

STATEWIDE SUICIDE PREVENTION COUNCIL
QUARTERLY MEETING
BETHEL, ALASKA MAY 8-9, 2014

May 8, 2014

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bill Martin at 1:45 p.m. Chairman Martin expressed his appreciation and thanks to the people of Bethel for inviting the Council to meet in their community. The chairman recognized Mike Williams from Akiak. Timothy Andrew, director of natural resources from Association of Village Council Presidents, welcomed the Council to Bethel and to the AVCP building. He shared that the community is experiencing stress related to the regulation and use of natural resources, and AVCP is very aware of how suicide affects the community. Sen. Fairclough recognized Representative Herron, who expressed his appreciation and connection to the people in the room for the meeting and on the Council. Chairman Martin expressed his appreciation for Representative Herron's work during the legislative session.

Roll call was taken. Council members attending included Chairman William Martin, Senators Anna Fairclough and Berta Gardner, Representatives Benjamin Nageak and Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Sharon Fishel, Barbara Franks, Brenda Moore, Meghan Crow, Alana Humphrey, Sue May (teleconference), and Lowell Sage (conference). Staff attending included executive director Kate Burkhart and council assistant Eric Morrison. Council member Fred Glenn was excused. Notice was provided that Al Cirocco has resigned from the Council.

Agenda

Rep. Nageak moved to approve the agenda. Sen. Fairclough seconded the motion and noted a correction to the objective for the discussion of public comment. Meghan Crow noted that we have not received confirmation for presenters at 2:15 p.m. on Friday. The rest of the Friday afternoon agenda items will be moved up in time accordingly. The agenda was approved, as amended, without objection.

Ethics Disclosure

Sharon Fishel disclosed that the Department of Education receives grant funds from the Council. Meghan Crow is employed by a recipient of those grant funds. Barbara Franks is employed by Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, which receives state funding. Alana Humphrey is employed by the Boys & Girls Club, which receives state funding. Chairman Martin is chairman of the SEARHC suicide prevention task force, funded by the State of Alaska.

Announcements

Barbara Franks shared that the National Lifeline has answered 1,130,192 calls. She has created numbers with which Council members can pose for a photo to share with the National Lifeline, to help promote the resource, which includes Careline.

Public Comment

Benjamin Nukusuk, a family navigator for AVCP in Hooper Bay, shared that they have made great strides over the past year standing up to suicide. In Hooper Bay, they are working with the University of Alaska Fairbanks, youth, elders, and Americorps to work with children of all ages. He works with 9th to 12th graders to prevent suicide and reinforce reasons to live. He is grateful for people working to prevent suicide all over the state, and hopes the State [of Alaska] continues to support suicide prevent because villages have felt the pain of suicide for a long time. In Hooper Bay they tailor their program to meet the needs and personality of the village. They incorporate the Yupik way of life and traditional values. Traditional arts and crafts, song, dance, and activities are having an amazing transformation on the children.

Timothy Andrew, Bethel, spoke on the importance of subsistence – and salmon fishing – to the people of Bethel. The harvest limits for the entire river (32 communities) is 1,000 fish. This is 1% of what the people usually harvest to feed their families. It appears that this strict regulation will be around for a while, so the impact could be great. During the fisheries disaster in the 1990's, domestic violence increased. He shared the story of a suicide that occurred in Marshall when Mr. Andrew was mayor in 1978. This first suicide was followed quickly by another. His parents could not remember a suicide occurring prior to that. This may be because of young people going to boarding schools and the pressure on youth to live in both worlds (go to school, learn a trade, but also hunt and fish and provide). Traditional values and roles provided protective factors – respect, acknowledge, connectedness, pride – to youth to prevent suicide. Elders used to teach and mentor youth, but now they spend their time with TV and internet. Returning to traditional ways will help prevent suicide.

Mike Williams, Akiak, is a counselor and tribal leader. He recognized Liz Ivan and two students who came with him to the meeting. He shared that his community has been working to address suicide, which spiked in his community about 10 years ago. They gather everyone to work together and coordinate funding resources. He shared that about 60% of the students in their schools report feeling sad, depressed, and wanting to hurt themselves. The elders and counselors are providing safety planning and groups to help students, and are trying to deal with underlying causes of suicide like substance abuse. They are cracking down on bootleggers and trying to reduce misuse of alcohol and drug use. They have healing circles every Wednesday every summer for the past 4-5 years, which ensures that elders are engaged with youth. Language and culture are a big part of preventing suicide. Communities have the answers locally, but

sometimes need resources and support. He appreciates the Council's work, and legislators' support for the Alaska Native languages bill.

Chairman Martin noted that Mike Williams and his son, Mike Williams, Jr. run the Iditarod promoting the message of sobriety. Chairman Martin also noted that Rep. Kreiss-Tomkins sponsored the Alaska Native languages bill, and express his gratitude.

Elizabeth Ivan, Akiak, works with prevention of substance abuse and suicide. One of their objectives is to have traditional camps that give youth the chance to learn the Yupik way of life from elders. They introduce and teach youth about subsistence and traditional ways. They provide alcohol and drug education at the school, and work with the tribal court to apprehend bootleggers. They have tribal checkpoints to prevent drugs and alcohol coming into the community. They encourage community members to engage in counseling. It looks hopeful and they are applying for continued funding for the Indian Substance Abuse Prevention Program.

Ryan Williams, student, thanked the Council for their work. Growing up, he has dealt with suicide and the effects of drugs and alcohol. What people want is comfort, someone to talk to.

Agatha Andrews, student, commented that communities need support and people need to be heard. They have a lot of pressure and stress, and they need someone to talk to so they don't hurt themselves.

Sen. Fairclough commented that there have been attempts to increase the penalties for bootlegging, and wondered if the Council wanted to research that issue. Rep. Nageak shared that some bush airlines are working with the community to prevent drugs and alcohol to come into the communities. Mike Williams reported that his regional villages have been meeting to work together to search and confiscate drugs and alcohol, and adjudicating the offenses in tribal court. Williams raised concerns about the marijuana initiative and how legalized marijuana could negatively affect communities trying to heal, so they are educating people about the initiative could affect them.

