

Professional Development Workgroup - MINUTES
Alaska FASD Partnership
11/11/2010 & 11/29/2010

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Scope of Workgroup

Group will discuss issues related to education and training for professionals in the areas of medicine, social services, corrections, public safety, employment, and educations, and gather research and best practices, identify gaps and solutions, and develop recommendations for action.

- Target audiences: All professional groups who work with individuals who experience an FASD and their families. For example, education professionals, legal and corrections professionals, health and allied health care professionals, legislators.
- Training opportunities for professionals across the state.
- Gaps and solutions: Need to know what to do for these individuals, what works best? Interventions and training.
- Increase collaboration and support among and between professional groups around FASD education and training to better support individuals and families who experience an FASD.

Short Term Goals

Discussion: Many professionals around the state do not have access to FASD training and education opportunities, either through lack of availability in their region or lack of funds to pay for such training. In addition, while there is a fairly good background level of knowledge about the causes of FASDs among professionals, many professionals do not understand or know how to work with individuals who experience an FASD or their families on an every day, day-to-day basis. There is anecdotal and research-based evidence (at least for health and allied healthcare professionals) that suggests that they are seeking specific tools that will work for all individuals with an FASD. We need an evidence-based tool box. However, there are few evidence-based interventions that have been specifically developed for individuals with FASDs, although there are three or four that are currently in testing mode (e.g. Families Moving Forward, Project Bruin Buddies, etc.). Professionals need to be supported and shown how to use and adapt the tools they already use in their everyday practice.

Recommendations:

1. Expand training opportunities across the state through funding of additional FASD101 and FASD201 or other training curricula workshops, especially in rural or underserved areas.
2. Advocate for the establishment and funding of an itinerant FASD training team that can present FASD101 or FASD201 workshops (or other training curricula) around the state. This team would need to be able to reach all professional groups and be able to adapt their training content to the needs of different professional groups.
3. Advocate for funding to distribute publications that outline intervention strategies that have been developed by parents and families:
 - a. Strategies Not Solutions (booklet developed in Canada)
 - b. Trying Differently (booklet developed in Canada)
 - c. Trying Differently Not Harder (Diane Malbin)

4. Through expanded training opportunities, show each professional group how to take the tools in their toolboxes and adapt them for the needs of individuals with FASDs.
5. The RSA process is already in place for many state-funded agencies around Alaska. Funding could be made available through the existing grant process to pay for or contract for FASD training. Organizations can apply for training funds (flow-through). For example, Alaska Children's Services could apply for funding and contract out the services to those who have experience training certain professional groups.
6. Look into resources and training programs developed around the US and Canada for different professional groups. For example, the mentor training program at the University of Alberta, Calgary, research conducted through Health Canada, the CDC FASD Competency-Based Curriculum for health and allied health care professionals. Are there similar resources for legal professionals, educators, etc?

Long Term Goals

Discussion: There seems to be a lack of knowledge of the types of FASD training and education that is available to different professional groups around the state. Some training opportunities are well-known within professions, such as the state-mandated training for new teachers in Alaska, and the annual Full Lives conference for direct service providers, but may not be available or useful to other professional groups. Since FASD comprises issues that cross professional groupings, there needs to be more knowledge and understanding of how professionals can work together to assist each other and individuals and families be successful. We need to know what other professional groups are doing in terms of FASD education and practice, how they are doing it, and whether it is successful.

Recommendations:

1. Conduct a survey of the types and content of training resources for professionals that are available in Alaska and which professional fields they address.
2. Review and strengthen FASD knowledge requirements for licensing, credentialing or other employment requirements in Alaska.
3. Increase FASD knowledge in programs leading to professions that are likely to work with individuals who experience FASD or their families.
4. Increase opportunities for collaboration and learning between professional groups, such as a state-wide FASD conference or summit rather than profession-specific events.