

Statewide Suicide Prevention Council
Quarterly Meeting
February 15, 2013, Videoconference, Alaska
Minutes

February 15, 2013

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bill Martin at 8:30 a.m.

Roll call:

Present: Martin, Meghan Crow, Phyllis Carlson, Barbara Franks, Brenda Moore, Christine Moses, Lowell Sage, Melissa Stone, Teresa Baldwin, Sue Ellen May, Rep. Anna Fairclough, Rep. Berta Gardner

Absent: Alana Humphrey (excused), Sharon Strutz-Norton, Anna Sappah

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

Approval of agenda:

Martin asked for approval of the agenda. Carlson moved to approve the agenda as presented. Moore moved to second the agenda. The agenda is approved without objection.

Approval of minutes:

Martin asked for approval of the minutes of the October meeting. Carlson moved to approve the minutes as presented. Crow moved to second the agenda. The agenda is approved without objection.

Ethics Disclosure:

No member reported a conflict of interest.

Announcements:

Martin said he will have to leave before the meeting is over due to a scheduling conflict and asks that Crow be able to take over the meeting as vice-chair.

“Casting the Net Upstream” One-year Implementation Report

January marked the one year anniversary of the “Casting the Net Upstream” statewide suicide prevention plan. Burkhart said there was a lot of great work done across Alaska over the first

year of the plan and the implementation report highlights the indicators set out in the plan. The report also includes an annual report that highlights the work of the Council during fiscal year 2012 so there did not need to be two separate reports written to provide to the legislature this session. The report focuses on the work of the partner communities and agencies work rather than boasting the Council's achievements because the state plan focuses on all Alaskans. There is a lot more focus on communities in the report rather than on the state or the Council.

Some of the examples of things that are included in the report include the large number of trainings. There were hundreds of people across Alaska trained on subjects related to suicide prevention. An estimated 1,700 people were trained during the year, which does not include the non-evidenced-based training. The preliminary total numbers of suicides from vital statistics shows that 22 fewer people died in 2011, which is exciting, but is something to be taken with a grain of salt. The numbers have fluctuated over the years so it hard to tell, but it is exciting that the number has gone down by 22 people.

The report highlights several items that might be considered for policy change later. Alaska is making some good progress on the restriction to lethal means programs, such as the gun locker program in Togiak. The data is showing an upswing on hanging, poisoning and suffocation, which are means that are very difficult to restrict access to. Burkhart said she is not sure what to do on this because there is not much evidence to support how to deal with these issues and some of the research says to focus on restricting access to guns and pills.

The www.stopsuicidealaska.org traffic is way up this year, as indicated in the report. The actual unique visits to the site have increased by over 100 percent. That is promising because right now the site is not what it was intended to be or what it will be in the future. But even with the limited functionality there is now, it is getting great traffic.

The cost of printing the report is a little over \$5 so the decision was made to only web publish it. If someone really wants a hard copy it will be printed in the Council's office. There will be postcards printed out for the legislators to let them know that it is available on the Council's website.

Martin asked for any questions on the report.

Stone said the report is very well done. Carlson said it was impressive and rewarding to read the report and reflect. Stone said it is nice that it is very practical. Gardner said that the report is well done.

Martin said that he is encouraged to hear about the decrease in the number of suicides, even though it might just be a one-year trend, but it is good to have hope.

Burkhart said sometimes it can be easy to think about rates and numbers and not think about the numbers of actual people, but 22 people is a number to be hopeful about.

Educational Outreach Materials

Morrison said the Council has done a lot of education outreach over the past year. There were numerous new items the Council bought, including pens and magnets, that have been given away at events and through the mail to different organizations and stakeholders. Many of the items given away this past year have been www.stopsuicidalaska.org items, which could potentially be part of the reason why the website traffic has increase so dramatically this year. The staff has been very frugal with the Council's budget and tries to spend as little money as possible, so there are some funds available that can be used toward more educational materials.

Burkhart said the magnets have been a huge hit this year, but they promote Careline. One option would be to create more magnets with the unveiling of the new www.stopsuicidalaska.org website.

Morrison said the Council has been lucky to partner with the Division of Behavioral Health on getting business cards and brochures printed, but has focused mainly on marketing the www.stopsuicidalaska.org website. The discussion today is to determine what Council members would be the most effective way to get the message out.

