

Statewide Suicide Prevention Council

Quarterly Meeting

May 6 -7, 2013, Anchorage, Alaska

Minutes

May 6, 2013

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bill Martin at 9:00 a.m.

Roll call:

Present: Bill Martin, Phyllis Carlson, Alana Humphrey, Barbara Franks, Fred Glenn, Brenda Moore, Melissa Stone, Rep. Ben Nageak, Sue Ellen May, Sen. Anna Fairclough, Sen. Berta Gardner, Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Meghan Crow

Absent: Teresa Baldwin, Christine Moses, Lowell Sage, Sharon Strutz-Norton

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. Franks seconded the motion. The agenda was 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. Franks seconded the motion. The agenda was approved without objection.

Ethics Disclosures:

Moore said she works for Christian Health Associations, which receives state and Alaska Mental Health Trust funding. Franks works for the Alaska Native Health Consortium and is an Alaska Psychiatric Institute advisory board member. Humphrey is director of the Alaska Boys and Girls Club, which receives state funding.

Introduction of New Council Members:

Rep. Nageak is from Barrow. He has been there since 1956. He is a former Assembly member and Borough Mayor. He lost his son to suicide in 2009. For the first two years it was very emotional for him and his family. He vowed to do something and wanted to openly talk about

suicide and its impact on families. There is a long history of suicide in the Northern region. Now he has a forum that he can talk about it openly and how it has affected his whole family.

Rep. Kreiss-Tomkins is serving his first term in the House of Representative. He is from Sitka and serves rural Alaska in Southeast. Last year he spent a lot of time in 11 communities in Southeast Alaska and was struck by the impact of suicide on all of those communities. He has had some peers that have died by suicide. He is excited to be a part of the Council.

Glenn is the new representative from the Advisory Board on Alcohol and Drug Abuse. He has a PhD in soil physics. He is a recovering alcoholic and has been sober for 15 years. His son died by suicide. He has contemplated suicide. He is not sure if working on suicide or alcohol is more difficult. He is on the Council to represent his son and his problems. He has lived in many places in Alaska, coming to the state first in 1963.

SSPC Executive Committee Elections:

Martin opened nominations for Chair.

Nageak nominated Martin as Chair. Franks seconded the nomination. Martin accepted the nomination. Carlson moved to close the nominations. Martin asked for any discussion. Hearing none, he asked for a vote. Martin was unanimously elected as Chair.

Martin opened nominations for Vice-Chair.

Franks nominated Crow as Vice-Chair. Fairclough seconded the nomination. Moore moved to close the nominations. Martin asked for any discussion. Hearing none, he asked for a vote. Crow was unanimously elected as Vice-Chair.

Martin opened nominations for Recorder/Treasurer.

May nominated Stone as Recorder/Treasurer. Moore seconded the nomination. Carlson moved to close the nominations. Martin asked for any discussion. Hearing none, he asked for a vote. Stone was unanimously elected as Recorder/Treasurer.

Martin opened nominations for Officer-at-Large.

Carlson nominated Franks as Officer-at-Large. Moore seconded the nomination. Stone moved to close the nominations. Martin asked for any discussion. Hearing none, he asked for a vote. Franks was unanimously elected as Officer-at-Large.

The executive committee will begin serving on July 1. The officers will hold those positions for 1 year.

Quarterly report from Division of Behavioral Health:

James Gallanos, a prevention grant coordinator for the Division of Behavioral Health, presented the quarterly report. The state is currently about half way through the 3-year grant cycle. The division is working on proposal guidelines for the next grant cycle. There are about 25 prevention grants through the division, although not all of them include suicide prevention. The division is concerned that each grant cycle there are less and less rural grantees, and it is working on addressing that in the next grant cycle. Some of it is due to grant management issues, some to staff turnover. They are working on ways to better the support for rural grantees.

Alaska Careline is doing a lot of great work throughout Alaska. The division and Careline are working on a better system for follow up calls to users of Careline. Careline is also working on ways to get the number out to more Alaskans so the service can be utilized more effectively.

