-year plan, so this will focus on the third year and moving forward. The hope is to strengthen the regional teams and to bring everyone back to the table to focus on the regional intermediate and long term goals they established in 2012. The idea is to have another summit in 2016 to focus on the last year of the plan and to move ahead into the next five-year plan.

The structure is to have educational presentations based on topics identified by the regional teams and stakeholders in the morning, and to have working groups in the afternoons to apply the skills learned from the morning to strengthen and refine the regional action plans created in 2012. Some of the content ideas include updates on data and research, stigma reduction, means restriction, reaching out to youth, survivor resources, and training strategies. There is still some funding that will be needed. The summit in 2012 cost roughly \$30,000. Staff has secured about \$15,000 and is looking to acquire another \$15,000.

Fishel said she will have funding for the school grantees attend.

Morrison said it is the hope to keep the costs similar to last time. Last time it was requested that grantees use their travel funds to attend, and the Council was able to provide a certain amount of funding for each regional team, which is the hope for this summit as well.

Senator Fairclough asked if there was a specific amount to fund the summit. Morrison said the last summit cost about \$30,000 and the hope is to get to that figure again.

Senator Fairclough said the Legislature could have helped provide funding if the request had been made earlier.

Morrison said it was discussed last year and the Council decided that, since the Legislature has been so financially generous to the Council in recent years, it didn’t feel appropriate to be requesting more funding. Senator Fairclough said looking forward it might be good to request funding for the 2016 summit because it is better to be in front of the game.

Baldwin asked what it will take for more youth to get involved, as the last summit didn’t have as many youth as she would have liked.

Burkhart reminded that each regional team is required to have a youth member involved. Each team had a youth member; some had two. The teams are limited to a finite number of people. The model is to have a diverse group of people that represents different aspects of each region.

Winter Bear Update:

Morrison reported that the Winter Bear Project toured in the Upper Tanana and Copper River Basin communities. They said there was a great turnout and the play was well received. They went to about a dozen communities and were well received.

Senator Gardner asked if there were discussions with the community after the play was performed to discuss suicide prevention. Franks said they did. Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium provided funding for the project and part of the requirement for funding was going in before the play to discuss it with community leaders and to have behavioral health aides available during the play and after in case people needed someone to talk to about suicide. ANTHC is still waiting for reports back from the health aides as part of the grant. ANTHC has received a lot of letters from the communities supporting the project. There were not any reports received that it was not good.

Burkhart said she has seen a report from Tanana Chiefs Conference that is supportive of the project, so that was reassuring that they were aware of the project and supportive of its goal to address suicide in the region.

Franks said that the cast and production people involved in the play were trained in safeTALK before they took the play on tour so they would be prepared how to address suicide prevention if it came up while on tour.

Division of Behavioral Health Quarterly Report:

James Gallanos of the Division of Behavioral Health is a project coordinator for many prevention grants in the state. He oversees six grantees that focus on suicide prevention. There have been some adjustments, but it is similar to the past reports he has given to the Council. Every six months the grantees are asked to report out on their outcomes. Some have reported some progress, while others have had some struggles reporting out their progress. For example, Juneau has a strong coalition and has been able to focus on upstream needs and is doing more public awareness. They are finding some good success.

Martin agreed that Juneau has a strong coalition and is doing some great work. He was surprised to learn that Careline gets more call from Juneau than any place else and he thinks that has a lot to do with the Juneau coalition getting the Careline number out and reaching out to the community.

Burkhart asked that Gallanos follow up with the staff person implementing the Sources of Strength program (funded by the division grant) in the school district. There were quite a few bumps in the road last year and it might be good to get in now to help this school year go more

smoothly than last year. Gallanos said they are making some refinements and adjustments to the program this year to make it work better. Fishel said if you want it to be sustained that educators and staff are on board and know what to do. Burkhart said it is a great program and she would like to see it succeed.