Gardner said she thinks magnets are the best options to get the helpful information out to people. The flashlights and pens are great, but when people need the number it is easier to know where you have the magnet located like on a refrigerator.

May said stress balls have been very popular with the VA crowd that she interacts with, as well as magnets, reusable grocery bags and key chains.

Crow said the stress toys are very great with kids, as well as zipper pulls.

Stone said she thinks the zipper pulls make sense.

Morrison said that there are still plenty of materials in the Council's office, but this is just an opportunity for Council members to give their feedback on materials in the future. There is no need to decide today, and is a subject that can be discussed again during the May meeting once the fiscal year is winding down and there is a better idea of what the budget figures will be.

Martin and Carlson said that it makes sense to wait until later in the year to know exactly what money is available to maximize the purchasing power of the order.

Morrison said he will look at items prior to the next meeting and put this topic on the agenda for the next meeting in May.

Quarterly Report by the Division of Behavioral Health

James Gallanos of the Division of Behavioral Health said there are a number of prevention grants that the Division of Behavioral Health manages, and suicide prevention is just one area of an overall comprehensive preventions grant management program. The report in front of Council members focuses mostly on suicide prevention, including strategies, outcomes and a little bit of results. Right now it is about halfway through the grant cycle and grantees have just submitted their annual reports, but those just came in so there has not been a chance to analyze those yet. Overall, the prevention grants are moving along very well.

The Juneau Suicide Prevention Coalition is doing a lot of great work. They are working at expanding the Sources of Strength prevention program in their schools and identifying students at risk of suicide. The program helps reduce stigma and helps promote help seeking by students.

Mountain Village did not enter into another grant agreement because they refused to sign the agreement with DBH because it didn't want to give up its tribal sovereignty. The division has been working with the University of Alaska Fairbanks to reapply for the funding on behalf of Mountain Village and to monitor the grant for the tribe. They are restructuring the grant and will primarily focus on strengthening culturally based activities. They want to have a community center for both youth and adults. They have had problems holding on to a coordinator for the grant in the past, so this arrangement should make it easier for the community to manage and retain the grant.

The Nulato grant has also had a difficult time finding a coordinator that can manage the grant. The city and the tribe have since partnered for their suicide prevention activities. The grant used to focus on youth activities and have a lot of emphasis on the younger members of the community, but had difficulty maintaining a program for adults. There was a suicide in the village not too long ago, and they received some help from the Tanana Chiefs Conference. The division is working to build greater capacity for the grant. They need more attention on the behavioral health elements of the grant that focus more on prevention in these cultural activities.

Petersburg has used its behavioral health grant primarily on underage drinking over the past several years. There have been several suicides in the community since then so they have focused more on suicide prevention recently, with now about half the grant focusing on suicide prevention and half of it focusing on underage drinking. They are working with Wrangell as well because they share a lot of resources on these behavioral health issues. They have been looking

at their city and community policies when it comes to underage drinking and have been able to get more support from prosecutors to help curb the amount of alcohol being supplied to underage residents.

The division is managing about 25 behavioral health prevention grants, with about five of them directly involving suicide prevention.

The division has finalized a contract with Careline for \$125,000 for three years. It was intended to be \$50,000 year, but it began part way through the fiscal year so that is why it is \$125,000. They will be unveiling a new text option that will be connected to an auto-reply and a verification text that the caller received the automatic reply. That fits into the policies and protocols on how to reply. The funding will go toward paying for a person to monitor the text line, which is also a recommendation from the American Association on Suicidology and the National Lifeline. Careline has hired a person dedicated to staffing the text line and there will be a soft rollout of materials to advertise the text line in schools and communities beginning in the next several months.

The division just completed the first 6 months of the three year Garrett Lee Smith grant it received. This is the second round of this grant funding from the federal government. The first round focused on the development of the regional teams. This cycle will focus on suicide prevention training. The training has been expanded to be more adaptable but to still have the main core criteria. There will be several training opportunities, including a one hour, two hour, four hour, and full day training. Gallanos expects the new Gatekeeper training will be unveiled at some point this spring.