The State received another Garret Lee Smith grant. About 80 percent of that funding will go toward revamping the Alaska Gatekeeper suicide prevention training model. The division is developing standards that are universal for trainings all over the state while at the same time making it adaptable for different audiences. There will be a 2-hour and a 4-hour training version. The Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) best practice model is embedded in the plan to have it completed by the end of the month. They will then have a model to roll out with a training of trainers sometime in the Fall. At the same time, they are working with the Division of Juvenile Justice and some tribal entities to embed this new model in their workforce. The division is also funding promotion of the Careline text line with the GLS funding.

There will be another Connect postvention training with NAMI New Hampshire coming in June to Anchorage. A day for the planning teams will be added to the Connect training, as the model is focused on training of trainers. There will be an emphasis this year on participants planning trainings in their regions for the coming year. There will be a night of Healing Words, which is another program from NAMI-New Hampshire that brings in a survivor of suicide to speak publicly about loss and promote prevention. It is also a way to invite the public in to discuss suicide loss and to promote prevention in the community. The division is also working on a postvention DVD to provide communities with an example of how postvention can work throughout Alaska. This project is in the initial planning stages, finding survivors of suicide to come together in late summer to plan the DVD and find a vendor to help produce it.

Planning for the 2014 Alaska Suicide Prevention Summit:

The Council will have another suicide prevention summit, on the same two-year cycle, in January, 2014. The first summit theme was “Mending the Net.” The second summit had a theme of “Casting the Net Upstream.” The Council was asked to choose a basic theme and structure so that planning can start in the next couple of months.

May said that “Weaving the Net” might be a good theme to build on, since many people are working on implementing services and building coalitions in communities and regions. There are a lot of puzzle pieces, so it seems like the net theme would be good to build on.

Carlson said there has been mending, with a concept of closing gaps. Then there was casting, which was working on upstream preventative measures.

Moore said that “Tending the Net” might be a good theme, to focus on the good work that has been done over the past several years.

Nageak suggested “Harvesting the Net.” It could focus on harvesting the information that has been learned.

Burkhart said the next step is really focusing on harvesting what has been done over the past couple of years. This would be year three of the five-year plan. There are two years of good work that has been done and this would be an opportunity to build on those successes.

Morrison asked if the Council would like to see people reporting out, or some action planning, or some training or teaching opportunities.

Burkhart explained as background for new Council members that if it is a big conference or meeting open to the public, there is not as much focused participation. Since the Council funds the travel, it is frustrating when there is not a lot of enthusiasm and buy-in. Thus the model has been invitation only. The idea is to invite people that might not be involved on a daily basis, but people that can do work and have enthusiasm for the issue. By making it something that not everyone can go to, people think it is a special thing to attend. They work really hard, not just at the summit, but afterward and are really invested in the process. It is up to the Council what it wants to do, but there has been success in the past in having it a closed event.

Martin asked if the regional teams would be invited back. Burkhart said that is something she would want to do.

Kreiss-Tompkins asked for specific examples of some of the people that would get invited.

Burkhart said the first summit had room for 70 people. The list was divided for 20 spots for the usual behavioral health providers, school officials, and state officials. The other 50 spots were for youth and elders, leaders in the faith community, cultural healers, business leaders, policy makers, LGBTQ community leaders, law enforcement, etc. The planners tried to invite every group that had something to contribute that the Council hadn’t talked to before. There were some people that had been involved, but it was important to have the discussion driven by people that had not been at the table before.

Carlson said that she felt that the attendees were the front line folks involved in suicide prevention who deal with suicides in their communities. It was an inventory of what was working, what wasn't, and identifying the gaps.

Burkhart said the idea was to bring in new people with new ideas. The last summit there was a solicitation for teams, with a request of what type of representatives we wanted on the teams, but they included people that volunteered and chose themselves. Every team had someone that we hadn't worked with before, as well as some people that had been involved in the past.

Carlson said it would be a good idea to strengthen the regional teams and to help them build capacity in their regions.

Burkhart suggested having the teams indicate what kind of training and information they want to learn. An example could be a grant writing workshop, a grant management workshop, community coalition building.