Gallanos reported that Tanana Chiefs Conference has also implemented Sources of Strength. Last year they used it as part of a state grant and now they have shifted it to a federal grant, but they are using the same program. They have 11 schools now using the program. They have had some difficulty getting the support in some of the communities that are using it, but they are also finding strengths in the program and support from the youth leaders.

Mountain Village has been a grantee that has had a series of challenges over the years. They have been developing community care approaches that have seen some success. For example, they have begun dividing up men's and women's talking groups and they are inviting folks from other communities. It has drawn a lot of attention in those areas and has been successful, particularly with the young men.

Senator Gardner asked if there is a difference in the participation rates of the men's and women's groups. Gallanos could not recall if there was more attendance in one than another, but that they have been well attended and appreciated in the community.

Martin said traditionally in villages, when groups are split up by gender, typically there is more openness from each group. When they are intermixed, the tendency is to not be as open. Some men may get emotional and they can do that in front of other men, but will hold back if there are women around.

Gallanos said Careline answered 1,474 calls this past quarter. That is a slight increase from a year ago, but not as significant of a change in the past so it appears it might be flattening out a bit. Part of that may be some of the better coordination with the national lifeline. The division is working with Careline on a new texting campaign and has a variety of printed materials to help with that. Careline is only getting about 20 texts a month, which is low but still an increase from several months ago when it was about five per month. They hope that this texting campaign will help increase those numbers and help reach more of the youth population. The materials have only been out for about 6 weeks.

Humphrey said she would like to see the materials to see if they might be a resource for Boys and Girls Clubs in the state. Gallanos said he could provide her with some to look at.

Gallanos said the state is one of the Garrett Lee Smith federal grantees, a grant he oversees. The focus is on training. The first part was adapting the Alaska Gatekeepers program to include the Question Persuade Refer model. That has been completed and the Council was able to get

trained in it in May. The state has contracted with the Trust Training Cooperative to help do the trainings. They have three certified trainers. They will be working to train juvenile justice probation officers as a way to target at risk youth. There is interest from several other groups, including some tribal entities and nonprofits.

Gallanos said the state just finished its second cohort of the Connect Postvention Training model. There were 32 certified Connect trainers. There are four trainings lined up over the next couple of months. They are working on a postvention video project and are looking for a vendor to produce a 30 minute video that addresses postvention in Alaska.

AFN Conference Preparation:

Martin said there will be a 15 minute presentation as discussed earlier. AFN has also provided the Council with a booth this year as well to distribute materials.

Burkhart said based on Morrison's report from last year, the booth is worth more to the Council than the stage time, as far as reaching people. It was estimated the Council distributed items to about 800 people last year.

Morrison said part of the reason this is on the agenda is to discuss if the Council wants to have a creative way to reach out to the public. Last time the Council distributed roughly the same number of glow sticks as the number of Alaskans that die annually by suicide. This is a time to brainstorm to determine if there is something the Council would like to do this year to have an impact on the crowd beyond the speech.

Senator Gardner wonders if people would be engaged if there was a way to identify if someone who they lost. Burkhart suggested that there could be a sticker with a place for a name that people could have that would identify loved ones they had lost to suicide. Senator Gardner said or it could be a banner that people could sign and then bring it up on to stage. It could be a banner that is rolled up. Or it could be a sticker with the Careline number on it as well.

Fishel said she has some personal reservations because her step son called Careline and still committed suicide so she doesn't feel comfortable with them together.

Crow suggested making a Wall of Hope type banner to focus on the positive rather than dwelling on the negative. Martin said he thinks it is a good idea to make it positive.

Burkhart said it might be a good idea to have a Wall of Hope but to also have a sticker that says "I Can" and a blank space for them to identify a way to help address suicide in Alaska.

Sage said for generations people have been hurting and in pain for losing someone to suicide. To offer or let people know that there is healing that needs to be done and there are ways to help recover. The healing process needs to begin within the Native community.

Burkhart asked if this is enough to get the people excited to attend the presentation. It would be nice to have a special guest, like the Iron Dog guys. Senator Gardner said if there is a special guest they would take up an already short 15 minutes.

