

# Alaska Suicide Postvention Training & Healing Conference Summary<sup>1</sup>



Early this Summer 2011, the Department of Health and Social Services in collaboration with the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council sponsored a two-day postvention training that included plenary style panel and keynote presentations on the topic including evening healing sessions and events. Approximately 90 people attended, half from the Anchorage region and the rest from all over the state. Of all attendees, more than half experienced a suicide loss of which a quarter was a family member. In addition, attendees represented, survivors of an attempted suicide, law enforcement and public safety, clergy, youth, seniors, tribal leaders, the military and veterans, coalition members, mental health professionals, educators, caregivers, university students, and policymakers.

The general goals of the training and conference were:

1. Learn how postvention efforts and activities can strengthen Alaska's suicide prevention efforts
2. Learn latest national research and developments
3. Learn about suicide protocols, guidelines and best practices by Alaskans to provide accessible postvention and healing resources to every community
4. Meet with other survivors of suicide loss for networking and mutual support

As part of the intent and main goal of the Postvention Project funding received through the efforts of the SSPC and the Alaska Division of Behavioral Health was to create postvention resources including the development of "***Helping Our Communities Heal: The Alaska Postvention Resource Guide***". This guide was introduced at the training and served as the framework from which the various topics and issues were presented:

- Coming together in response to suicides in Alaska
- The future of postvention as a coordinated community response to suicide
- Developing a community postvention plan, lessons learned and steps for action.
- Youth involvement.
- *Walk for Life* and *Out of Darkness Walks*.
- Understanding the suicide grief process
- The roles of community mental health, schools, first responders/law enforcement, clergy, crisis hotlines, military and veterans.
- Healing for healers

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<sup>1</sup> Summary report prepared by James Gallanos, DBH Project Coordinator for the SSPC on 9/24/2011

- Community Action Planning (CAP) workshops
- Survivor healing support groups

As a result of the trainings, presentations and discussions, below are the recommended action steps for the state, region/communities, agencies/organizations and individuals.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Educate legislature on brain health</li> <li>○ Raise awareness of social emotional wellness in relation to academic success.</li> <li>○ Create task force to build relationships and network and train to be prepared</li> <li>○ Support trauma informed care initiative with funding</li> <li>○ Reduce stigma</li> <li>○ Funding for youth leadership councils to create or better youth programs that address suicide, suicide intervention, substance abuse and sex education.</li> <li>○ Bring back postvention to individual regions, or podcast information in the future so that more communities could be involved.</li> <li>○ Encourage self care within workspaces. Add new components, e.g. 15 minute walks between breaks or start health/wellness group.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Addressing personal issues before addressing community issues.</li> <li>○ More Alaska State Troopers</li> <li>○ 24/7 social networking monitoring system.</li> <li>○ Postvention teams/mobile post-suicide teams, resources.</li> <li>○ Agencies to be connected and collaborate, know roles and communicate well.</li> <li>○ PSA – Help? Know where to find information.</li> <li>○ Forming coalitions within regions.</li> <li>○ More formal trainings.....(Police, OCS, DOC).</li> <li>○ Cultural awareness, undoing racism historical trauma, positive media.</li> <li>○ Involve more trusted tribal leaders.</li> <li>○ Develop survivor groups</li> <li>○ Youth focused trainings (high risk group)</li> <li>○ AK chapter of AFSP</li> </ul> |
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Separate planning efforts were also created for the Community Action Planning teams represented and will be a work in progress in coordination with the Division of Behavioral Health and other key community providers.

The postvention page is now up and running on the Alaska suicide prevention web portal. You will be able to find most all the resources that were available at the conference. You can click on the main page, [www.stopsuicidalaska.org](http://www.stopsuicidalaska.org). Go to “Groups” and the “Postvention”.

### **Plans for FY2013**

- Continue to meet and work on developing future postvention resources, outreach to survivors of suicide loss, technical assistance and training.
- Continue to collaborate with many of our statewide tribal organizations that are increasing the development of resources for healing, both traditional and blended approaches to address the impact and trauma associated with suicide.
- Fine tune the postvention products/toolkit including the resource guide and suicide survivor packet that can be found on-line.
- Hold periodic postvention trainings and healing seminars designed to support providers, first responders, clergy, educators and other suicide prevention specialists.