Carlson said she loves the idea of the regional coalition building because that is the key to sustainability in the programs. It is important to engrain in them that regional coalitions can help prevent suicide in the future. It will take time and some nurturing.

Moore said she is not sure if the Council is ready to harvest. The net is still out and we are still trying to figure out the scope and depth of the problem.

Glenn said that he likes the idea of "Tending the Net."

Moore said the net is still out there and we are not ready to pull it in yet.

Burkhart said that the summit is based off the five-year plan so "Harvesting the Net" should really be saved for year five. Even if you are ready to harvest now, you would want to save it for year five.

Moore said building the capacity is the important thing. Nageak said he would like to see training at the summit to help build capacity.

Burkhart suggested having a healing of healers component to the summit.

Martin asked if "Tending the Net" is a theme that everyone can get behind. There was no dissent, so the summit theme will work on building capacity.

Morrison asked if it should be a two-day summit. If so, there could be a quarterly business meeting before or after the summit like was done last time. Martin said he thinks that is a good plan.

Morrison suggested having the summit the first full week of the January, which would give people enough time to come back from holiday vacation and be held prior to the legislative session. The business meeting could be held on Wednesday, January 8, with the summit the following two days on January 9 and 10.

Martin said that sounds like a good schedule and would allow time for the Council's legislative members to attend the summit.

Morrison asked if anybody wants to be a part of the planning team. Moore said she would like to be involved in the planning.

FY14 Meeting Schedule Planning:

Morrison said the Council has three new members that live outside of the Anchorage area that replaced members that lived in Anchorage. Depending on where the Council meets, it could add several more thousand dollars to the meetings. One option is to hold meetings outside of Anchorage and to have a teleconference as one of the meetings.

Martin said that, if it could be afforded, it would be nice to meet outside of Anchorage. He wants to have a presence at the Alaska Federation of Natives conference this year in October in Fairbanks.

Carlson said there are a lot of cultural differences throughout Alaska so it is nice to hold meetings in other communities and learn firsthand about what those communities are dealing with when it comes to suicide and suicidal ideation.

Martin asked if the Council would be agreeable to meeting in Fairbanks in October. Hearing no objections, he suggested holding it in conjunction with the AFN conference.

Morrison suggested holding a teleconference meeting in August because the summer season has high costs for travel and accommodations. Martin agreed that a teleconference would be a good idea. He suggested holding the last meeting of the fiscal year outside of Anchorage as well if there is a teleconference meeting in the summer.

Morrison suggested the end of August, or middle of August. He asked if it should be held on a Monday or a Friday, or in the middle of the week. Franks said it would work best for her at the end of a week. Morrison suggested Friday, August 23. Martin asked if that is a good date for everybody. Hearing no objection, Martin said August 23 is a good day. He asked about a meeting in the spring. He suggested going to Bethel, since the Council has not had a business meeting there, there is a high rate of suicide in the region, and two Council members live in the community.

May said she thinks Bethel would be a good community. Morrison said he would work with Moses and Crow to determine a good time to meet in the Spring, possibly in early April.

StopSuicideAlaska.org Website Update:

Burkhart explained that several years ago the Council created StopSuicideAlaska.org as a central place for the public and suicide prevention providers to post and learn information. There is a calendar. You can do data query or post pictures. It was supposed to have the capacity to create sites for regional teams, school districts, and community coalitions so they could create and manage their own sites. One of the reasons this was done is because many community coalitions or organizations could not afford

their own website, or they could not maintain them if grant funding ran out, so this would allow the state to host it and absorb the costs. The first iteration hit a lot of its goals, but not all of them. The Alaska Mental Health Board and the Advisory Board on Alcohol and Drug Abuse are funding the updated version. It costs \$17,000, as opposed to the \$75,000 version that was done the first time. This new version will be much better than the first version. It is still going to have the same URL and have the same functionality, but it will have the capacity for lay users to come in and create a site. Any entity in the state involved in suicide prevention can create its own site off this new portal version. The boards will pay to maintain the site, which is very minimal. There are meetings every Monday to discuss the project and the updates. All the architecture of the site is done. All of the layers are done. There will be several people that will be administrators to help manage the site internally. If there are Council members interested in creating content, they can be involved as an administrator for content. People that want to create a site will have administrator privileges to some degree. The website will be accessible to the public. The beta version should be ready in about 10 days to be able to view and provide feedback. Because the website will not be on the State of Alaska server anymore, the current version of www.stopsuicidealaska.org has not had any work done on it.

