

Family-Peer Support Workgroup
Alaska FASD Partnership
June 6, 2012

Present: Trish Smith (Volunteers of America-Alaska, FAScinating Camps director); Christy Reinhart (Family Support Specialists & Trainer, AK Center Resources Families); Jacquie (program director at Alaska Youth and Family Network, a statewide family-run agency); Christine Gerhart (itinerant therapist at Maniilaq); Cynthia Puhalski (We R, Juneau); Jeanne Gerhart-Cyrus (parent, FASD Into Action Trainer, Coordinator of Disabilities Program at Maniilaq); Melody Price-Yonts (Division Director Behavioral Health at SEARHC); Mary Williard; Shannon Cross (DHSS, oversees clinical portions of FASD Waiver); Teri Tibbett (Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse); Meg Allison Zaletel (staff attorney, mental health rights & systems litigation at Disability Law Center Alaska, DLCAK).

Approval of agenda. Approved

Approval of minutes 5/9/12. Approved.

Mediated Guardianship

Meg Allison Zaletel reported that DLCAK don't take guardianship cases because they don't work on issues that take away legal rights of people with disabilities; suggested families might use "Education Power of Attorney" in which children turning 18 sign a form to let their parents continue to be their decision makers – to avoid taking away rights of individuals; in these cases DLCAK will meet with families and teach them about what it means; they also suggest "Health Care Power of Attorney" for issues related to health care; for financial control there are conservatorships and guardianships; DLCAK recommends these kinds of limited arrangements so individuals can retain more rights; there are some things parents cannot control, such as a person's right to marry or have children, even with full guardianships; guardianships are often mediated and not usually contentious; attorneys are needed for both the individuals and parents on guardianships; arrangements are made for individual needs, like an IEP; conservatorship is a "money guardian," a limited type of guardianship in charge of the estate of the person, but doesn't allow you to make decisions about where the individual lives or their medical care, etc.

Jeanne: Asked about what to do when the person appears to function on the surface, but their brain disability results in an actual lack of successful functioning. For example, her son doesn't want a guardian, but she still manages his finances, but he can't get her the receipts she needs to maintain his social security.

Meg: One way is to look at individual issues and problem solve in terms of what makes the most practical sense in order to keep the individuals safe and still get everything done.

Jeanne: Parents want some way to keep their kids safe and healthy, rather than giving them the "right to fail."

Meg: Even with guardianship, individuals still fail and end up in jail; guardianship is a legal mechanism that doesn't keep people safe, you can't lock them down; guardianship can help out when the individual goes into contracts, like buying a car or a house.

Jeanne: What about supports after FASD has been used as a mitigating factor?

Meg: DLCAK doesn't practice criminal law, but can provide technical assistance to criminal attorneys. They do some work with people who are involved with sexual assault and "guilty but mentally ill," but only on the civil side. They're working on alternatives to guardianship and revising their booklet.

Whitecrow Alaska Update

Discussion about the differences between FAScinating Families camp vs. LIFE Sessions; important part is Whitecrow has a strong educational component along with the interaction with the families; the group feels strongly that the word “camp” is distracting to what Whitecrow is about and so suggests a different word. Melody suggested “retreat;” Melody suggested approaching tribal organizations for funding, ANB and ANS; Sealaska, Tribal Behavioral Health Workers (Melody is chair and is meeting next week on Wednesday, June 13, or in August, though they can have a virtual meeting to discuss funding for Whitecrow at a future time if the group can’t get the proposal finalized by next week); she will help figure out how to approach Native organizations; Mary suggested including Health Alaska Native Foundations.

An Ad Hoc group will meet June 22 at 9:00am to finalize the proposal; Trish will lead the effort because she has experience with the details of putting the camps together; the group will need someone who’s been involved in both camps, like Cheri Scott or Jeanne; also invite family Mary, Jill, and Kee. Melody is available for advice, and Deb Evensen. The group will answer the following questions:

1. Develop a timeline for establishing one annual L.I.F.E. Session retreat in Alaska, with the goal of expanding to more retreats as funding, personnel, and expertise allow;
2. Develop an outline of what the “Whitecrow Alaska” retreat(s) will look like – replicating the “Whitecrow Canada” model;
3. Establish a relationship with an existing non-profit organization to get the retreat(s) up and running, with the possible establishment of a “Whitecrow Alaska” non-profit organization of its own sometime in the future;
4. Establish where and when the retreat(s) will happen, who will administer the process of making the retreat(s) happen, and who will staff the retreat(s), how many participants, etc.;
5. Establish the costs of bringing the Whitecrow Canada staff to Alaska for the 3-4 day advance training and the 7-8 day retreat;
5. Establish the costs associated with renting a facility, food, transportation, supplies, insurance, scholarships, per diem or other compensation for staff, etc.;
6. Establish the costs associated with sending “Whitecrow Alaska” administrator and staff to Whitecrow Village in Canada to participate and learn experientially in their model;
7. Establish funding sources for start-up and sustaining “Whitecrow Alaska” retreats in Alaska

Peer Support

Rural Peer Support Services. Teri reported that Marilee Fletcher at DHSS said an announcement will go out in a week or so, requesting letters of intent. If there are more than a couple letters, an RFP will go out, as they will probably only be able to fund two projects.

FASD Waiver

Jeanne suggested forming an Ad Hoc group so people can share stories, frustrations, etc.; waiver is over in September; DBH is working on how to continue it. Shannon and Jeanne will come up with a person who can lead the effort.

Next meeting: July 11 at 9am