Paul O'Brien, a survivor of a loss to suicide and founder of Drew's Foundation, commented that there is a mental health component to suicide but he believes that abuse, poverty, substance abuse, and bad homes contribute even more. "We're breaking kids and fixing adults." We train the same people over and over, and the statistics don't improve. Our suicide rates are the same as they've been, so something is not working. There should be more focus on empowering youth to control and change their own lives, apart from adults. Youth who are empowered then in turn empower other youth. The focus should be on young kids.

Senator Gardner asked "How could we empower youth?" Mr. O'Brien answered that the focus is on prevention of a crisis, recognizing signs and intervening then. We should be intervening before there are ever signs. Drew's Foundation talks directly to youth, "feet on the ground," to encourage them to be proud of their heritage and of themselves. We used to not talk about

suicide. Now we need to talk about address abuse, poverty. We talk about elders, but not elders who are abusive.

Barbara Franks commented on the need to provide healing for elder and youth. She remembers how the closure of fishing grounds around Hoonah when she was a child affected the people in her community.

Ryan Williams commented on Sen. Gardner's question: Some communities have after school programs, "something for the kids to do." Some communities don't have the resources for these kinds of activities. These would prevent suicide.

John McIntyre, Bethel (originally Eek), volunteers to sing and drum for youth at the schools and jail. You hear people speak of our Yupik way of life and returning to our historic roots. He once asked Daniel Bill how to fix the problem of people killing each other. His answer was "we're too late." Like Paul O'Brien said, we need to focus on the children. Use our grassroots knowledge from our elders to strengthen families, before those elders and their wisdom is gone. On Nelson Island, they announce on the VHF radio whenever a group of elders is going to the community hall to talk – so that anyone can come and listen and learn. Mr. McEntire's father was a tribal leader, and his uncles were the ones who dealt with death. Growing up there were suicides in his village; the first one he remembers was his cousin. Then it was his classmate, who said he was suicidal but Mr. McEntire didn't know then what to do. Suicides continued in that family. By the third one, his father and he went to the family after the funeral. His father confronted the parents and said "Tell your children you love them. Talk to them about what is going on in your family. If you don't, all your children will follow their brothers and kill themselves." That was 25 years ago, and that family has not experienced another suicide. Look at programs in the villages, see what's working. It takes a village to raise a child isn't just a saying. It used to be that way. But now, people see a child in danger and don't do anything because now we think of ourselves as individuals (singular). It used to be "we," not "I." The Council's support for community-level programs is appreciated.

Jim Wyckoff, Bethel, spoke about the need for suicide prevention for people who receive or need to receive mental health services. They may not receive the services they need, which contributes to suicide. Mental illness is invisible, but that brain is an organ like your kidney or liver and needs health care just the same. Mental health resources have diminished substantially over the years. He also spoke about the need for services for veterans, whose rates of suicide are very high. He has not seen the Veterans Administration responding to the mental health needs of returning veterans. This region sent many young people to war, with huge impact on families.

Ray Daw, behavioral health director at Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation, commented that YKHC responds to people at risk of suicide and the aftermath of suicide. In this region, young men are the highest risk population. Almost all attempt/commit suicide while heavily intoxicating. And almost none have had prior contact with YKHC behavioral health services

before the suicide attempt/death. It's incumbent upon us to find ways to engage with these young people earlier and more effectively. We must find ways to provide positive youth development and counter unhealthy peer influences. YKHC tracks suicide in the region. There have been 60% fewer deaths in the first quarter of 2014 than ever before. He attributes this positive outcome to the village-based, community-based efforts in the region, elders speaking out more often and engaging more with youth. He also attributes the change to improved weather (more suicides during the harshest winter). Substance abuse, especially use of home brew, and poor nutrition continue to contribute to suicide risk in the region. YKHC is screening depression clients for nutritional deficiencies, and are finding that most do have nutritional needs. This reinforces the need for access to fish and healthy foods for good health, and he is scared that the summer's restriction on fish harvests due to a low salmon run will have far-reaching consequences related to suicide. He reminded that each village is unique, so each must be approached separately based on their characteristics and needs. They know where the problems are, so this approach makes for better policy and resource allocation.

Brenda Moore asked about the DBH department's workforce needs. Mr. Das reported that he has five management staff. All of these managers are Alaska Native or from Bethel. This is an asset and strength for YKHC and the villages served. They recruit local quality employees and get them credentialed appropriately, rather than recruiting credentialed people from outside. The Rural Human Services program is the solution, but it is suffering from lack of resources to subsidize the students.

Sen. Fairclough asked what the nutritional deficiency was that they are finding. Mr. Das said it was Vitamin D. Their screening program was developed with IHS and universities, and funded in part by Rasmuson. They have screened 190 people, 27 of whom were severely deficient (most of those were under the age of 35). Sen. Fairclough suggested the Council might support a Vitamin D initiative. Mr. McEntire spoke about his experience with Vitamin D, during a winter when lack of snow prevented getting out on the tundra to hunt. He started feeling depressed and fatigued, so he went to the hospital and learned he had a serious Vitamin D deficiency. Chairman Martin said that the Indian Health Service has focused on Vitamin D, and SEARHC is screening their clients, too. Rep. Nageak spoke to Rep. Seaton's efforts related to Vitamin D. Rep. Kreiss-Tomkins agreed with Sen. Fairclough and offered to provide information to Council members tomorrow.

Bridget Power, Tundra Women's Coalition, spoke about their teen violence prevention program. It incorporates traditional values and activities. She encouraged safe, healthy, communities where youth are supported and heard. They support Drew's Foundation and other suicide prevention activities in Bethel.

Wilson Green, Bethel, shared that when he was growing up, "it was not a pretty picture." And it probably wasn't for the people who have died by suicide. "I am what I've experienced." If a child is exposed to abuse, neglect, substance abuse, death, suicide and lives in fear, they carry

that into adulthood. People might look fine, but could be broken up inside. Healing those hurts will prevent suicide. Supporting survivors of suicide is also important. He turned to drinking after his first wife died by suicide 24 years ago. He helped himself, unraveled those feelings and let them go, and achieved sobriety 23 years ago. He encouraged using elders as a resource, and suggested that elders who support and serve communities (like the traditional healers working with the Rural Human Services program) should not have their income related to those efforts taxed.

