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ON THE HORIZON:

- Council Employment Initiatives
- Council budgetary recommendations approved by the Trust for FY11
- Outcomes from the Council meeting in October 2009 (Advocacy)
- Update on the Alaska Alliance for Direct Service Careers (AADSC)

GOVERNOR’S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES & SPECIAL EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

Council Establishes Annual Priorities for FY10

In May of every year the Council holds a planning meeting to develop priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. During this meeting Council members develop their annual priorities for all of the Council's standing committees. The Council hears annual priorities from the Division of Senior & Disabilities Services, Center for Human Development, People First, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Disability Law Center of Alaska, Stone Soup, Department of Education & Early Development, and Special Education Service Agency (SESA) in order to develop a more effective strategy.

During the meeting, the chair of each committee reports on what has been accomplished in the past year and makes recommendations to the full Council for consideration during the upcoming fiscal year. Through this effort, the Council votes on the top priorities for each committee. These top priorities establish the committees annual work plan.

Council members and community members from around the state participate on one the following committees and develop workplans to address each of the priorities:

- Developmental Disabilities Committee
- Early Intervention Committee
- Education Committee
- Legislative Committee
- Rural Ad Hoc Committee
- Ad Hoc Committee on the Developmental Disabilities Waitlist
- Ad Hoc Committee on Autism

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PRIORITIES FOR FY10

Developmental Disabilities Committee

- Advocate for an individualized streamlined system of care verses a programmatic system of care
- Identify, monitor, and recommend solutions on Medicaid issues that affect individuals
- Increase direct service worker living wages
- Monitor and comment on the development and implementation of a state rate methodology and review process
- Develop an action plan and time line for implementing the tiered system within the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services

Early Intervention Committee

- Advise and assist with student loan forgiveness program to support staff recruitment and retention
- Advocate for changes that allow Infant Learning Programs (ILP) to bill private insurance for all ILP services
- Advocate for changes to allow ILP to bill Medicaid for all ILP services
- Assist Department of Education & Early Development in organizing an early childhood summit
- Implement preschool survey and assist the Department of Education & Early Development in creating a preschool listserv

Education Committee

- Ensure Special Education Service Agency (SESA) has adequate funding
- Work with stakeholders to secure a 10% increase in "Alaska Grown" special education teachers and related service providers
- Advocate for changes to State special education regulations so that the definition of autism is expanded to include the full spectrum.

Legislative Committee

Monitor and advocate as needed for the passage of the following bills:

- House Bill 187: Which will require insurance coverage for autism spectrum disorders, describing the method for establishing a treatment plan for those disorders, and defining the treatment required for those disorders; and providing for an effective date.
- Senate Bill 109: An Act repealing the secondary student competency examination and related requirements; and providing for an effective date.
- Senate Bill 32: An Act relating to medical assistance payments for home and community-based services and provision of personal care services in a recipient's home; and providing for an effective date.

Rural Ad hoc Committee

- Assist communities in developing local disability service needs assessment
- Maximize technology in rural areas to improve access to key services
- Support the development of sustainable opportunities for adults with disabilities so that they can remain in their communities
- Research financial and programmatic resources available to rural communities to meet their identified needs

Ad Hoc Committee on Autism

- Monitor recommendations made to the state board of EED
 - > Add advanced nurse practitioners to the list of medical personnel who can make an autism diagnosis (adopted)
 - > Expand definition to include Autism Spectrum Disorders



Council Members: Anna Attla & Ric Nelson

- Review progress made to date and prioritize remaining recommendations

Many other priorities were recommended that did not make the top priorities. The top priorities are accomplished throughout the year. Other priorities from the list then move up based on the number of votes they received.

Council committees will finalize work plans this summer. Once finalized, work plans will be posted on the Council's web site for members of the community to review. In summary, Council members and staff are looking forward to a successful year of capacity building, system change and advocacy to improve the lives of Alaskans who experience disabilities.

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES SUMMIT

Residential Services Summit

Sponsored by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority

On May 28th–29th, 2009 the Council held a Residential Services Summit. This event was funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority.