Franks suggested they could hold the banner. Burkhart said the Iron Dog guys are a good example of the "I Can" idea, because they did the race to address the issue.

Senator Fairclough suggested having a drummer that is beating in the background during the speech that is timed to coincide with the number of people that die by suicide each year. Senator Gardner said that is a good idea.

Martin directed staff to look at the most feasible of these ideas.

StopSuicideAlaska.org Update:

Burkhart said the website is ready to launch once the state signs off on switching the domain from a state server to a private server. The idea is to launch the site during Suicide Prevention Week. There is a new logo and feel to it. It is designed on an open source platform called Drupal, which is relatively intuitive. It is similar to Wordpress, but it is easy to use if you know how to use a computer. It will have relatively low maintenance upkeep at about \$1,800 a year, which the Boards are paying for. When you log in as the public you can access all the same content and functionality of the old site, it will just be easier to use and better looking. Registered users will have a specific homepage, depending on what groups you are affiliated with. There can be public or private groups. The designers have been really great to work with. Another nice thing is staff can update it whenever, and not having to wait on the IT department to update our webpage. It is an exciting project with lots of possibilities in the future.

Garrett Lee Smith Meeting Presentation:

Martin had a chance to present at the Garrett Lee Smith annual grantee meeting in Washington, D.C. as part of the SEARHC grant. He spoke about the 5 year plan and about the work being done across the state. He spoke about the difficulties in living in such a diverse state, both geographically and ethnically. He apologized for not being more prepared right now and asked Morrison if he could help provide some details of that meeting.

Morrison said he went on behalf of the state since James Gallanos wasn't able to make it. There was a lot of great participation from all over Alaska, and he believes that Alaska has the most number of GLS grants compared to any other state. There were representatives from more

than eight grantees from Alaska, some of which staff did not know had these federal grants. There were about three dozen Alaskans in attendance and maybe 350 total participants. One of the most beneficial things provided at this meeting was the networking. One thing that was great was seeing how good the work created and carried out in Alaska is compared to the other groups and states. A lot of people are aware of the five-year plan and there was a lot of praise for the work being done in Alaska. There were a lot of great presentations on a variety of important topics. Working in this field, it often feels like there isn't being enough done and there could always be something more done, but being at the meeting and getting the positive feedback -- it is nice to know that people are taking notice of what is being done in Alaska.

Stone asked if all of the attendees are GLS grantees. She asked if the Alaskan attendees are part of the state's GLS grant or are separate grants. Morrison said they are all separate federal grants under the GLS program. Stone said she wasn't aware of all those federal grants. She asked if her staff has a handle on how much GLS money is being distributed in Alaska and the scope of their work.

Gallanos said the project officers for the GLS programs know that there is a lot of money coming into the state, though project officers don't necessarily communicate about the different grants they manage. This is something that has been discussed and the idea is to work on better coordination with the federal project officers, the Council, division, and the grantees themselves. The groups were all offered a time to meet and coordinate while in Washington. The hope is to create better communication in the future.

Stone said it is important to follow up on this because it seems to be valuable to communicate with these federal grants to not duplicate services and programs. Gallanos said we can have a conversation with the project coordinators and work on a plan of how to better communication.

School-based Suicide Prevention Grant Program Update:

Fishel said the new school year is coming up soon. The Department of Education and Early Development has put up its first suicide prevention e-module training. It is on the website now. The module is about 2 1/2 hours long and is based on Alaska Gatekeeper. It has a certificate that can be earned, and counts toward continuing education credits. There is a survey at the end of it as well. 70 people so far have completed it. The survey is similar to the Kognito survey. About 90-95% of the survey responses have been very positive.

The e-module is being actively used. The Mat-Su School District is making it the program used district wide to complete the 2 hours of required training. There will be more of an update in October. It is open to anyone that wants to take it, but it is created for educators and school

staff. There was a notice sent out to all of the superintendents in the state. The department is trying to get the word out.

The DEED is working on suicide prevention e-module part 2, which will primarily be on safety planning. It will also be two hours, which means there will be at least 4 hours of training to help people fulfill the 2 hour training requirements in SB137.