Suicide Awareness, Prevention & Postvention Grant Program Update:

Sharon Fishel, an education specialist for the Department of Education and Early Development, is the coordinator of the new suicide awareness, prevention and postvention grant program that utilizes the funding appropriation the Council helped secure. She gave a report to the Council back in February on the program, and this is a report on what has been done since then. There was a request for proposals for school districts to apply for small suicide awareness, prevention and postvention grants. Grants are for \$25,000 for the next three years, up to \$75,000 during that period. The Program Evaluation Committee recently wrapped up. There were 14 letters of intent, with 11 school districts that eventually applied. Only one application was allowed per school district. Big districts like Anchorage had to determine which schools would be applying.

Six applicants were funded. Anchorage School District was awarded a grant to serve the alternative high school, Anchorage Vocational Academic Institute of Learning (AVAIL), and New Path, the school at Anchorage Correctional Center. New Path is a school that just started; young adults that are part of this program have all been convicted of a crime and are in prison. They will be doing the Natural Helpers program.

Norwest Arctic Borough School District also received a grant to focus on postvention. They plan on doing some survivor support and healing with their Youth Leaders program. The Mat-Su School District was awarded a grant to serve the Burchell High School and Valley Pathways High School, alternative high schools in the valley. They plan on doing ASIST training and collaborating with the Co-Occurring Disorders Institute to provide crisis counseling to students..

Haines School District was awarded a grant for safeTALK training with staff, students, and the community. Their high school counselor is a safe TALK trainer, so she will be providing those trainings. They used to have a Boys and Girls Club in Haines, but that shut down so they want to set up a

mentoring program for kids in the community. Humphrey clarified that it was a youth center that called itself a “Boys and Girls Club,” but they were not affiliated with the actual organization.

The North Slope School District was also awarded a grant for safeTalk training. They will be training all of their counselors as safeTALK trainers and then will have them go out to all of the villages that they serve. Another primary component is working with the alternative high school in Barrow.

Petersburg was awarded a grant and will implement Signs of Suicide, which is a depression screening for high school youth. They will be doing crisis counseling as part of the grant.

To get priority points for this grant, applicants needed to have a Memorandum of Agreement or a letter of support with the behavioral health agencies in their school district. If they were applying for an alternative school, they would also get priority points.

There is an online suicide prevention e-module (distance delivery) based on the Alaska Gatekeeper program. It is hosted on the DEED website. It doesn't have the QPR component because that is copyrighted, so content from the previous Gatekeeper program was used. According to Senate Bill 137, the annual training for staff is two hours annually. Fishel hopes to have four hours of content on the Website by August 1. All school districts will be able to use those modules to complete the required training for the upcoming school year.

DEED trained 192 people this past school year, using a variety of trainings including Gatekeeper and safeTALK. The Jason Foundation materials were the most used training; Fishel sent each school district a copy of their DVD training so that every school district could be in compliance.

The department will work with the school districts that applied but did not receive a grant, or sent in a letter of intent and didn't apply, so that they can work on capacity building, community readiness, action planning, and grant writing. They plan to help them so that when the next application process happens in January, the playing field will be more even and they will have a better chance at receiving a grant. The idea is to have four more grants awarded so there will be a total of 10 by next year. The current grantees will be meeting September 23 and 24 in Anchorage to do some action planning, training, and to ensure that they are available to implement what they laid out in their grant proposal.

Moore asked if Council members would be allowed to come to that meeting and sit in and learn firsthand what the school districts are doing. Fishel said she would like that. She is excited because they are all doing different things and can all learn from each other. **Public Comment:**

There were no participants in person or on the phone for public comment.