Prior to the Summit, Council research focused on identifying strategies to improve the delivery of residential services. The three major areas identified were:

- Use of “smart” technology in residential services
- Development of intentional communities, where people with and without developmental disabilities live together
- Development of innovative models of service delivery with a focus on inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in community activities

“Smart” Technology

In addressing the use of “smart” technology, the Council invited two individuals from companies located in Colorado to the Summit: Rich Herold representing AbleLink Technologies and Greg Wellems representing Imagine: SmartHomes

AbleLink Technologies was founded in 1997 to address the significant need for well-researched cognitive support technologies for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Along with cognitive support technologies, AbleLink continues to focus on empowering individuals who experience intellectual disabilities with person-centered supports so that they can live a more independent and self-determined lifestyle.

Imagine: SmartHomes was established in 1963 as a private, not-for-profit organization and was the first local area single-point of entry into local,



state and federally funded programs for Coloradans with developmental disabilities. Imagine has a long history of offering services for people with cognitive disabilities that are both creative and innovative. SmartHome, the first of which is located in south Boulder, was designed for people with significant developmental and physical disabilities and features cutting-edge technologies to improve the quality and efficiency of services and supports for people with disabilities. The SmartHome is designed to enhance quality of life by developing personal skills, enhancing communications and regulating environmental conditions. In addition, the SmartHome augments the effectiveness of caregivers by sensing, storing and transmitting health information, analyzing healthcare and health/safety trends and detecting behavioral clues for changes in cognitive and physical condition. SmartHome provides cost and energy savings by managing staff time efficiently, utilizing alternative energy sources and minimizing energy consumption.

Intentional Communities

Roy Scheller from Hope Community Resources in Anchorage, presented on the topic of Intentional Communities. Roy has been associated with Hope Community Resources for 31 years. While learning greatly from his Alaskan experiences and from the people associated with him, Roy has developed a culturally sensitive planning process referred to as ‘Finding the Essence’ of a person. He is currently the Deputy Executive Director for Hope Community

Resources, located in Alaska. In his presentation Mr. Scheller defined an intentional community as members of a community that share a social, political, religious, or spiritual vision. They share responsibilities and resources and their purposes may vary. They may create a family oriented neighborhood and/or create a livable and sustainable lifestyle. Some are secular, spiritual, focus on communal meals, focus on egalitarian values, and/or have primary themes of music, arts, and crafts. In looking at communities throughout the world that are now using this model, some have taken the approach to design faith communities, communes, co-op housing, eco-Villages, land trusts, and/or survivalists’ retreats. Because of these demonstrated successes, many families in Alaska have asked that provider organizations look into the development of intentional communities.

Innovative Models of Service Delivery

Dustin Wright with Rest Assured began his career as



RESIDENTIAL SERVICES SUMMIT

a Direct Support Professional with a private provider in Indiana, while attending Purdue University. In his role as General Manager of Rest Assured, he oversees operations at the company's "state-of-the-art" network virtual support and response center and is responsible for marketing, sales and development of the Rest Assured model.

Many people have improved the quality of their lives, increased their independence, and maintained their privacy, health, and safety by using Rest Assured services. Rest Assured provides real-time interactive support, two-way communication with the provider's on-call staff, documentation, event tracking, and home security services. Rest Assured offers agencies, providers, and family members access to proprietary screening and assessment tools. These tools, along with the data collected from on-site visits, residents, funders, family members, and other interested parties, can help caregivers determine whether an individual will benefit from Rest Assured services.

Experienced technicians visit each individual's home and determine the appropriate mix of sensors and cameras in order to create a technical support service plan that best meets his or her individual needs. Broadband cable is available in the continental United States. Rest Assured indicated that this service can be established in Alaska. Of importance is that you do not need technical expertise to use the Rest Assured system. Rest Assured technicians do everything from establishing the system requirements and shipping components to unpacking, setting up, and testing components to ensure that each installation is operational. Each installation is warranted by Rest Assured. Rest Assured provides real-time support of the system's integrity by regularly testing each device and camera. If there is a system or component failure, a technician is notified and repair or replacement is scheduled.

After the presentations on Smart Homes, Intentional Communities, and Rest Assured, three break-out groups were established based upon audience

interest. Through a strategic process, all three groups made recommendations to the entire group at the end of the second day. Those recommendations are now being formulated into a report that will be submitted to the Council's Developmental Disabilities Committee. Recommendations will be posted on the Council's web site and specific actions will be taken depending on the will of the Council and stakeholders. Details to come soon!

