

Match Summary

Name of Match: **Arctic Council Mental Wellbeing and Suicide Prevention**

Location of Match: Anchorage, Alaska U.S.A.

1. Brief summary of the outcomes of your match

The match involved 17 individuals representing Alaska as well as several national and international visitors (i.e., Canada, Sweden,) who participated in concentrated discussion and dialogue on mental wellbeing and suicide prevention among Arctic populations.

Several guiding questions we introduced to include; 1) how we define and understand mental health from both a medical model as well as a wellness continuum using community and cultural contexts in regards to large Arctic health systems or service models?, 2) How well have Arctic populations and communities been involved in becoming “change agents” in addressing mental health disparities in both aspects as “providers” and “consumers” of services? 3) What have we learned as we emerge community based participatory models of research practices and how has that influenced the research to practice paradigm among Arctic communities?

Presentations also included overview of the Arctic Council and its involvement with mental wellbeing efforts, introduction and overview of U.S. National Institute of Mental Health’s RISING SUN Initiative, the *Elluam Tungiinun* “Towards Wellness Project” in western Alaska villages, and expanding a care coordinated model for psychiatric patient care in rural Alaska.

Additional outcomes from the match included a site visit to the Southcentral Foundation’s, Nuka System of Care. The Nuka model is a customer owner and consumer driven model that fully integrates health care for approximate 65,000 Alaska Native individuals and families. The site visits included a “Corporate Presentation” that explained the model, how developed and how it has evolved as an internationally successful approach that integrates physical and medical health care with behavioral health services based on a team approach.

2. Resources used in your match

- Alaska Public Health and Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium report on Characteristics of Alaska Native Suicide, http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/bulletins/docs/rr2012_01.pdf
- Letter to the editor, Harold Napoleon. Anchorage Daily News, October 18, 2014. <http://www.adn.com/article/20141018/alaska-natives-still-people-peril>



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3. Brief description of how your match has accelerated change towards mental health, well-being and inclusion

The match was situationally organized around the Arctic Council chairmanship in Alaska 2015-2017. The topic, mental wellbeing and suicide prevention, plays a pivotal role in Alaska in particular among Alaska Native teens and young adults. In many of Alaska's rural communities, the suicide rates among Alaska Natives, in some cases, are 4-5 times higher among this group and despite efforts to combat the problem; the state has yet to see a reduction in suicide.

As a product of the Arctic Council's work in Canada with Inuit communities, the U.S. National Institute of Mental Health's is taking a lead role in continuing the work started among the Inuit and creating the RISING SUN Initiative that will implement a Delphi panel. The panel will be coordinated by a Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) representing Arctic indigenous groups that will define the specific measures and criteria that could be implemented across Arctic populations to contribute to mental health, well-being and inclusion.

The match was a key to helping the group reach consensus on particular ways and methods that would meet the goals of RISING SUN as well as improving Alaska health care systems. Particular attention was paid to how to best support "continuity of care" and how to invent creative ways to integrate prevention programs and services with health providers and acute behavioral health care services.

4. Brief description of how your match has built leadership for the future

As a result of these discussions during the match, a listserv was created to "continue the conversation" and create linkages to active projects and partnerships based on the discussions. <http://list.state.ak.us/soalists/AlaskaRising/jl.htm>

"Listserv is to bring together Alaskans for developing initiatives for Alaska RISING SUN (Reducing the Incidence of Suicide in Indigenous Groups – Strengths United through Networks (RISING-SUN). Alaska RISING is connected to the circumpolar Arctic Council U.S. chair initiative on Arctic wellness among indigenous populations. On-going engagement with relevant stakeholders will include community members, researchers, and people in the helping fields such as health aids or traditional healers to better serve the needs of their communities, while helping policymakers measure progress based upon culturally responsive interventions that promote and enhance wellness."