Alvin Jimmie, VPSO director for the AVCP region, has been a VPSO for 23 years. There are 31 VPSOs budgeted for the region, but not all positions are filled. VPSOs have to respond to suicides and suicide attempts in their communities. Sometimes they respond to multiple attempts by the same person. When he first started years ago, they didn't have training and didn't always know what to do. The VPSOs are an effective tool in preventing suicide, because they see the problems and can identify when people are in need. The VPSOs try to connect people in need to behavioral health services, but it is not always successful. The majority of VPSOs have responded to suicides/attempts, and they feel the pain when someone in the community dies by suicide. Debriefing after a suicide is hard, so the critical incident stress management training and process is very helpful to VPSOs. He shared that the Napaskiak community-wide response to suicide in their community has been effective. He also commented on how a young woman was helped dramatically by Northstar Behavioral Health.

Kate Burkhart thanks Mr. Jimmie for his work. Mr. Jimmie attended the first suicide prevention summit in 2010 and has served as an excellent resource for Council staff ever since.

Sharon Fishel shared that LKSD is a recipient of the DEED SPP grants. Meghan Crow explained that the school community advocates in village schools will be ASIST trained and will work more closely with the school social workers and YKHC behavioral health staff to coordinate efforts.

Brenda Moore shared that the State of Alaska has invested in trauma-informed care and implementing programs that address adverse childhood experiences.

Meghan Crow thanked all of the people who came to speak to the Council. The Council doesn't always get public comment, so to have 18 people share their perspective is wonderful. Sharon Fishel thanked the youth who came, and applauded their courage in speaking to the Council. Chairman Martin shared that the Council has an open youth representative seat, as well as a public seat.

Minutes

Meghan Crow moved to approve the minutes; Brenda Moore seconded the motion. Sen. Fairclough noted several grammatical errors. These changes were provided to staff for correction and redistribution. Meghan Crow noted that her name was misspelled in the roll call list. Lowell

Sage noted that he was present by teleconference at the last minute. The minutes were approved, as amended, without objection.

2013 Annual Implementation Report

Kate Burkhart reviewed the draft implementation report with Council members. She highlighted the sections on the Council's partnership with DEED to offer the school based suicide prevention program, the change in the statewide rate in the context of the community driven solutions.

Kate Burkhart said the report is the same format as the previous year to retain consistency as well as making it easier to update. Kate Burkhart explained that because the report covers the previous year, it has the previous Council roster that was represented during that timeframe. The report provides information that the regional teams provided at the Summit in Anchorage in January, which provides direct input on what partners across the state have been doing in relation to the state plan. Alaska saw a big jump in the people trained in suicide prevention the previous year, which is in big part due to the leadership of Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. Kate Burkhart said it is worth noting that the rate of suicides in Alaska has gone back to where it has been off and on for the past six years. There was a promising start last year, but the rate figure has come back to where it was. Kate Burkhart said the report does highlight the partnership with DEED more this year because it has grown tremendously over the past year or so.

Sen. Gardner asked about the increase in mental health services reported between FY2007 and FY2011 and how that fits with the public comment just heard about the difficulty accessing treatment. Kate Burkhart explained that there were substantial increments appropriated during that time which allowed for capacity growth, but that she did not expect to see that capacity to grow given reductions in behavioral health general funds that have occurred in the past two years. The funding had gone to the highest need populations.

Kate Burkhart asked if there is anything missing from the report that Council members have noticed that should be included.

Sen. Gardner asked if compliance with the mandate for teacher training was being tracked. Sharon Fishel reported that she is currently tracking it for DEED. Sen. Fairclough suggested looking at how school districts are complying with the mandated suicide prevention training.

Sen. Fairclough praised the quality of the report, and how this work has allowed the legislators to secure funding for Council priorities, such as the continued development of suicide prevention and postvention training curricula available through the eLearning network at DEED. Sen. Fairclough said she would support a random auditing of different school districts to see if they are fulfilling the requirements, as well as if the trainings are following best practices.

Brenda Moore said the report is great and shows how far it has come in recent years. When the Council moved to collocate with AMHB and ABADA, it made a huge difference on the quality of work.

Barbara Franks notes the sense of collaboration in the report. She was wondering if the National Lifeline number of calls that were received could be added to the report since Alaska's numbers are included in that figure. Kate Burkhart said she would recommend adding it to the indicators section rather than the Division's report.

Meghan Crow said it would be nice to see a section of supporting local resources. She said it is vaguely in there, but not really highlighted. Kate Burkhart said she could add something about the Council's support for community-driven solutions.

Kate Burkhart said staff would get the report finished in the next several weeks in order to get it posted to the Council's websites and mailed to legislators and the Governor.

William Martin said the next item on the agenda is the Council's by-laws.

By-Laws

Kate Burkhart explained that the by-laws are on the agenda primarily to address the section about council member attendance. Currently, "poor attendance" isn't defined and there are not criteria for being excused. Kate Burkhart added that Sen. Fairclough noted that the Council hasn't updated the by-laws since the members' statute was updated. There are several issues that have come to staffs attention that need to be addressed.

Kate Burkhart said the first issue to be addressed is Council attendance, which is located on page 2. One of the things that resulted from the legislative audit is Council closed attention to member attendance. Staff has kept a new attendance log since the audit to closely keep track of attendance, and then to send it to the Governor's office at the end of each fiscal year. The Council used to have trouble getting a quorum, and now attendance has become much better. One of the things noticed is there hasn't been a discussion what poor attendance really means. The by-laws say "poor attendance" is defined by if a Council member "missed three or more consecutive meetings." That does not make it clear if it is three or more unexcused absences, or just absences. There is a question as to what it means to be excused and how does one become excused. This is the time for Council members to address these issues so everyone understands what the criteria are.

Sen. Gardner confirmed that attending by teleconference is attending. If someone can't even call in for three quarters of the meetings a year, than they should be removed so someone that wants to contribute to the Council can be involved.