ALASKA WORKS INITIATIVE GRANT UPDATE

Vocational Rehabilitation / Behavioral Health Workgroup Makes Progress on Work as an Expectation

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Division of Behavioral Health (DBH), Employment Supports Workgroup is making progress in several areas to improve employment supports and services to individuals with behavioral health disorders. Following meetings that began last fall and based on workgroup recommendations, two pilot study sites have been identified (Juneau and Kenai) to improve service delivery between the regional vocational rehabilitation offices and local behavioral health providers. Activities including: improve access to entering the vocational rehabilitation system, expediting the eligibility process for vocational rehabilitation process, increasing cross agency communication and coordination and providing ongoing behavioral health support services for individuals who become employed.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by DVR and DBH on May 22nd, which emphasizes their commitment to recognizing that employment is an

expected outcome in the total behavioral health system of care and a major element in the process of recovery.

Data collected from the pilot sites will focus on access to services in a timely manner, improved communication and collaboration between DVR counselors and behavioral health providers and jointly served individuals and follow up support after each person becomes employed. Though data will be collected on only two sites, all behavioral health providers were encouraged to adopt the philosophy of work as an integral part of recovery through training provided during the June 16–17 Change Agent Conference.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION OUTCOMES

Outcomes from the 26th Alaska Legislative Session

Operating & Capital Budget Increments



State of Alaska Capitol building, Juneau

Home and community-based service provider rate increase. Supports a rate increase for providers serving seniors and people experiencing developmental disabilities. **\$1.2 million increase to the base of \$354,681,300.**

Early learning coordination. Supports Head Start, other early learning projects. **\$600,000.** The overall purpose of Head Start programs is to promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of low-income children and their families addressing health, education, nutrition, social and other services based on family need.

Best Beginnings. \$200,000 one time increment. Allows 40-60 new children and their families statewide to receive Head Start services.

Infant Learning Program Services: \$1,000,000 added to the base. Funding has

not kept pace with inflation and increased operating costs. Early intervention services is critical with in the first three years of life to set the foundation for future learning.

Infant Learning Workforce Development: \$300,000 established to improve the qualifications and skills of Infant Learning Providers. This will help to recruit and retain qualified personnel to keep up with an increase in referrals and screenings.

Autism Diagnostic Clinic: Increase over the past couple of years has resulted in a total of **\$500,000 in the base.** This program conducts early identification and diagnosis of autism which is critical in establishing early intervention services leading to significant improvements in language, cognitive, social, motor skills, and educational achievements later in life.

Alaska Autism Resource Center: Increase funding both through the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and general funds/mental health funds totaling **\$350,000. \$150,000 of which is in the base.** With this increase the Alaska Autism Resource Center can improve provider, educator, and parent knowledge and skills in Autism Spectrum Disorders interventions, and increase the number of providers who are able to conduct screenings and provide services.

Autism workforce development capacity: Increase funding for a total **\$250,000. \$125,000 comes from the Trust & \$250,000 is in the base.** This money will fund the development of a much needed team of professionals trained in providing time-limited, intensive early intervention services.

Rural Transition Project: The Trust has funded

this project for several years. Funding for this project is now a **GF/MH increment of \$150,000.** This program helps students in special education find the resources and connections needed to transition into the adult world after they are finished with school.

Deferred Maintenance/ADA Improvement Grants: \$750,000 approved in GF/MH. These funds are granted for service providers and Trust beneficiaries for facility renovation, repair or upgrades and accessibility improvements.

Home Modifications: \$250,000 from Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, \$300,000 from the Trust, and \$500,000 in GF/MH for a total of 1,050,000. People with disabilities want to remain in their homes and live more independently in their communities. This fund has been established to achieve this goal.

Outcomes of Joint Priorities

In November of 2008 the Statutory Boards to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority established four agreed upon joint priorities for the 26th Alaska Legislation session.

Adult Dental Medicaid (House Bill 26) HB 26 reauthorizes this program, which helps avoid costly and potentially catastrophic dental emergencies later in life. Reauthorizing adult dental services was a top priority for the Trust and the Statutory boards. HB 26 passed through the house and the senate and was signed by the governor.