Planning for the Alaska Suicide Prevention Summit 2014

Morrison said the Council needs to decide if it will hold another summit the following January. This would be the third suicide prevention summit. The first was held in 2010, the second was held in 2012. This is a time for the Council to discuss whether or not to host another summit in January 2014, and if so, what it should consist of, who should be invited to attend, and what the structure and theme should be. Finding a way to fund a potential summit should also be considered in this discussion.

Moore said that she is in favor of having another summit because the past two have created so much traction for the Council and for the stakeholders across Alaska. By bringing people together to discuss the issue, she feels it was valuable.

Morrison said he was not at the first summit, but from his understanding it was about bringing all the stakeholders to the table and assessing all the strengths and weaknesses in the suicide prevention services in Alaska. This past summit was focused on the plan and creating regional

teams to create and implement supplemental regional plans. Is it a good idea to bring these regional teams back together and have a follow up summit on the plan, or should it be taken into a completely different direction, possibly having more of an informational update of accomplishments over the past couple of years.

Moore said maybe a building capacity track to talk about issues that have come up with grantees, particularly the tribal grantees. It might be best to learn from the rural areas if they have the capacity to manage a grant, and if not, then provide training to help build capacity to make the grants more manageable for rural communities.

Crow said she thinks it would be a good idea to have some trainings or presentations from grantees about programs that have been successful and how to model them in different communities throughout the state. Then regional teams can talk about what works in their areas and what doesn't. One of the problems she has seen with the regional teams is that they are so large geographically that they might not be able to work together well with other communities in their region because of distance. It would be helpful to learn how different communities are successful with different programs in different regions.

Moore said one of the biggest challenges with suicide prevention in Alaska has been the coordination, or lack thereof, throughout Alaska. It is so critical to sustainability. There has been a lot of money that has been spent throughout Alaska for different grants that don't have sustainability. Once the grant disappears the program often disappears with it and then it is back to the beginning again. Coordination is an important part of sustainability.

Carlson said she thinks a summit is a very valuable piece of overall suicide prevention strategy. She thinks strengthening the regional teams and building capacity in those regions is a good direction to continue forward with. Suicide prevention will be more successful in Alaska if people in those regions take ownership of the issue and work together to reduce suicides.

Burkhart said she is hearing two things being said. One is to showcase the good and innovative work that people have been doing across Alaska for suicide prevention. The second is to help support the regional teams and build capacity. The Council can do both at a summit by framing it as a showcase and having a peer-led capacity building theme as well.

May said she thinks it would be good to showcase where people have been and how they have come to where they are now, and to then learn from others new ways to move forward and be successful.

Morrison said there is still nearly a year until the summit would be held and still plenty of time for planning, but this is mainly a discussion to decide if a summit in January 2014 is worthwhile and financially reasonable. The Council can spend more time at its next meeting talking about

the planning specifics. What is important now is to decide whether or not to host another summit.

Carlson said the summits are very important when it comes to sustainability of prevention programs and capacity building throughout the state.

Franks said that she feels it is important to host another summit and to highlight all of the amazing things people have been doing throughout the state, as well as to give people a chance to learn from others what is working well in other places.

Moore said one of the main values of these summits is to bring everybody to the table and to learn from each other.

Burkhart said everyone seems in favor of having a summit in January 2014. For the next business meeting there will be time set aside to brainstorm on the theme, structure and planning of the next summit.

Update of the Overhaul of www.stopsuicidealaska.org

Burkhart said the www.stopsuicidealaska.org website has never been as functional as it was designed to be. Instead of continuing to pay large amounts of money on maintain a lesser product, it was more reasonable to start over with a more manageable site. This project is exclusively funded by the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse and the Alaska Mental Health Board. There was a bid that had gone out, there were several proposals, and a company out of Bellevue, Washington was awarded the bid. The company has a lot of experience and designed the suicide prevention website for the Air National Guard. Staff has been working with the company for about a month.

Burkhart said the main differences between the old and new websites, is the Council will have finally received the functions that it wanted from the beginning. There will be the ability for group sites that communities will be able to set up easily. There will also be a learning network where resources, webinars and trainings can be stored and accessed.