Barbara Franks stressed that each member represents an important constituency. There are people across the state that would love to be on the Council, and it lets people down when members consistently don't attend meetings.

Sen. Fairclough explained that the by-laws are explicit, and that all that is required is that the council member is courteous enough to call and ask to be excused. Her recollection is that the chairman would contact council members who cannot attend or be excused, but if someone is not responding to calls, emails, or mail then something has occurred in their life and the Council should send a letter and move forward. For council members that cannot call in or attend two of three meetings, then the Council should act.

Sen. Gardner asked if the public comment section should be modified, regarding the time limits and limits on organizational representatives. Kate Burkhart explained that all state boards and commissions have this same language related to the purpose and process for public comment, but she would have to research whether it was required rather than boilerplate. Council members commented on how valuable public comment is. Meghan Crow said she was very grateful for the volume of public comment earlier in the afternoon and feels it is valuable both the community as well as the Council.

Sen. Fairclough volunteered her staff to provide an updated draft for Council members to review at the next meeting. Council members can send their specific suggestions for changes to Sen. Fairclough. Sue May said that the veterans representative should be added to the by-laws because the by-laws haven't been updated since that came about..

William Martin said that he thinks this would be a great idea for Sen. Fairclough's office to revise the by-laws and to address them at the next meeting this summer.

Kate Burkhart said that the travel budget section next on the agenda may take longer than there is time left today and suggested moving it to tomorrow afternoon after the presentations. She said there are some pretty big decisions to be made about what the Council wants to do in FY15 since the travel budget is almost surely to shrink due to budget cuts.

The meeting recessed at 4:45 p.m.

May 9, 2014

The meeting reconvened at 9:05 a.m. Christine Moses joined the meeting by teleconference this morning.

Division of Behavioral Health Report

James Gallanos presented the report for the Division of Behavioral Health. No written materials were provided.

Twenty seven applications, requesting \$6m, for the \$3.7m comprehensive prevention grant program were received. Category A applicants are communities under 20,000 people; Category B applicants are communities over 20,000 people. Grant programs must be coalition-led and data-driven. Technical assistance will be provided to support coalitions in collecting and using data.

Prevention activities focus on mental health, substance abuse and suicide prevention. Suicide prevention grants comprise \$600,000 of the \$3.7m total program. Awards will be announced in late June.

The DBH Garrett Lee Smith Grant program is about halfway through the 3 year period. The focus is on training. The initial focus was on training trainers. Now DBH will work with organizations adopting the QPR Gatekeeper model as ongoing staff training. The Division of Juvenile Justice is one of these organizations, using the training with probation and facility staff. Gallanos will present the model to the Alaska State Troopers and VPSOs in the Fall. These organizations are also interested in postvention. Northstar Behavioral Health has shown interest in receiving this training for outreach staff.

The Trust Training Cooperative, funded under this grant, provided the QPR Gatekeeper training to Tanana Chiefs Conference behavioral health aides and staff. Gallanos will be providing support to the 120 individuals trained as trainers, with the goal of each trainer holding one training in the next fiscal year. The goal for FY15 is 300 people trained.

The Garrett Lee Smith funds also support the text service at Careline, which is reporting an increased utilization of this service. The target population for the grant program is youth, but it appears that youth are a small proportion of the text users. Gallanos asked for ideas on how to promote the text line to reach more youth. He is considering use of the Careline text service as a follow up tool for at-risk youth discharged from emergency departments, primary care providers, etc. – the issue of consent and health information will need to be addressed.

Sen. Gardner asked if youth have access to text in rural Alaska. Gallanos answered that Cyndi Nation from the Interior reports that texting isn't available in many Interior villages, but Michelle Woods from the Northwest Arctic reports it is widely used. Given the differences in access by community, it might be necessary to assess that capacity in efforts to promote the text service.

Sen. Gardner asked if we should explore other social media outlets that youth prefer to Facebook, if texting is not readily available. Gallanos is planning to reach out to a national effort to create texting lifeline/hotline network infrastructure in communities, to get advice on how to best market the service.

Sen. Fairclough commented that Alaska is unique in that it doesn't have braided electronic networks. We have six independent entities providing the service, rather than a big networked

system. This promotes user security but creates a challenge because we have to work with each agency. However, they do offer incentives and in kind supports to efforts. And they send text ads, couldn't we work with them on PSAs related to suicide prevention? Kate Burkhart reported that she and Lindsey Kato (the Juneau coalition coordinator) are approaching GCI about having Careline installed in all phones prior to sale, so she could add the PSA text idea to that conversation. Gallanos offered to help coordinate that, as the Garrett Lee Smith grant includes \$25,000 for marketing.

Gallanos that Barbara Franks for her help with the production of the 60-minute DVD to accompany the DBH postvention guide. Andrea Guste is providing the on screen and voice over talent. The DVD will include the message that postvention is prevention. The DVD will be available in August 2014.

The postvention advisory group has been reassembled and has met twice. It will be finalizing a packet to send to families that have experienced a loss to suicide. The packet will be sensitive to the resources available in the community of the survivors. There will be another Connect training for law enforcement officers at Southcentral Foundation in May.

Barbara Franks asked if there would be media around the release of the DVD. She suggested a media build up leading to World Suicide Prevention Day in September, so that there is no suggestion that it is related to a specific suicide. This creates a bigger picture, like the "10-10-10" initiative she coordinated around World Suicide Prevention Day.

Kate Burkhart asked how families would be identified by DBH to receive the postvention packets. Cause of death is protected health information, and cannot be shared without consent, so how will survivors be identified? Will packets just show up in a family's mailbox unsolicited? Gallanos responded that these are critical issues to talk about, but he has no clear answer. In New Hampshire, the medical examiner sends out the packets. It is also possible that the Alaska State Troopers could do it.