Senator Gardner asked if the school year is when the clock starts ticking on SB137 and the 2 hour training requirements, or if it is a calendar year. Fishel said there wasn't anything specific in the bill that addresses that. It just says annually. Many schools are addressing it at the beginning of the year. It will vary on each school district when they do it. It will also vary on which program or training they decide to use.

Senator Fairclough suggested having the Council go through the e-module in the future to know what the Council is endorsing.

Fishel reported that six grantees were awarded funding through the increment the Council helped secure. There will be a grantee meeting in September to talk about expectations, reporting, and action planning. The plan is do build a network of the six groups to help make them stronger.

Morrison asked which districts got the grants. Fishel said the grants were awarded to Petersburg, Haines, Anchorage, Mat-Su, Northwest Arctic, and the North Slope. There is a pretty wide range of grantees that were selected by the committee.

Kognito At-Risk Update:

Morrison said Kognito is a suicide prevention training program that uses avatars to facilitate practice discussions that was endorsed by the AASG students. The Council listened to the students and set up a two-year pilot program for high school educators interested in using this program to fulfill the SB137 requirements. This is the second year of the pilot program. Last year was not as successful as we had hoped, and had about 130 participants. To bolster participation there will be a webinar in September to highlight the program and why it is beneficial. It will also discuss ways to train up to two hours to help it meet the two hour training requirements since the training is for one hour.

Burkhart said the survey the e-module has is very similar to the Kognito survey at the end of the training. The Council will be able to access the information after the pilot program ends and determine if this is something the Council wants to continue to provide in the future.

Morrison said he is working with the Kognito people to update the Alaska webpage on their site to include a discussion guide that school can use to bolster the training to two hours.

Senator Fairclough asked if the Council would like to offer a training during the legislative session as a way to show the work that is being done, but to also show the legislature why this work is important. Senator Gardner said the Council could challenge the legislators to take a training.

Humphrey said she would like to see more training opportunities for Council members at the quarterly meetings.

Senator Fairclough said Suicide Prevention Week coming up might be a good time to thank teachers for doing the training and looking out for Alaska's children. It could be a letter to the editor or opinion that could be penned by the Chairman that highlights the training requirements and thank them for the work they are doing. Burkhart said Morrison could draft a letter for Martin. Senator Fairclough said she sees writing it as a celebration of teachers.

Sen. Begich Suicide Prevention Meeting Update:

May said the event was hosted by Sen. Begich's wife, Deborah Bonito, as part of an effort by several senators' spouses to help bring attention to suicide prevention. The event was held at their house in Anchorage and was attended by quite a few people. They were looking at identifying gaps in services, and one of those gaps identified was the issue of money. It became apparent that there was not a lot of communication between federal and state entities and grantees.

Humphrey said the premise was to come and get educated about what is working on suicide prevention. The discussion was "who is doing what." It was interesting to listen about all the work being done by different organizations. It was a widely varied group but there were some obvious holes in attendees, such as no one from the Anchorage School District.

May said there was some frustration expressed about how to identify outcomes and the success of different programs. There was an obvious concern at the meeting about what is really working, what is not, how to identify each, and how to move forward in the future. The key is to open up communication between all the groups at a statewide level and work together as opposed to independently.

Humphrey said it was gratifying that everyone in attendance got a copy of the Council's plan. It was her impression that the intention of the meeting was all about information gathering. There was a real disbelief about the systems and programs set up across the state. The Council may take it for granted how much work has been done recently, but there are a great deal of people who have no idea of the suicide prevention work being done in Alaska.

Public Comment:

No public comment

Final Comments

Franks wanted to thank Fishel for all the work she has been doing with the schools and Alaska Association of Student Governments. Franks said there are two advisory board positions open for the Alaska Psychiatric Institute.

Humphrey said she would like to have more training opportunities at the Council quarterly meetings.

Martin asked for a motion to adjourn. Fishel moved to adjourn, Franks seconded the motion. Hearing no objection, Martin adjourned the meeting.