TXT4Life program increases efforts and outreach

TXT4Life, a suicide prevention resource for residents in Minnesota funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, has significantly expanded and increased its ability to respond to the needs of both the communities and the individuals it serves through text services with the implementation of several new initiatives.

TXT4Life continues to distinguish itself from other text-based suicide prevention programs by having Regional Coordinators and Tribal Liaison staff members who present at schools, civic organizations and other public forums to build awareness about the program and to give people the opportunity to reach out and ask questions and request help. The program also takes pride in its efforts to expand its database of local mental health and mobile crisis services that can offer texters longer-term help after text conversations are complete. Providing free suicide intervention and prevention trainings to communities and collaboration with mobile mental health crisis teams and other providers are other key features of TXT4Life.

Throughout 2016, TXT4Life has collaborated with agency and community partners to align program actions with the goals and objectives of the DHS Contract. As a part of these collaborations, TXT4Life Regional Coordinators have had the opportunity to use research and evidence based best practices, including culturally responsive and inclusive approaches to reach out to populations identified as “high risk” for suicide throughout the state including members of Tribal Nations, adult white older males, and students in grades 7-12. A substantial increase of text conversations from these populations is evident and continues to grow.

Serving all the Tribal Nations in Minnesota in effective and culturally meaningful ways, TXT4Life is devoted to help end suicide among the population with the highest need in Minnesota-Native youth. “Being invited into the Tribal communities is an honor. The Tribal Nations have shared a sincere commitment to making the TXT4Life program a central part of their suicide prevention efforts,” said Dr. Rosemary White Shield, TXT4Life Regional Supervisor.

TXT4Life also has a strong presence with students across 54 counties in the state. During a recent school presentation by a TXT4Life Regional Coordinator, a young boy connected deeply with the presentation in emotional ways. When counselors at the school talked with him, they discovered that he had been having suicidal thoughts, and the TXT4Life presentation had encouraged him to reach out for help.

“You saved a young boy’s life today,” the school counselor said.
“What you do matters.”

continued on page 3
### Three American Indian programs honored with Commissioner’s awards

In December, Minnesota Department of Human Services Commissioner Emily Piper honored seven programs recognized for their leadership in the field of human services and for improving the lives of people. Of the seven, three were focused on serving the American Indian community.

The 2016 Commissioner’s Circle of Excellence Awards were held at the Elmer L. Andersen Human Services Building in St. Paul. Recipients from across the state were honored for their outstanding contributions to human services and the people they serve. “The work we do in human services has real, tangible impacts on the lives of Minnesotans,” Piper said. “These organizations have gone above and beyond to make a difference for some of the most vulnerable among us. They have worked to improve access to mental health services for children and decrease stigma, reduce opioid prescribing and support Native American women and their families in recovery, help older residents age in place, and provide nutritious, culturally-appropriate food. It is an honor to recognize their leadership and innovation in this field.”

The three programs focused on the American Indian community were:

- **The Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center**, a non-profit located in the Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis committed to providing opportunities for holistic healing and self-empowerment of Native American families. Founded in 1984, the Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center works to counter the effects of colonization and trauma by providing a broad range of cultural and tradition-based programs for Native American families and training for community service providers. One such program, Nokomis Endaad (Grandmother’s House), was the first in the nation to address the intersection of sexual trauma, chemical dependency and mental illness with a culturally-grounded, recovery-oriented outpatient treatment center.

- **School Linked Mental Health – Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Human Services Division and Carlton County Public Health and Human Services**, which formed a unique partnership to provide school linked mental health therapy services for American Indian and Carlton County children. Through the use of therapists from Fond du Lac Behavioral Health and Carlton County Public Health and Human Services, youth in four Carlton County school districts and the Fond du Lac Ojibwe School have increased access to mental health therapy in their school setting. Working with school districts, the partnership improved coordination and planning around student mental health issues, leading to improved educational success.