Sen. Fairclough commented that Alaska Troopers already have to leave information with victims of domestic violence, so it might be possible for them to leave additional information for families. Gallanos responded that the Alaska Troopers role would not include providing the packets or consoling the families, though they do provide Careline information. The Police Chaplaincy has asked that law enforcement have greater information about local resources to which to refer families. There is also discussion of having the Alaska Troopers report a suicide or suspected suicide death to community caregivers and support agencies. Kate Burkhart suggested that the legal counsel for the Department of Public Safety be included in these discussions, as what Gallanos described creates possible legal complications.

Sharon Fishel, Department of Education and Early Development

Sharon Fishel provided a written report on the School Based Suicide Prevention Grant Program and the suicide prevention training program for educators. As of May 5, 2014, 1,367 users have completed the suicide prevention training (2 hours, based on Gatekeeper) in the eLearning module. Of these, 450 users are from the Mat-Su School Districts. Part two of the training, focused on safety planning and providing interactive learning scenarios, will be available in August 2014.

Fishel will have a report on what suicide prevention training each school district is using by this summer.

The School Based Suicide Prevention Grant program funded 6 districts in FY14 (3-year grant) and is adding 4 more in FY15 (2-year grant), with wide geographical representation in all regions of the state. All of the 10 districts are using evidence-based suicide prevention training and/or interventions. The FY14 grantees are submitting their annual reports at the end of the school year. This will be shared with the Council in the Fall. The grantee meeting is September 22-24, 2014 in Anchorage at the BP Center. All Council members are welcome. The QPR Gatekeeper training will be part of the grantee meeting and the School Counselors Conference.

Chairman Martin asked about SB 137, and what percentage of teachers have completed the mandatory training? The majority of school districts are using the eLearning module, then Jason Foundation, followed by a small number of districts using ASIST, Kognito, and safeTalk.

Fishel also shared that the Special Education Service Agency focused on suicide prevention in their most recent newsletter. Brenda Moore asked if there is any research about students with special needs/disabilities being at greater risk for suicide. Fishel said that she didn't know about the research, but her experience as a special education teacher supports the idea. She commented that students often have greater supports in school. Kate Burkhart said it would be interesting to explore whether suicide risk grows when a student receiving special education services leaves the school system.

Sen. Fairclough asked Fishel to find out if the assets discussed in the newsletter related to self-esteem are included in the new teacher evaluations. She also asked if the newsletter and related materials could be used to provide packets of information to news outlets in the lead up to World Suicide Prevention Day. Brenda Moore commented that the Anchorage Daily News could add suicide to their series focus on alcohol in Alaska. Sen. Fairclough suggested that the Council provide training and resources at the annual press conference in the Spring.

UAF Kuskokwim Campus Wellness Program, Jennifer Peeks

Jennifer Peeks is the Wellness Coordinator, at the UAF Kuskokwim Campus (KUC). It is one of six rural campuses, and is the largest with 426 students this past year. The entire array of degrees, from certificate to masters degree, can be earned at KUC. The majority of the students are Alaska Native from the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Over 90% are part-time students, and

typically are non-traditional students. Many classes are distance delivered. There are two cohort-style programs, including the Rural Human Services Program.

There is a 38-bed co-ed dormitory on campus. It is a zero tolerance (no alcohol) housing program, because alcohol is such a big factor for younger and full-time students. Alcohol and partying, with the stress of college, create barriers to students' performance.

Offering education close to home is very important to students in the region. Not all students who go to Anchorage or Fairbanks or out of state do well so far away from home and the subsistence lifestyle that keeps them healthy, so having access to higher education close to home is a big draw. The smaller class size and greater access to professors, especially Yupik speaking professors, is also appealing to students.

The Wellness Program at KUC started in 2008 with a federal Title III grant. Prior to joining KUC, Peeks was a licensed clinical social worker at the school district. The Wellness Program helps students with healthy life choices through strength-based counseling and support.

Personal/family relations, alcohol, drugs, stress, depression, anxiety, homesickness, and financial concerns are barriers to success for many KUC students. While this isn't unique to this campus or these students, Peeks shared that these are serious sources of struggle for students, who often feel overwhelmed. She emphasized the importance of support and teamwork to helping students succeed and overcome obstacles.

Wellness Program services include individual and group counseling, educational services, collaboration with social services and health providers in town, crisis intervention, and life-skills instruction. Students do experience thoughts of suicide, so crisis intervention and connecting to resources is important. Peeks is building Yupik ways of living into the life instruction class she teaches. Healthy relationships are a major focus of the program.

Student activities include the "Learning to Learn" orientation camp for all full-time students. Peeks is an ASIST and safeTalk trainer, offering these trainings each semester for students, staff, and faculty. They also have offered volunteer alcohol screening and referral to services. Activities are designed to empower students to find and use their voice.

David Simon, a Rural Human Services graduate, spoke of the huge transformation he experienced in the program. The blending of Western and traditional learning, with the addition of the support from the school, was healing and helped students succeed. ASIST, safeTalk, and Gatekeeper were all part of the program.

Brenda Moore asked if the student body is more women than men. Peek answered that generally, yes there are more women than men enrolled. She thought that might be because it is harder for men to leave home for school because of their roles as providers. Daniel Bill commented that living here is not easy. They have traditional gender roles that people still abide by, like men seal

hunting for the family. These are dangerous, scary situations so women are not allowed to take on these roles because they have a sacred duty of raising children and organizing the family and home. Fathers are needed at home. If the father is missing, the mother's family members take on that role which puts more pressure on her family. Burkhart commented that it is a national trend, with more women enrolling in higher education than men.

Chairman Martin asked what percentage of students attend via distance learning? Peeks answered about 75%. Even students living on campus take distance classes from other UAF sites.

Break

SAIPH Suicide Prevention Coalition

Jennifer Peeks, KUC, and Patty McMillin, Lower Kuskokwim School District, presented a report on the local suicide prevention coalition. SAIPH grew out of a Methamphetamine and Suicide Prevention Grant from the Indian Health Services given to Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation.

ASIST training efforts started strong years ago, though there are now only about six active ASIST trainers, including Peeks and McMillin. The need for Yupik speaking trainers has been identified, but they have not generated enough interest to hold a training. All but two of the school district's social work staff are trained trainers. SAIPH and the social work department partner to offer ASIST and safeTalk to all the schools and communities so they can comply with the mandated training requirement. Peeks commented that ASIST is "awesome, but it's not for everyone." SafeTalk is more manageable and more appealing to people seeking training. McMillin said that she and Jim Biela are trained in the updated ASIST model. They have also received a copy of a version adapted to indigenous Northern cultures that is more relevant to the people of this region.