Medicaid Rate Review (Senate Bill 32) SB 32 passed the senate but not the house. Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) include senior care, assisted living, personal care attendants, mental health and substance abuse treatment, infant learning and services for Alaskans with Developmental Disabilities. SB proposes a regular

LEGISLATIVE SESSION OUTCOMES

schedule of rate reviews that will allow providers and the Department of Health & Social Services to plan and allocate resources so that the reviews create a minimal administrative burden.

Housing & Homeless Services Funding:

Affordable housing with adequate support services is key to continued and sustained recovery for many Mental Health Trust beneficiaries. State resources for non-Medicaid eligible services such as social support and skill development have dwindled over the years. This coming year will see approximately \$10,000,000 in capital funds in AHFC with \$6,000,000 of this new funding.

Coordinated Community Transportation: \$300,000 from the Trust and \$800,000 approved in the Capital budget for a total of \$1,100,000. The lack of accessible, affordable transportation is a major barrier for people with disabilities.

Other Bills That Passed of Interest to the Council

SB 1 provides for the minimum wage to be adjusted up each year according to inflation and ensures that it is at least 50 cents higher than of the federal minimum wage.

HB 105 reinstates the State Training and Employment Program (STEP) to provide financial aid for eligible providers of training and employment assistance. STEP enhances the quality of in-state job training and makes employment assistance more easily available to employers, employees, and future employees.

SCR 1 This resolution establishes March 2009 as Brain Injury Awareness Month in Alaska.

The Council wishes to thank Katie Bringold, our legislative intern, for an outstanding job during the 26th Legislative Session!

Community Transportation Gets a Closer Look by State

Governor Palin signed Administrative Order 243 on Oct. 16, 2008 to promote better coordination of state funding and services for community transportation programs around the State. The Order established a 12-member task force which started meeting in February to help coordinate and integrate community-based public transportation services. The Council has supported such an effort for nearly ten years and looks forward to the task force's final report which is due to the Governor on January 15, 2010.

For more information: www.dot.state.ak.us/stwdplng/cttf/

Governor's Council visits Ketchikan Shipyard

Duane Mayes and Patrick Reinhart, the Council's Business and Industry Liaison visited with Doug Ward, director of shipyard Development at the Alaska Ship and Drydock (ASD) in Ketchikan just prior to the May Council meeting. Mr. Ward is a member of the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB). According to Mr. Ward, ASD is hoping for steady expansion of projects and employees over the next few years. The Council, with support of the Alaska Works Initiative Grant and in cooperation with the AWIB, is promoting the hiring of persons with disabilities with non-traditional employers like ASD. In addition, the Council is advocating for persons with disabilities to apply for and become part of the State's growing apprenticeship program.



RURAL AD HOC COMMITTEE

Outreach Trip to the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) Region in Alaska

April 19 – 22, 2009

The Rural Services Ad Hoc Committee (RAC) was formed in October 2008 at the direction of the Council's Executive Committee. This decision was based on public input concerning lack of resources in rural Alaska.

The RAC met April 19–22 to conduct an outreach trip to the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) region. On Sunday April 19th, committee members met in Fairbanks to discuss ways to address concerns regarding the lack of services in rural Alaska. Four teams of approximately 4 committee members per team were briefed on what would happen the next day on their outreach trips. On Monday morning the 4 groups departed to Delta Junction, Fort Yukon, Nenana and Galena to gather public input. On Tuesday morning the 4 groups met as a whole and each gave a comprehensive report of their findings. Statements and testimonies made are listed as follows:

- Rural communities have a hard time finding providers who are trained to provide care to seniors and those who experience a developmental disability
- It is difficult to get formalized training in CPR
- Local services are limited and communities are struggling to obtain services such as physical, speech and occupational therapy
- Many families have to travel to Seattle to obtain services
- Given the complexities of disabilities, some doctors are recommending that families move to larger communities for services
- Marginal support groups exist for families who have children with significant disabilities
- Community buildings are not accessible — ramps, etc
- Care givers are not paid enough which limits hours of services
- Money for providers is at poverty level
- There is no transportation for the people with disabilities in the community
- Direct Service Workers receive low pay
- Local doctor will be leaving — need to plan for life after he leaves
- There is a high rate of suicide
- More training is needed on FASD
- Better technology is needed to reach professionals in larger communities
- There is a lack of elder housing
- There is a lack of transition services for students with disabilities exiting from high school
- The High School Exit Exam is not realistic and it limits employment and academic opportunities