Martin called for a recess until 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday morning.

May 7, 2013

Martin called the meeting back to order at 9:00 a.m.

Anchorage Suicide Prevention Coalition Overview:

Eric Boyer is the chair of the Anchorage Suicide Prevention Coalition. It was started during the 2012 suicide prevention summit in Anchorage, and includes Council members May, Franks, and Moore. The coalition meets on the third Thursday of every month and is open to the public and all willing participants. The meetings are always held at Northstar at 9:00 a.m.

The Coalition is a grassroots group. It has been a slow process, but has been very successful. They have a passionate group of people and it works on prevention, intervention and postvention and everything in between. They are targeting many different agencies and have members from the Anchorage School District, military, the Anchorage Police Department, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, the university, and a lot of other organizations. The coalition has a lot of experts in the field, so it gives them some authority on the topic in the community. There is still a perception that suicide is not a problem in Anchorage, but in reality it is a pervasive problem. One of the main focuses of the coalition is to educate the community about the scope of the problem in the community.

The coalition does not have any funding sources and is volunteer-based. They have discussed trying to get funding, but he has cautioned the coalition from going down that road because it will have to be on the terms of the grant. It has so far worked well as a grassroots volunteer group and he believes it can be sustainable in its current form.

The coalition is working off the Council's five-year state prevention plan and the supplemental action plan created at the summit in 2012. They are working on a postvention response team in Anchorage. They would like to get a postvention response team plan on paper soon. They have also been doing postvention training in Anchorage, and have currently done four trainings in the past year and had over 100 participants that are now trained in the Connect model. There were 25 people trained at Providence Hospital. They are working with them on how to handle suicides at the hospital after there was a staff member that killed themselves at work. Providence is now working on a postvention policy that it plans to implement in the near future.

Fairclough asked if they have been working with the University of Alaska to provide training for mental health professionals as part of the curriculum. Boyer said they are working on getting the Gatekeeper program certified so that people can get credits for taking that course. The coalition has been advising Boyer with the revision of the Alaska Gatekeeper training.

Fairclough said that she would like to change the requirement so that suicide prevention is a mandatory class for health professionals for their degrees. Boyer said he doesn't know what avenue to take to get that accomplished. Franks said that has been one of her dreams is to get that training mandated at the university for the health field.

Fairclough said there are some skills that students in these professions should have. There could be a class that helps people identify the issues, whether it is abuse, alcohol or substance use, mental health issues or suicidal ideation. It rolls together.

May said there are biennial licensing training and education requirements for social workers in Alaska. She thinks there should be a requirement for suicide prevention for social workers. Fairclough agreed,

but that is after the fact. She thinks it should be part of the educational component. Burkhart said she could look into other colleges and see if there are any similar requirements at other universities.

Boyer said the Anchorage Coalition has a Facebook page. They are also planning to set up a page on the new iteration of StopSuicideAlaska.org when it is operational. They have discussed having their own website, but it makes more sense to use the portal so that it is sustainable and they can get the knowledge out there.

Carlson asked if the coalition has given a presentation to the Alaska School Boards Association. Boyer said they have not but would be willing. Carlson said that would be a good seed to plant and help them learn what the coalition is doing in Alaska's largest school district.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Overview:

Franks was invited to participate on the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline advisory board on a subcommittee that focuses on survivor support. They have a crisis line now in every state. One of the concerns that she has is that, when people start a new crisis line through a grant, it may or may not be sustainable. She is part of a group that does spot checks on all of the crisis lines in the country to make sure that they are active and available. She thinks it is important that everybody knows the national lifeline number as well as the state number. Some of the issues happening across the nation are funding for training and keeping up on the newest technologies. They have found that texting is a way a lot of young people are reaching out. They are working on e-cards that have different messages as a way to reach out to people that call the crisis line as a way to do follow-up messages.