After many years of energy and success, attendance at SAIPH coalition meetings has dropped off, making it difficult to get work done. They now focus on the training partnership, the Survivors Day event in November, and the Walk into Light in the Spring. Peeks hosts a radio show once a month to talk about a variety of topics related to suicide, emphasizing the positive side of suicide prevention. Sometimes it's a call-in show, sometimes they have special guests to talk about the topic. They have hosted shows on domestic violence, veterans, Elizabeth Peratrovich, education, and other topics.

Brenda Moore asked if there were other coalitions in Bethel. There is a coalition associated with the sex offender treatment program in Bethel, and a coalition associated with the Choose Respect Initiative. Sustaining coalitions is difficult. Some partners, when they lost the funding for their prevention program, stopped participating. Turnover at Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation has affected the coalition, and the relationship is still being rebuilt.

McMillin commented that there is a natural process to coalitions as they are born, grow, and then regroup. Moore agreed, and commented that the Alaska Mental Health Board has advised the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to provide technical assistance and funding for coalitions already working on prevention programs. The current system of funding coalitions promotes the process of creation, operation, and then dissolving when the funding dries up. McMillin added that in small communities, it is often the same people on all the coalitions and those people are overtaxed. McMillin is pleased that, in Bethel, there is Native leadership and a focus on root causes. Peeks and McMillin both commented that a positive outcome is increased interest among the village leaders to participate directly in regional suicide prevention efforts so that what happens in the villages is community-driven. Meghan Crow commented that the agencies in the region (KUC, YKHC, AVCP) are all actively working in prevention, even if it is not expressly coordinated.

Lower Kuskokwim School District, Patty McMillin

The Lower Kuskokwim School District social work department serves the 23 villages in the school district. There are ten social workers in the department. Four are full-time in the Bethel schools, with five serving the villages as itinerant social workers. Each of the itinerant social workers have about five villages. This is the only school district in the state with a social work department. The social work department started in the late 1970's with two social workers assigned to the special education department. The full social work department was established in 1997 after a school shooting. The school board has invested in the program, and there has been no discussion in the last 6-7 years of not maintain the program (despite the fact that it is not a mandated education service).

The Central Native Education Parent Advisory Committee (CNEPAC) funds two of the positions, and the Kuskokwim Learning Academy funds the social work position there.

McMillin has been with the LKSD social work department for 14 years, and Meghan Crow has been with the department 16 years. They have several long-serving (10-12 years) social workers, and have had 2 new hires each year for the past few years. The LKSD social work department developed the endorsement program so that social workers could achieve the DEED required certification, since it was not provided at the universities.

The social work department offers Signs of Suicide each year, and tracks the number of students screened, the number who want to talk with someone, and the number of those who are new contacts. They have added ASIST and safeTalk training (mostly safeTalk) to their prevention efforts.

McMillin provided a written report of student contacts (4,146 contacts, 1,328 unduplicated count of students) in the 2013-2014 school year. Of these, 200 students were suicidal, 5 students attempted suicide, and zero students died by suicide. The entire district student population is

about 4,000. McMillin reported that 10% of the student population experience mental illness, serious family dysfunction, suicide risk, and other high risk factors.

Rep. Kreiss-Tomkins asked about the trend related to suicide before the social work department was formed, and then after. McMillin and Meghan Crow both commented that there was no data like that kept prior to the formation of the social work department ten years ago.

Sen. Gardner noted that increase in contacts for bullying, relationships, discipline etc. in October, and wondered if the Permanent Fund Dividend had an effect. McMillin explained that October was the first full month of school in the Fall (so student contact is more consistent), and they conducted a bullying survey for the first time in October 2013. The bullying survey resulted in a lot of conversation about what bullying is and is not. Peer relationships is the highest number of contacts, so the social department will increase the focus on dating violence in 2015-2016. Meghan Crow commented that the leading contributors to suicide among high school students are break ups and substance abuse. McMillin commented that binge drinking is a major problem among students and young adults, so they provide education about the biochemical depressant effects of alcohol on the brain and encourage youth not to leave their friends alone after they've been drinking.

Rep. Kreiss-Tomkins asked what the terms "CSI" (child study investigative team, a team of school staff convened to address the needs of a student struggling to succeed academically) and "IEP" (individualized education plan) mean in the reports. He also asked about the correlation between the harshness of the weather and suicide. McMillin answered that there was a record-breaking brutal winter two years ago that created stress on families needing to heat their homes and feed their families. This past winter was record-breakingly mild, and so there were fewer health and financial stressors. Meghan Crow explained that October and April are "cabin fever" times, since the river is not frozen enough or usually thawed enough to get out. McMillin commented that October-November and February-March are tough times in the natural rhythm of the school year, compounded by the transient nature of teaching staff.

Sen. Fairclough asked if the social work department collects data or has any information about the impact of Vitamin D on students. McMillin commented that YKHC and Public Health are looking at the issue. Sen. Fairclough asked how daylight savings time affects students. McMillin said that there is a negative impact on students, especially given the fact that high school students (adolescents) need more sleep and are not ready to learn before 10:00 a.m. There is a huge cultural issue related to life rhythms based on the light and shifting to the Western system based on the clock. McMillin commented that the research is there in the medical and scientific community, but it hasn't translated to education. Sen. Fairclough encouraged local school districts to look at timing the day to maximize the learning population.

McMillin concluded that you can always get services to kids through the schools, and school mandated school social work departments would be a big asset.

Break for lunch

The meeting reconvened at 1:30 p.m. Christine Moses joined the meeting in person.

Association of Village Council Presidents, Daniel Bill

Daniel Bill is a behavioral health counselor, working in the field since 1975. He has worked with adolescents and adults in Alaska, Oklahoma, and New Mexico.