From the left: Kris Johnson, Lisa Balivet, Amanda Lofgren and Duane Mayes

- There is a lack of services for the deaf
- There are little to no services in place for people with substance abuse issues

On Tuesday, April 21st, the rural committee heard from agencies in Fairbanks that provide services to rural Alaska. Participating agencies included:

- TCC Information Office — Jim Williams (Chief Information Officer)
- TCC Infant Learning Program — Catherine Lawrence (Early Intervention Specialist)
- CyberLynx, Interior Distance Education Academy — John Abrams (Special Education Director) & Tracy Culbert
- TCC Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation — Amanda Race (Program Director)
- State of Alaska, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation — Pam Curns (Rehabilitation Manager)
- State of Alaska, Employment Security, Department of Labor & Workforce Development — Nikki Kreatschman (Regional Manager)
- Access Alaska — Jim Kreatschman (Regional Director)
- Fairbanks Resource Agency — Emily Ennis (Executive Director)

The following issues are some of the struggles the above agency professionals reported:

- The lack of technology in rural areas is often financially driven.
- The use of T-1 lines subsidized by the FCC can only be used for K-12 education and the delivery and administration of health care activities.
- One of the biggest barriers in providing services is that families often miss their appointments.
- Travel is difficult due to weather concerns.

RURAL AD HOC COMMITTEE

- Telehealth is needed for OT/PT and Speech.
- It is difficult to provide more frequent services to children with Autism or Down Syndrome because of the lack of skilled staff.
- Technology is fairly limited and because of this e-mail is primarily used to track students and keep up with their paperwork.
- There is a high turnover rate within special education, lack of technology, and confidentiality being breached within small communities.
- Technology can come to the smaller communities, but it sits there and never gets upgraded.
- There is a need for community building and identifying people within the community who are willing and capable of helping out to build that community spirit.
- Video conferencing is needed as a way to help build relationships with people in communities by having regular face-to-face contact.
- Identifying people in the villages to head up projects is a need.
- Strategies for maintaining a person's cultural heritage and family connections when they come to an urban setting need to be implemented.

On Wednesday, the committee reviewed all the information gathered from

community visits and agency presentations; identified a list of issues and concerns; and created a mission statement:

“Empowering rural communities to create individualized solutions to improve the lives of people with disabilities.”

In total the committee identified 38 priorities, in Alaska. The following four top priorities were presented to the full Council for approval during the May meeting:

1. Assist communities in developing local disability services needs assessments.
2. Maximize technology in rural areas to improve access to key services for individuals with disabilities.
3. Support the development of sustainable opportunities for adults with disabilities to allow them to remain in the community of their choice.
4. Research financial and programmatic resources available to rural communities to meet their identified needs.

The RAC will now formulate a work plan with specific action steps to address these four top priorities which were approved by the full council in May.

RURAL AD HOC COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Anna Attla, Council Member, from Galena
Lisa Balivet, EI/ILP program, OCS
Belinda Burns, AKSHA
Milton Cheemuk, Council Member
Tom Cyrus, TVR
Pam Curns, DVR
Mark Doughty, Health Care Service

Kris Green, Autism & Family Support Svc Mgrn
Taylor Gregg, Council member
Jackie Hill, Council member, Disability Law Ctr
Kris Johnston, Council member, Parent
David Kvasager, DVR
Banarsi Lai, AK Commission on Aging,
Amanda Lofgren, Senior and Disability Services

Stacey Messerschmidt, Council member, Parent
Patrick Pillai, Special Education Service Agency
Chris Saddler, Council Member, Parent
Steve Williams, AK Mental Health Trust
Holli Yancy, Assistive Technology of AK ATLA
Duane Mayes, Council Staff
Teresa Holt, Council Staff

“Empowering rural communities to create individualized solutions to improve the lives of people with disabilities.”



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ON THE WEB

Up-to-date information and resources on disability issues in Alaska, is available on the web.

Legislative and Action Alert Update Ongoing tracking of federal and state legislation impacting Alaskans with disabilities.

Where to Turn: Service directory of business and agencies who serve people with disabilities.

Agency Links & Current News: Helping you stay connected to partners and agencies who are leading the way in improving the lives of people with disabilities.

Access us on the web at: <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/gcdse/>

