

Suicide Prevention in Alaska

"AWorldWithout Suicide"

History of Alaska

- The Alaska territory and transition to statehood "50"
- Acculturation
 - Boarding schools, ANCSA, oil, mining, subsistence culture, religion.
- Introduction of rural social service programs
 - RuralCAP
 - Rural Human Services Program (RHSS)
 - Community-based suicide prevention grants
- State Suicide Prevention Council (SSPC)
- Suicide prevention training
 - Gatekeeper, ASSIST, QPR

Suicide Rates

- 124 people commit suicide each year in AK. (20.3 per 100,000)
- 5th leading cause of death, 2nd under 50.
- Alaska Native males have highest rates (ages 15-29)
- Northwest region (70 per 100,000)
- AK Native Elders have low rates



Strategic Prevention Framework in Alaska

Juneau

Akiachak

Strategic Prevention Framework in Alaska

Juneau

- Capital city
- Population = 30,000
- 16% Alaska Native
- Economy: Government, tourism, fishing, mining, services
- 6 % poverty, 5% unemployment
- Combination public/private provider run services

Akiachak

- Traditional Alaska Native Subsistence Community located along the Kuskokwim River with Tribal governance.
- Population = 650
- 96% Alaska Native
- Economy: Fishing, education and public services
- 21% poverty, 25% unemployment
- "Dry" village: Local Option Law
- Bethel "Hub" provider of services

Step One: Assessment

Juneau

- Several suicides among teens and youth sparked community outcry. Lack of prevention resources among schools and community providers.
- In 2009 creation of the Juneau Suicide Prevention Task Force
- Applied for 3 year comprehensive behavioral health prevention state grant
- Funded project coordinator

Akiachak

- High rates of suicide among young Yupik males late teens and early twenties (High rates of alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, teen pregnancy, child abuse, unemployment).
- Lack of provider based services (VBC, VPSO)
- In 2009, Received one time suicide prevention planning grant (SPF).
- Applied for 3 year Alaska Youth Suicide Prevention Project Grant (GLSMA)
- Created Regional Suicide Prevention Team.
- Funded four villages in the region.

Step Two: Capacity

Juneau

- Assembled a coalition of approximately 60 people in four sub-committees
 - High risk pops
 - Media awareness
 - Training
 - Mental health
- Created newsletter as communications tool.
- Developed regional ad-hoc committee to address needs of Alaska Native youth.

Akiachak

- Assembled the regional team to include representation from Akiachak, Kwethluk, Tuluksak, and Akiak to include Tribal Elders, village based counselors, clergy, schools, youth and supportive community members.
- Partnering with Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation and the Suicide Awareness, Intervention, Prevention and Healing Coalition in Bethel.
- Will hold Youth and Elders gathering in June, 2010
- State resources to include Gatekeeper training in June, 2010.

Step Three: Planning

Juneau

- Reviewed school based protocols and procedures.
- Identified Signs of Suicide (SOS) as an NREPP evidence-based practice that provides early screening and referral.
- Site visit to observe SOS implementation in Wasilla, Alaska.
- Identified Alaska Gatekeeper training
- Developed media outreach campaign targeting high risk groups.

Akiachak

- Each village is unique and has many variables that will indicate which strategies will be most effective.
- Various levels of readiness and ownership of the problem.
- Identified multiple phased approach to implement postvention strategies followed by prevention, education and awareness focused on protective factors and cultural strengths.
- Will require an adapted Gatekeeper training that is culturally responsive to the village and Alaska Native context.

Thoughts to Consider.....

Juneau

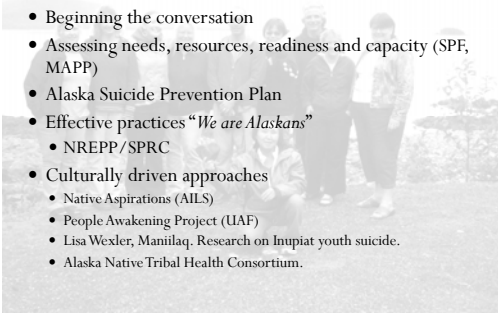
- Juneau has more resources, can produce more outputs, higher degree of organizational and technical capacity.
- Reliance on Western values and medical model based interventions
- Evaluation requires outcomes focus

Akiachak

- Akiachak relies on traditional, cultural, spiritual connections, relationships and seasonal changes
- Reliance on Yupik values and honoring traditional healing, alternative holistic interventions.
- Evaluation requires culturally centered approach.

Thoughts to Consider.....

- Beginning the conversation
- Assessing needs, resources, readiness and capacity (SPF, MAPP)
- Alaska Suicide Prevention Plan
- Effective practices "*We are Alaskans*"
 - NREPP/SPRC
- Culturally driven approaches
 - Native Aspirations (AILS)
 - People Awakening Project (UAF)
 - Lisa Wexler, Maniilaq. Research on Inupiat youth suicide.
 - Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium.



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