Mr. Bill shared a story about a young woman he worked with an inhalant abuse treatment provider. She reported huffing the evening after being at the treatment center. When he asked why, she said that it was because she was hungry but there was no food in the house; when she huffed, she lost her appetite and didn't want to eat.

The Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) receives funding from SAMHSA for their Healthy Family Navigator prevention program, implemented in partnership with the Center for Alaska Native Research. This program relies on traditional Yupik ways of living to promote positive youth development. This program, for the first time in many villages, is speaking against suicide in public.

Activities include prevention education and activities in Hooper Bay, in partnership with the school and school counselor. Hunting and subsistence activities are provided for young men, especially those who do not have a male family member to teach them. Successful hunts are celebrated with a meal, dancing, and fellowship. The young women prepare the food harvested and shared in the celebration. This importance of ritual, and not just food, is emphasized. This builds pride for the youth, their siblings, and their families. They are now recruiting uncles to help with the hunting and subsistence activities.

The Chevak program is recruiting for a Healthy Family Navigator. The previous staff person created a Facebook page for suicide prevention, which is being maintained by young women in the community. Chevak has dances, Girl Scouts, and annual culture days in the Spring every year. Mr. Bill says these activities, along with summer festivals, build resilience and promote sobriety. Dances and Girls Scouts provide additional activities in Chevak. They would like to develop a partnership with the school in Chevak.

Louisa Walker is the Healthy Family Navigator in Scammon Bay. She partners with YKHC staff to provide afterschool activities for youth. Last week, they had a bake sale to help support the elder who volunteered to take the youth to fish camp. That is a new development, an elder volunteering to teach youth. He thinks the Healthy Family Navigator helps create an environment that encouraged elders to get involved.

In Alukanuk, they started with grade school students, offering activities for the children and parents. This built trust and experience, which allowed for expanding activities to youth. They

have organized dances. In that community, the tribal council does not want co-ed activities, so the Healthy Family Navigator has developed activities that respect that.

Each village's tradition council has granted permission for development of a community suicide prevention plan. Villages are tired of suicide after suicide, elders are tired of going to funerals. They are now meeting with community members to create these plans, which will be given to every person in the community so they know what to do, who to call when someone is suicidal. These plans will include the professional prevention roles of VPSOs, behavioral health aides, etc. as well as what individuals can do to help someone who is suicidal.

This program is having a positive impact. Hooper Bay has had at least one suicide every year for years. But in 2013 and since then, there have been no suicides. People are more sensitive and responsive to the signs someone might be in distress.

The Healthy Family Training (Elluarrluteng Ilakutellriit) was begun in 2008 by ONC Social Services. It relies on traditional ways of living and parenting to support and strengthen families. It is now a requirement for parents engaged with the Office of Children Services and Indian Child Welfare Act workers in child protection cases, most of which involve alcohol.

Mr. Bill shared that a Navajo elder once told him that there are five things to do in order to heal: talk, take care of yourself (eat, sleep), keep busy, look for things to be thankful about and express your thanks, and pray. When Mr. Bill shared them during a visit to Chevak, the people there said that these were the same essential things their elders had taught them about healing.

Mr. Bill commented that, if you are trying to help a suicidal adolescent, you are too late. You should be working with children and young parents so that they never get that far. He explained that traditionally, new parents stayed with their own parents until the time the grandparents were sure that the new parents could take care of the children and themselves. Then they would be allowed to live in their own home. Mr. Bill went on to say that too many people learned to parent from BIA and religious boarding schools, where people often experienced trauma and abuse. That has been passed on to their children and their children's children. They talk about this in the Healthy Families Training – everything is on the table so that all the hurts can heal. Some Alaska Natives are ashamed to be native – they are overrepresented in corrections and juvenile justice and API and with domestic violence – but that feeling changes after the Healthy Families Training. “This is our sacred path.”

Mr. Bill reminded that “life is good,” and “we will be okay.” There is more good going on than bad.

Chairman Martin suggested to Mr. Bill that the villages developing suicide prevention plans might look to the state plan. Mr. Bill said he does share that plan with the villages, “it is a very good document.” Barbara Franks thanked Mr. Bill and the Healthy Family Navigators for their

work to encourage people to talk about how they have been hurt, rather than push it under the carpet.

Christine Moses asked if the program was in more than the four communities of Chevak, Scammon Bay, Hooper Bay, and Alukanuk. Mr. Bill answered it was a pilot project. They were chosen because of the very high suicide and domestic violence rates in those communities. If it is successful they will look to expand it.

Meghan Crow commented that the Hooper Bay success should be celebrated, noting that in 2013 Hooper Bay was the state basketball champion. The fact that they had so many healthy boys to have a team is a big change.

Brenda Moore asked how, given the past experience with some religious organizations, the relationships with churches are in the four villages? Are faith leaders involved? Mr. Bill said that some people have left established Western religion, some people start their own prayer services, some have stayed in with the church. It is much more fragmented than it used to be. Mr. Bill doesn't know of formal relationships between the church leaders and the prevention program. Rep. Nageak shared that many people have a struggle between faith and religion, having grown up seeing hypocrisies and trauma.

Drew's Foundation, Meghan Crow

Paul O'Brien founded Drew's Foundation after his son died by suicide in 2011. Meghan Crow shared a brief report, since Mr. O'Brien couldn't join the meeting. Drew's Foundation hosts a Memory Room at the annual Camai Festival for people to remember people lost. This year, Cynthia Erickson and the Tanana 4-H Group came, speaking at the school and sharing their "Take the Pledge" campaign. Drew's Foundation continues to sponsor local snowmachine and dog sled racers to carry the message that "Suicide Is Never the Answer." Drew's Foundation hosted a film festival, but the turnout was small, so instead Mr. O'Brien is producing a film with Mike Williams, Jr. and others. Drew's Foundation is focused on building resiliency and working with young children toward positive youth development.

Travel

The travel budgets statewide were reduced by 12.8% for FY15. The FY14 travel budget was \$32,500. The FY15 budget will be \$28,240.

Discussion of the options included meeting in Anchorage only, prioritizing a rural visit with teleconference, and sending small teams to communities. The Council decided to prioritize rural visits.