- **White Earth MOMS Program**, an innovative response to the opioid epidemic impacting pregnant Native mothers and their babies on the White Earth Nation that includes a culturally-specific holistic treatment program. The White Earth MOMS (Maternal Outreach and Mitigation Services) Program for pregnant and parenting mothers and their partners provides daily outpatient substance use disorder treatment, mental health services, prenatal care by registered nurses, culturally-based services, traditional spiritual healing, and medication assisted therapy, along with childcare. Work by the dedicated, multidisciplinary team has led to a significant reduction in the number of babies born with neonatal opioid withdrawal syndrome.

Watch videos about the 2016 Commissioner’s Circle of Excellence Award recipients on the [Commissioner’s Circle of Excellence Awards page](#) and at [YouTube.com/MinnesotaDHS](#).
To use the TXT4Life program, a texter sends the word LIFE to 61222 to be connected to a trained counselor. Counselors respond to texts 24 hours a day, seven days a week, ensuring safety, confidentiality and help create hope for all who turn to them.

The TXT4Life program partners with Tribal Nations directly, as well as several agencies across the state to serve funded counties. Though the program is not funded to respond to texts in the Twin Cities metro at this time, funding efforts will continue in the next legislative session. For more information, visit www.TXT4Life.org.

“You saved a young boy’s life today,” the school counselor said. “What you do matters.”

The Statewide TXT4Life conference will be on April 4 and 5, 2017 at Grand Casino, Hinckley, Minn.

Inspiring speakers, suicide prevention trainings and breakout sessions focused on effective strategies for high risk populations will be included. http://txt4life.org/get-involved/txt4life-conference/

Greetings friends,
The introduction of the substance use disorder reform in Governor Mark Dayton’s 2017 budget represents the culmination of many years of partnership and collaboration between the Department of Human Services and our partners and providers. I hope that those who were able to participate in the development of the reform proposal see their work adequately represented. This proposal emphasizes a person-centered and equitable model of care that treats addiction like a chronic illness. These changes will strengthen the continuum of care by allowing early intervention and supportive services to get a person to treatment earlier and support them as they transition back to their life in the community.

Minnesota has also been presented with an opportunity to receive additional federal funding through the State Targeted Response grants to address opioids. Through these efforts we look forward to:

- Building a robust continuum of services from prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery to result in a healthier Minnesota, including delaying the onset of adolescent initiation to alcohol and drugs,
- An average wait time from “I need help” to “I get help” under 72 hours,
- The lowest prevalence of substance use disorders for all populations, and
- Elimination of health disparities across cultural and ethnic groups.

Although these are lofty goals to strive for, with your help and support, they are achievable.

It has been a personal and professional pleasure to lead the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division during this time of transition and opportunity. We hope the collaborative efforts in problem solving have transitioned the conversation from a “you” and “me” problem to a “we” problem. Together we will continue to do good work and underscore the facts that treatment works, treatment is cost effective and that the majority of people who have supportive services after completion of treatment have better long-term outcomes.

Brian Zirbes MA, LADC, LPCC
Deputy Director
DHS Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division
Employee Spotlight: Shawnee Hunt

Position: Principal Planner Alcohol & Drug Abuse Division
Location: DHS Elmer A. Anderson Building, St. Paul, Minn.
Background: Where do you get your blood from?

Boozhoo, Hau, Aho, (Greetings!)
On my father’s side: Ojibwe-Leech Lake Band of Pillager, I am from the Hunt family from the Onigum Community. I bear bear clan from this side of my family.

And from my mother’s side: I am an enrolled member of the Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin. My mother’s maiden name is Stacey and her father was Ken DeCora. I am buffalo clan and lighting clan from this side of my family.

So as I like to say I’m Half-Chunk or chippie-ho, which ever you prefer.