Burkhart said this project did come under budget. There are weekly meetings on Mondays that include a report and a conversation on where the project is at. The project is moving very quickly and the customer service is amazing. The project costs about \$18,000. For comparison purposes, the old site cost about \$75,000. The new one will be far and away more in line with the originals goals of www.stopsuicidealaska.org.

Stone asked how Kognito is connected to this project.

Burkhart said that Kognito will be linked from the new site, but they are separate sites. There will not be any hosting of Kognito because they have their own site. Burkhart said she is the project manager and not by committee like last time so that it goes fast and is cost effective. There will be an opportunity for people to contribute but this is not a committee-driven process.

Martin asked when it will likely be finished and ready for the public.

Burkhart said the contract ends in June, so it will most likely come online in May.

Break for Lunch

Martin called the meeting back to order.

Suicide Awareness, Prevention and Postvention Grant Program Overview

Sharon Fishel is the suicide prevention grant coordinator for the Department of Education & Early Development. The DEED received the suicide prevention funding in July that was secured by the Council advocacy during the previous session. Since then the DEED has secured training modules and education materials from the Jason Foundation so there are enough materials for all the school districts. About 400 kits have been sent out to more than 300 schools. The department has also set up a website that has a lot of informational material, as well as links to statewide and national organizations. The website also has the list of trainings for staff that are approved for the Senate Bill 137 suicide prevention training requirements.

Fishel said the funding transferred from the Council to DEED will also cover some administrative costs. The department will also be developing a 2 hour module training of the Gatekeeper model being revised now. It is hoped that will be completed by the end of August. This will be another training option for teachers to comply with SB137. The mini grant money this year is being used in conjunction with other funding through the Division of Behavioral Health to augment some of the suicide prevention work being done at alternative high schools around the state.

Fishel said there is currently a grant application out for the Fiscal Year 2014 mini grant funds set up through SB137. School districts can apply for a small grant of three years up to \$25,000 each year. About ten grants will be given out to separate school districts. The department is encouraging the school districts to think outside of the box when it comes to prevention. The programs can be vastly different as long as they fall under the state suicide prevention plan and can focus on anything from wellness, resiliency, improving school climate, to trainings. There have been about 14 letters of intent submitted so far. Only school districts can apply for this grant program and there can only be one application per school district. The applications are

due March 11 and then they will be reviewed and the grantees will be announced sometime in April. The letters of intent have been received from all across the state, from Hydaburg to Barrow, so it is pretty balanced. All of the submissions have been very different so it will be fun to see what projects will be accomplished over the next three years. The grant program will be a great benefit to many students across Alaska. Fishel said she is grateful for the work the Council did to secure the funding for the grant program.

Burkhart said that she appreciates all the work Fishel has done in partnership with the Council over the past 6 months, particularly with the consistency of message. It is very important to have a consistent message on suicide prevention and Fishel has demonstrated consistency and it is very helpful.

Martin said there was a bit of push back from school districts about SB 137 and requiring two more hours of training for teachers that already have a lot on their plate and not a lot of extra time. Martin wondered how the training has been going and if there is compliance from the school districts with the new law.

Fishel said administrators, specialists, teachers and counselors are required to take two hours of training during the entire school year. There is a time issue for some schools, but there are free resources including Kognito where the teachers and staff can take the training at their leisure.

Martin asked if the training is just for this year.

Fishel said the law states that every year they must have two hours of training.

Martin said he really appreciates all of the work being done by Fishel and the DEED. Many people, especially the youth, have communicated with the Council how important suicide prevention training in schools is. Martin said he is very grateful that SB137 was passed and that DEED is now working to implement it across the state.

Council Member Update

Morrison said this time has been set aside for Council members to fill in each other on the work they have been and are doing across the state. It has been several months since the Council has met and people have been doing a lot of exciting work.

Franks said she has been working on a project called Photo Voices. They are working with young men with the Father Initiative Program. There are a lot of issues young men are going through right now and it is an important demographic. There has been a loss of cultural identity. There are young men in Juneau, Huslia, Anchorage and are looking for one other community and would like to have 10 young men participate in the project. Franks has also

been working on the Survivor Voices project. Franks said she has been asked to be on the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Consumer Subcommittee representing a survivor. She will be going to Baltimore at the end of the month to meet with the subcommittee. There have usually been only 6 or 7 people on the committee but now there are 18, so it is exciting. She has been working with the Alaska Association of Student Governments and ANTHC on the annual suicide prevention commercial campaign. The goal this year is to have 10 commercials, which will be unveiled at the AASG spring meeting. Franks has been asked to be on the Advisory Board for Alaska Psychiatric Institute for seat reserved for ANTHC. Doorway to a Sacred Place is going to be coming together. It has taken a long time to create, but this year there should be a final product coming out.