Dates for meetings:

August 26, 2014 – Summer meeting, teleconference

October 20-22, 2014 – Fall meeting in Seward

January 14, 2014 – Winter meeting, teleconference

May 6-8, 2014 – Spring meeting on Prince of Wales

Elections

The officers are the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary/Treasurer, and an at-large officer.

Rep. Nageak nominated Bill Martin to serve as chairman. Bill commented that he has been chair for three years, and wanted to make room for others who might be interested.

Sen. Fairclough commented that there might be people interested but not comfortable speaking up. Kate Burkhart suggested establishing a nominating committee and then having an election only teleconference meeting before June 30.

Brenda Moore moved to create a nominating committee and have a subsequent election. There was no objection. Anna Fairclough, Brenda Moore, Berta Gardner were appointed to the nominating committee. Staff will provide current contact information to the nominating committee. They will have the slate to the Chairman by June 1, 2014. The Council will meet by teleconference on June 17, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. to have the election.

Break

Statewide Clergy Training, Brenda Moore

Brenda Moore reported that the Arctic Resource Center in Fairbanks director, Jim Wisland who is a pastor, has been working with an interdenominational group of clergy on a theological response to suicide. Moore has been participating, as the group has developed a theological guidance document. Pastor Richard Irwin, who serves on the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, organized a sexual assault and domestic violence training for clergy members. This inspired Moore to connect Eric Boyer at the Trust Training Cooperative with Pastor Irwin and the Church of Anchorage (a consortium of local churches). They have included Jim Wisland in the conversation and are now moving forward with planning a training event.

One of the goals is to equip pulpit ministers with safe messaging tools and theological bases for discussing suicide prevention. At the training, they will provide suicide prevention training (with the Trust Training Cooperative) for lay and clergy leaders and special training for pulpit ministers. They have invited an outside seminarian to speak at the training. Interdenominational representatives from Fairbanks and Anchorage are participating in the planning, and they are reaching out to Rabbi Gartenberg in Juneau. They will next meet May 16, 2014.

Barbara Franks shared that she and Bishop Lateme from the Episcopal Church are trying to put together and clergy network, to help trainers connect with those leaders when they go to

communities. Kate Burkhart shared that the Southeast Episcopal Deanery has asked for and received training, and suggested that she connect with Gordon Bleu from that community. Brenda Moore said they want a broad representation from many organizations.

Lowell Sage commented that ministers must address safe messaging. He shared that they had a suicide death a couple of months ago. At the funeral, the minister spoke about “it was their time” and that the person was better off in heaven. This is the wrong message. He asked that the training materials from the clergy training be shared widely among clergy members, and not just among those who attend the event. This sort of pulpit minister training is very much needed.

Walk for Life Preparations, Meghan Crow

The Walk for Life, sponsored by the SAIPH Coalition, AVCP, and YKHC, is May 10, 2014. This is the 4th Annual Walk for Life. Council members are invited to participate and to speak before the walk if they would like. The Walk will start at 11:00 a.m. at the Cultural Center. She suggested being there by 10:45 a.m. There will be t-shirts, provided by YKHC.

Meghan Crow offered to take members to the airport to check in before the walk, and then Council members can go to the airport after the walk.

Final Comments

Barbara Franks commented that it has been a good and busy year for suicide prevention, and the Council is going places she never thought doors would open. Sue May commented that she is retiring from the Veteran’s Administration in June, and so the Council may want to reevaluate her membership. Sen. Fairclough asked if she was willing to continue to serve. Sue May said she was of course willing to serve at the Council’s pleasure. Sen. Fairclough asked that she send a letter explaining why she is still an excellent representative of the veteran population.

Christine Moses apologized for missing the first day of the meeting but expressed her appreciation for what she heard today: “We are making a difference.” One person can make a difference. She thanked everyone for how they have been helping.

Sen. Gardner commented on how important it is for the Council to go into Alaska. It’s partly what we learn, the fresh understanding, but also that we are here. Rep. Nageak agreed that it’s important to spend time in rural Alaska. He commented on how important it is for young people to hear they are cared for and lifted up.

Alana Humphrey echoed the importance of visiting rural Alaska. She shared that Boys and Girls Club has received funding to pilot their suicide prevention program in 11 sites in Alaska. She thanked Council members for their work.

Meghan Crow expressed appreciation for the meaningful opportunity to hear from local suicide prevention efforts, and that being allowed to talk about suicide now is the norm. These

conversations are happening, even among elders, when five years ago youth were speaking about how hard it was to get parents and elders to speak about the problem. Now, people know what to say and they are talking. She shared that the students in Toksook Bay organized their own full-day International Survivors Day in November, winning an award for their work.

Rep. Kreiss-Tomkins will share information he received from Rep. Seaton about Vitamin D with the Council, should they want to pursue a resolution. He will also reach out to the Alaska Broadcasters Association about the idea of partnering with the media on reporting on suicide.

Brenda Moore remembered how, just five or six years ago, no one would talk openly about suicide. Now, the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and the tribal health organizations are all working on wellness and prevention. That gives her hope. Part of this is the Council's work, part is the way the grants are structured, and part of this is the StopSuicideAlaska.org portal.

Kate Burkhart commented that it was a good meeting, with meaningful content and the important message that good things are happening.

Lowell Sage reminded the Council of the public comment about how concerned the people are about the reduced salmon fishery this summer, and encouraged the Council to offer support and assistance if possible. He commented that it was a great meeting.

Sen. Fairclough commented that it was a great meeting.

Eric Morrison commented on how generous AVCP has been in hosting the Council.

Chairman Martin said he was disappointed in the statewide rates for 2012. His mindset is that you can figure things out logically, until you work with people. The numbers haven't changed, but we are making a difference, and perhaps if we weren't working so hard the numbers would be much higher. He appreciates the work of the Council. It's heartbreaking to hear some of these stories, but listening to them is part of the healing. He is very impressed with the legislative members, and their active participation in the meeting. He is grateful that the Council members give their whole heart to this work.

Sen. Fairclough moved to adjourn the meeting. Brenda Moore seconded the motion, which passed without objection. The meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.