What did you do before working at DHS?
I have worked in the social services sector in the Twin Cities’ American Indian community. I worked as a Youth Prevention Worker under the Chemical Health Grant in an American Indian youth diversionary program with a culturally-based prevention focus. Some of my favorite memories were on group nights, I would drive around the cities in a fifteen passenger van picking up youth participants for an evening of eating, drumming and singing powwow songs. As a former DHS Chemical Health grantee, I know a lot of this work was keeping Indian kids connected to the culture by connecting to one another and letting them work together on various projects in an encouraging environment in which they could learn about healthy aspects of our cultural practices. Making relationships and maintaining them was important. I also worked briefly as a Cultural Case Manager with families involved or at risk for involvement with child protection. I would collaborate with families on setting up a cultural family goal they wanted to work on, for example, getting Indian name for their child, learning how to make pow-wow regalia or some other item of interest.

I also worked in Indian Education in which I encouraged young people to pursue education in both a western academic settings and American Indian tribal traditionally customs. A lot of my work was trying to make positive connections with the students and their families as they navigate their way through public school systems. I worked with a variety of students ranging from both senior high to kindergartners. I enjoyed interacting with students with reading books and telling stories to little ones. One time in elementary school, I was walking down the hallway and had to stop for a passing procession of school children and one girl said “hello” to me in which I mistakenly replied: Oh-good morning baby. The girl abruptly stopped in her tracks, turned back and looked at me with a very serious look and replied “I’m not a baby I’m in 2nd grade!”

Describe the work that you do.
I provide technical assist to a portion of American Indian Chemical Health grantees who receive funding from the Chemical Dependency Consolidated Treatment Fund. The following is a list of my grantees that I work with: White Earth Substance Abuse Program, Bois Forte Tribal Government-Prevention Program, Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa- Chemical Dependency Program, Division of Indian Work-Youth Leadership Program, Indigenous People’s Task Force-Wayinagay Prevention Program, Fond du Lac Band Chemical Dependency Program, St. Paul Public Schools Indian Education. I respect all of the work that these listed groups along with several communities/grantees not listed perform on a daily basis to help serve people in reducing chemical usage rates.

I serve on work group committees which are a website work group, problem gambling work group, assurance statement-licensing division work group, and attend quarterly American Indian Advisory Council meetings within the state.

What current projects or accomplishments are you most proud of?
On a personal note, I am happy to say that I have been living chemically free since 1997. I have been blessed to have three healthy daughters ages 04, 11 and 14. My wife and I have made a commitment to have a chemically free household in which to raise our children.

What do you like most about working at DHS?
I enjoy working in a position where I can assist the American Indian community on a broad range of prevention and intervention, with issues as it relates to the health and well-being of our peoples.

When I am not working I like to...
Spend time with my family, refurbish/recycle old computers, watching movies and sometimes exercise.
Meeting brings members of the American Indian community and government together to talk about cultural historical and current trauma

In June 2016, Department of Human Services Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division staff, led by Cecil White-Hat and with support from administration leadership, invited members of the American Indian community for a day of engagement focused on cultural historical and current trauma and its relational impact with DHS and American Indian Urban Communities and Tribes.

The purpose of this event was to allow American Indians to share such stories with each other, and with key DHS decision makers. American Indians who have experienced oppression have stories to tell of historic and current trauma and how that impacts current relations with other cultures and governmental agencies such as DHS. Through the sharing of stories, the meeting sought to help address stereotypes, mistrust, identity issues, and misunderstanding that still exist between cultures and state agencies such as DHS. The hope was to open the door to an opportunity to heal from trauma and oppression, and inform and improve DHS’s future approach to relationship building with these communities.

The discussion took the form of a “World Café,” as well as Peer Spirit Circle Process. The World Café approach is designed to create a safe and inclusive space to have an honest and open dialogue, learn together, harvest insights and share discoveries.

The full day event included four segments:

- **Peer Circle:** Cecil White Hat, the Bush cohort participant and primary facilitator of the event welcomed everyone to the circle. Richard Wright, an elder in the Ojibwe tribe, offered a traditional blessing including the burning of sage. Community Supports Assistant Commissioner Claire Wilson also welcomed the group, thanked everyone for their attendance, and expressed the desire to continue to engage in similar events moving forward. The full group shared their name, who they represent, and their reason for attending.

