

FASD and Legal System Workgroup Alaska FASD Partnership

October 11, 2011 @ 4 pm

Introductions of attendees - Stephanie Johnson, chair, (Nome Youth Facility); Mike Jeffery (Alaska Court System); KJ Metcalf (Juneau FASD Advocate); Jeri Museth (Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska-Wellness Coordinator); Steve Williams (Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority); Dee Dee Raymond (Alaska Department of Corrections); Teri Tibbett (Alaska Mental Health Board/Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse); Larry and Laura Rorem (parents/grandparents of children with FASD).

Reviewed / Updated Progress on FASD and the Legal System Goals

- **Change mitigating factors related to FASD** – Judge Jeffery reported that Teri reported her boss is unable to work on this issue and recommended Dave Fleurant of the Alaska Disability Law Center. Steve Williams reported he took this topic to the Governor’s transition team and there was not “full” support. It was mentioned that there needs to be dedication to public safety from all parties involved. It was suggested someone meet with the Commissioner to discuss further. [Added 11.30.11 – the work is progressing through the Alaska Disability Law Center, Alaska Mental Health Board/Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, a state senator’s office, and experts from out-of-state].
- **Expand screening at Department of Corrections (DOC) and Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)** – Stephanie reported there is still talk with the DJJ of incorporating a screening tool for FASD. The DJJ Mental Health technical assistance grant identified this as a need. The recommendation will be presented to the Senior Managers in November 2011. It is believed that the Alaska Screening Tool could be used for this purpose. There will be a statewide screening called the MAYSI – 2 (Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument) which screens for substance abuse, trauma, depression, anxiety, somatic complaints, thought disturbances and anger and irritability, but not specifically FASD, implemented for all youth entering a DJJ facility in the very near future. Dee Dee reported that not much has changed with the efforts from DOC.

It was suggested by a member of the group that the “Youth Probation Officers' Guide to FASD Screening and Referral” be introduced to Alaska DJJ.

Stephanie reported on a specific case where she worked directly with Jeanne Gerhardt – Cyrus to get a young man from Ambler who was at the Nome Youth Facility tested by a neuropsychologist. This young man is suspected of having an FASD.

Teri reported that the Alaska Mental Health Board/Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse put forth a \$300,000 recommendation for funding to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority for assistance in developing alternative diagnostic options for adults in the justice system. The Trust forwarded the recommendation to the Governor’s office. We’ll know after Dec. 15 (when the Governor’s budget is released) whether or not made it into the budget.

- **Expand training for DOC/DJJ staff** – Stephanie reported that at DJJ has been working with the Arctic FASD Regional Training Center to provide training to staff in youth facilities across the state. One Mental Health Clinician from McLaughlin Youth Center

was trained as a trainer for FASD 101 and 201. This has been a priority of the DJJ Statewide Training Committee.

Steve Williams reported the Trust provides funds for training judges, prosecutors and public defenders through the Dept. of Law, Public Defenders Agency, and the Court System for a variety of mental health diagnoses. They also provide funds for Therapeutic Courts and programs that serve offenders with mental illness, both inside and outside of corrections. The Trust has just finished crisis intervention training for the Anchorage Police Department.

KJ reported that Therapeutic Court (TC) clients with an FASD require much more daily support than others. In Juneau the staff at TC said no more clients with an FASD because they require more time (resources) than they have. He also commented that while the Trust does not officially recognize those with an FASD, they are recognized and served by the Trust in other ways, according to Steve Williams. KJ asked if they could be formally recognized and seems (understandable) no one wants to open the door to additional disabilities, then asked if the Trust could make a formal policy to recognize FASD as an acquired brain disability.

- **Improve transition services for individuals with an FASD (assistance with housing, treatment, medication, employment, training, education, case management, etc.) from Department of Corrections (DOC).**

Dee Raymond reported that DOC has two new positions funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority. One is a contract with Anchorage Community Mental Health Services, housed in Anchorage jail, and who provides mental health services for inmates who have short stays (quick releases). His job is to keep inmates connected with their providers while they're incarcerated, and provide release planning for short these people who are short-stay offenders. The other is the IDP+ position, which is a DOC state position that supervises felony offenders on probation who have a psychotic disorder, and who are released into the Anchorage area. She stated the department is still in need of someone to supervise inmates with FASD and/or other cognitive impairments (TBI, ABI, FASD, etc) with transitional planning and release into the community. Funding for this position was requested by the Trust in FY12, but not accepted by the Governor.

Teri talked about 2nd Chance grant. Last summer a working group led by DOC attempted to apply for a grant that would have screened, diagnosed and served offenders with FASD, but the inability to locate matching funds stopped the process. However, the intent of DOC to address the problem was clear and reassuring. Additionally, there is strong support from DOC and many state legislators to increase substance abuse and mental health treatment in DOC as a way to address recidivism and the high cost of incarceration. During the upcoming legislative the Partnership will be focusing on FASD and the legal system – including distribution of packets and one-on-one visits with legislators, as well as presentations before the House and Senate Judiciary committees.

Jeri discussed that Johnson Youth Center in Juneau should work to get youth with a suspected FASD diagnosed so that a case manager could be assigned to them when they are released. This could greatly impact the recidivism rate and increase services for youth once they are released.