Baldwin said she has been working on a project called the Week of Hope with multiple universities and with AASG in Alaska high schools. The plan is to be a weeklong project with different activities to build resiliency and hope in young people. She will be speaking in April at the National Indian Child Welfare Association about suicide and prevention.

Moore said she is in the process of planning an integration summit to help some pastors increase their skills and be more aware of mental health issues in their congregations. They will host a training in April that focuses on bringing pastors together with Christian mental health professionals. They will be inviting community members as well.

May said she will be presenting at the Rural Providers Health Meeting on February 22 to talk about the role the VA plays. One talk will be on suicide prevention and first responders, the second on suicide prevention in the military and veteran population. The VA is working on establish an MOU with the State Office of Epidemiology do share information on veterans to better share information about veterans between the state and the VA. The Veterans Crisis Line information is now available national in brail for vision impaired veterans, which has been a long time coming.

Martin called for a break before public comment.

Public Comment

Sam Trivette of Juneau is a member of the Juneau Suicide Prevention Coalition and the survivor of a son that died by suicide. He is proud and grateful for the work the Council has done over the past couple of years and knows that there was a time when it looked like the Council was going to be dismantled. The issue of suicide prevention is on the upswing and he is happy to see all of the great work done by the Council and others around the state. There is an extremely committed group of people in Juneau working on suicide prevention and he is proud of all the work they have done. The people that are in that group come together to make things work. They have found a way to work together and they make sure they are on track to accomplish

their goals. The Juneau coalition is working on three tracks, including school-based services, public awareness and training, and postvention.

Carlson thanked Trivette for coming in and all of the work he does for suicide prevention in Juneau.

Martin asked to be excused, Crow took over as Chair.

Norm Phillips of Fairbanks is calling as a follow up on behalf of Anne Hanley about a letter of support for the Winter Bear Project. Hanley is out of the country at the time so he is calling to discuss the most recent developments of the Winter Bear Project. The coordinators met with several senators in Juneau recently as well as the commissioner for the Department of Health and Social Services and the Governor about securing \$250,000 for funding the Winter Bear project. His daughter died by suicide when she was a senior in high school. He did not think he would enjoy the Winter Bear play when he first heard of it but then he enjoyed it after seeing it for the first time. The play really comes down to hope and instilling hope in others. He thinks it is a very strong and neutral look at suicide and the kind of hope that is needed to be shared. He hopes the Council will consider writing a letter of support to the legislature for funding the Winter Bear Project.

Carlson made a motion to suspend public comment until any members of the public want to testify in order to discuss a letter of support for the Winter Bear Project.

Moore seconded the motion.

Crow asked for any objection, hearing none, suspended public comment.

Crow asked if people would like to make it an agenda item for the next meeting.

Moore said she would like to do that because Franks and Martin have left the meeting and may be in favor of this. There should be more council member input on such a big issue.

Sage says that he has not had a chance to read the script yet.

Moore said she was not able to finish the script either, but she has seen the play, and she thinks people need to really look carefully at the content of the material. She has some strong reservations about the content, but she would like more feedback from all the Council members, particularly the Alaska Native members. Moore made a motion to discuss this at a future meeting.

May seconded the motion.

Crow asked for any objection, hearing none, the issue will be discussed at a future meeting.

Burkhart suggested holding a teleconference in the next couple of weeks in order to be timely with the Winter Bear folks since they have a request in with the legislature.

Crow asked staff to send out an email to find a time in the next several weeks to hold a teleconference on the Winter Bear letter of support.

No more members of the public came forward to make a public comment.

Final Comments

Carlson said she thought the videoconference worked well for this meeting and wouldn't mind more like this in the future.

Moore said she liked the video conference as well but looks forward to the next meeting and being all together again.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.