- **Background Presentation:** Cecil White Hat gave a brief presentation in order to set the context so that participants had a common understanding of the historical and current trauma experienced by American Indian communities.

“How can you heal when people (collectively) have not even begun to recognize history?”

- **World Café Discussion:** Participants divided into small groups, consisting of native and non-native participants, to discuss three questions:
  - What has been the historical role of the federal government in your life?
  - How have governmental relations between your community and the federal government affected trauma in your community over the past generations? How has that impacted your ability to trust government?
  - How do you think past experiences affect your comfort level in working with people from other cultures? How has historical and current trauma affected your community from one generation to another?

- **Harvest:** Participants returned to the circle in order to ‘harvest’ learnings from the small group discussions. Discussion focused on:
  - What were highlights of the discussions you had?
  - What surprised you?
  - What important topic did you learn about this issue that you did not know before? Why is it important?
  - How will you use what you discovered today in the work you do with American Indians?

At the end, participants were asked to rate the event across a variety of aspects. Respondents generally rated the event very highly. All respondents felt that the event either “very much so” or “completely”:

- Engaged them in a meaningful way
- Was on a topic that is relevant to their own lived experiences, the lived experiences of the people or a community that they care about or the work in which they are involved.

Nearly all respondents (92%) felt that the event either “very much so” or “completely”:

- Was held at an appropriate venue
- Made them feel that their ideas and experiences were valued by the DHS facilitators and staff who participated in the event.

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State transfers addiction treatment program to Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe have reached a historic agreement that will preserve culturally relevant substance abuse and addiction treatment services for American Indians throughout the state. This historic agreement strengthens voluntary treatment and care services for all Native Americans and tribal members in Minnesota.

Under the agreement, DHS will officially close Four Winds, its Community Addiction Recovery Enterprise program in Brainerd, Minn., and the Mille Lacs Band will open a new, licensed program in the same facility. The Band, which will lease the facility from the state, expects to have the new program up and running by March 1, 2017. DHS will provide a one-time grant of up to $800,000 to help offset the transition costs.

“This is a prime example of the good things that come when we reach out and work together to solve problems,” said Human Services Commissioner Emily Piper. “The goal was to ensure access to effective and meaningful treatment for those who seek help, and we worked together to make that happen.”

While the new program will be operated by the Mille Lacs Band, it will be open to individuals from all of Minnesota’s tribal nations.

“There is extraordinary need in Minnesota for programs serving Indian people that focus on our traditions, spirituality and culture within the recovery and treatment journey,” said Band Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin. “Two years ago, we made it our goal to be able to offer a program like this to Band members, so this opportunity to take over this facility was a priority.”

The agreement was prompted by the fact that if Four Winds remained a state-operated facility, the program could serve only clients who are civilly committed for substance abuse treatment. That restriction would have imposed a double hardship on the people most often served at Four Winds. About 90 percent of the clients are American Indians and most seek treatment voluntarily.

“The possibility that access to substance abuse and addiction services would be greatly reduced for American Indians in the region and throughout Minnesota was unacceptable to everyone,” said Piper. “The Mille Lacs Band stepped up as a leader and a dedicated partner during an uncertain time.”

Four Winds is the only state-operated program with a specific focus on American Indian traditional healing and recovery practices. Placing the program in tribal hands will sharpen that focus, since the Mille Lacs Band has a greater likelihood of hiring and retaining American Indian staff with knowledge and experience in traditional practices.

The transition may include rebranding the program with a new name and a new identity that is reflective of the culture of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, said Sam Moose, the Band’s health and human services commissioner.

The new program will serve American Indians from throughout Minnesota with a model of care that includes cultural programming, addiction recovery programming, and fully integrated care for co-occurring mental health conditions.