The survivor support subcommittee is a brand new group, so they are learning as they go. They have members with a lot of different experiences and are able to learn from each other. She is proud to say that Alaska is doing a lot of good work and people are watching what is going on in Alaska. It is exciting that Alaska is getting that recognition. Burkhart said she has seen a lot of change in Alaska since Franks has been working with the Council. For example, Barrow did not want Franks to conduct a training in the community four years ago and now there have been several trainings and the school district applied for and received a grant from DEED. Sometimes it takes awhile for change to happen, but that is a massive accomplishment in just four years. Barrow is not the only community that has begun to embrace suicide prevention recently. A lot of the reason for that is because of people like Franks doing all this great work.

Nageak said it has taken awhile for Barrow to accept suicide prevention and be willing to talk about it. It took him a couple of years to talk about suicide, but one day he woke up and decided to talk about it and not let it be swept under the rug anymore. It is OK to start talking about it. It is not as taboo as it once was. It is hard for people to face others when they have a loved one that died by suicide. It is hard for people that have lost someone to suicide. But it is important to talk about it when they are ready.

Final Comments:

Franks said her grant period ends in September at ANTHC, so she is not sure how the organization will move forward with suicide prevention in the future. She is thankful that she has had her job and to be able to help the suicide efforts across Alaska. It is important that suicide prevention continues in Alaska and she is very thankful for all the work of the Council.

Nageak said this meeting has been wonderful. This is his first meeting with the Council and never in his wildest dreams did he think he would be at a meeting like this about a subject that so many people have avoided talking about for a long time. This is coming from a man whose family has a history of suicide. There have been numerous suicides in the family and they have been through it time and again. The tide is turning on this issue. The more we talk about it the more it will have an impact.

Carlson said she is so grateful to have been a part of the Council. She will not be working at DEED this next year so she will no longer be filling this seat on the Council. She is so pleased by all the work the Council members have done and is proud to have been a part of this group. To see the progress made in education and working with the youth has been very great. She is very thankful for the support of the legislative members and all the work they have done to help advance the issue in the state, particularly having suicide prevention training now mandated in schools.

Kreiss-Tomkins said he is excited to be on the Council and has learned a lot of the past two days. He is excited to see the work done with the youth in Alaska and is looking forward to working with the Council in the future.

Fairclough said she is appreciative of the Council and all the work it has done. They hear about the work of the Council in the legislature on a regular basis. People are looking for the Council annual reports.

Glenn said he has learned a lot of information about suicide prevention. He is not sure how much help he will be for the Council, but he is very glad to have had the opportunity to be here and learn about the work done by the Council. He is glad that the Council exists and is doing this important work.

Moore said she is so thankful for how far the Council has come since she has been serving. There was a lot of disorganization before the Council was co-located with ABADA and AMHB. It was a struggle to even get a quorum. It is amazing how much work the Council has accomplished in the last few years. She is particularly grateful for all of the work done by the Chair and the leadership he has shown in recent years. She is amazed by the talent and passion of the Council members.

Humphrey is thankful for the opportunity to be a part of the Council and to help work on this issue. She is thankful for all of the work that the Council does.

May said she is always overwhelmed by the wisdom and the passion of the Council members. There are 77,000 veterans in Alaska and they cut across all ethnicities, ages, cultures and regions. Whatever she can bring to the table, she is willing.

Burkhart said the Council has had a lot of impact on Alaska in recent years. An example of that is the Anchorage coalition that began at the Council's summit in 2012. They had never had a coalition, even

though they have the highest numbers of suicide in the state each year. This is amazing group of people and she is very proud to work with all of the Council members and for the Council.

Martin appreciates every one of the Council members for the time and dedication that they give to the Council. He is very grateful for legislative members working so hard on behalf of the Council in the legislature. Before it was difficult to get legislative members to attend the meetings and this meeting all four of them are in attendance.

Morrison said he is grateful for all of the work that the Council members do and appreciates that everyone could make this meeting. Reaching a quorum is one of his biggest stresses, so he is thankful there was one for this meeting. He is really appreciative of the new members all attending this meeting. He will really miss having Carlson on the Council and is so thankful for all that she has contributed over the years. Martin asked for a motion to adjourn. Carlson moved to adjourn, Franks seconded the motion. Hearing no objection, Martin adjourned the meeting.