“The goal is to create a space that is welcoming, healing, and reflective of Anishinaabe values and of our way of life,” said Moose. “I’m extremely excited about what the addition of inpatient treatment services means to the tribe.”

The Mille Lacs Band had been exploring ways to develop stronger inpatient or residential treatment services for those who struggle with addiction, said Moose. Tribal officials had considered strategic partnerships with other organizations and even weighed establishing their own programs. Taking over established operations and treatment programming at Four Winds is an opportunity to achieve results quickly.

Experts on chemical dependency treatment among American Indians welcomed news of the agreement.

“It has been a long-shared vision to have a special place to address substance use disorders in
Minnesota,” said Richard Wright, a member of the Leech Lake Nation, a respected authority on substance abuse among American Indians and a member of the state’s American Indian Advisory Council on Chemical Dependency (AIACCD).

In addition to leadership from the Mille Lacs Band and DHS, the move had strong support from leaders of Minnesota’s other Indian bands, said Wright. “There are so many people who stood up for this idea,” he said. “This is a major step toward a spiritual healing lodge which can optimize ceremonial aspects of healing in all phases of health.”

The 17-member AIACCD establishes policies and procedures for American Indian chemical dependency programs, and reviews and recommends proposals for funding. The council includes one member from each of Minnesota’s 11 reservations, two members from Minneapolis, two members from St. Paul, one member from Duluth and one member from International Falls.

In 2016, Gov. Mark Dayton and Minnesota’s 11 tribal nations held the first ever Tribal Opioid Summit to develop strategies for prevention, treatment and recovery in American Indian communities.

However, not all participants felt completely comfortable sharing their opinions at the event. Participants were also less likely to believe that the event organizers described how they will be kept informed of how DHS will act as a result of the event. Participants were also not completely confident that the event will lead to better outcomes for their community.

At the conclusion of the event, those in attendance agreed that the event was a positive experience, but acknowledged that there is a lot of work to do to address cultural and historical trauma in American Indian communities. The group agreed to meet four additional times to engage around cultural and historical trauma, initially discussed as the next quarters changed to the next four seasons.

To see the complete report, see the reports section of DHS website. http://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/news-initiatives-reports-workgroups/alcohol-drug-other-addictions/

“The Indian Perspective

In late August 1919, A. McG. Beede, a missionary on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota, sent Melvin Gilmore, the curator of the State Historical Society, a manuscript that discussed the beliefs of the Western Sioux Sioux. This paper is regarded as an accurate account of the knowledge of the Western Sioux and Chippewa Indians, (Deloria, 1999).

... Of course, the history of any people contains mythology (which is, perhaps, not quite so simple or invaluable as many a “scientist” might assume), but is such a mythology composed entirely of myths added one to another, or is there beneath all and through all and in all an all-encompassing something unexplained by our “scientific” “force and energy” which the Western Sioux thought of, sincerely claimed to know of, as Woniya (Spirit)? It does not bother the old Indians to understand, in an elementary way, what we mean by “the modern scientific attitude”...

There is no difficulty in leading an old Teton Sioux Indian to understand the “scientific” attitude, and that the processes that give rise to phenomena may be more and more known by man, and may be, to some extent, controlled by man, and that in this way the forces of nature may become a mainspring of progress in the individual and in the human race. The idea of atoms and electrons is easy and pleasing to an old Indian, and he grasps the idea of chemistry. Such things make ready contact with his previous observation and thinking...

In the Turtle Mountains, North Dakota, Harry Boise... was with me eight months. At his request I allowed him to teach the old Chippewa and Cree Indians there the modern scientific attitude with its view of things... The chief among his pupils was Sakan’ku Skonk (Rising Sun)... But Rising Sun, speaking the conclusion of all, pronounced “the scientific view” inadequate. Not bad or untrue, but inadequate to explain, among many other things, how man is to find and know a road along which he wishes and chooses to make this said progress unless the Great Manitoo by his spirit guides the mind of man, keeping human beings just and generous and hospitable. (Emphasis added)
Events

Summer events


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