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Community Innovations for Aging in Place
Alaska Native Aging in Place Pilot Project
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Reporting Period: April 1st, 2011 to September 30th, 2011

Date of Report: October 29, 2011

AoA Program Officer: Erin Long

AoA Grants Management Specialist: Heather Wiley

Project Coordinator and Authorized Signatory Signatures _____

1. What did you accomplish during this reporting period and how did these accomplishments help you reach your stated project goal(s) and objective(s)? Please note any significant project partners and their role in project activities.

Program Goal: Pilot a village based Aging in Place program in two rural Alaska Native

Villages to enable Native Elders to remain in their homes and/or villages during the end of their life cycle.

Objective 2: Year 1, 2 & 3, Implement and Evaluate services

Activity 1: Implement program and services

Timeframe: Months 10-36

Person(s) Responsible: Elder Services staff and strategic partners

Discussion: Services will consist of a combination of in-home geriatric care, case management, and activities.

Outcomes

- Regular interaction with elders to pinpoint the needs daily.
- Training/Luncheon Activities consisting of Mental Fitness, Nutrition, and Exercise w/ partners where partners roles will become consistent.
- Cultural Camps in project areas and regionally benefit elders in their roles to community and empowerment.
- Trips to 2 urban areas in Alaska have expanded knowledge for staff.
- Elder received her honorary doctorate degree in May 2011 which was a big honor to the communities and provided great values.

Activity 2: Evaluate services

Timeframe: Year 2 & 3, Months 10-36

Person(s) Responsible: Elder Services staff, Elders, and strategic partners

Discussion: Evaluation data on services will be collected monthly from Elders and their families to assess the effectiveness of services and make necessary adjustments to Individualized Care Plans as necessary. Elder Committees will meet quarterly to evaluate the overall program.

Monthly staff meetings will be held with staff, providers and consultants to discuss evaluate and adjust services to improve effectiveness.

Outcomes:

- Individualized care plans are needing to be updated and personalized to each client's needs/wants. We can accomplish by networking regional providers and resources.
- Elder Committees need to be established in both communities before the end of program for future evaluation on elder care.
- Surveys need to be created and added to individualized care plans before personalization could take place.
- Consistent meetings with partners, project consultants, tribal councils, elders, boards, staff, and community will produce adjustments and action plans.

Activity 3: On-going training of project staff

Timeframe: Months 6-36

Person(s) Responsible: Elder Services Director and strategic partners

Discussion: Training is expected to begin during the 6th month and continue into year 3.

Outcomes

- Distance Delivered Training from regional community college Prince William Sound started January 2011 for Long Term Care Training. Marg Halloran, training coordinator at UAA Center for Human Development is primary contact for MSTC Elder Service training.

- Lack of Motivation in Distance Delivery has been recorded by Director and primary contact @ UAA.
- Finishing HUMS v110 Activities of Daily Living and Social Skills
- More On-site and interactive training have been asked for that is personalized to each staff member's skill set.

Objective 3: Years 1, 2, & 3 disseminate process and outcome data and lessons learned to provide a model that can be adapted by other rural villages.

Activity 1: Develop and Update project content for MSTC's website

Timeframe: Starting months 4 - 36

Person(s) Responsible: Administrative Assistant and Elder Services Director

Discussion: The website will begin with a general description of the project and the types of information that will be added to the website over time. The Elder Services Director will have overall responsibility for approving what information goes on the site and the Administrative Assistant will have overall responsibility for adding information and maintaining the site.

Outcomes:

- Website had been updated in small amounts over the year.
- Director and project consultant are working on what best website layout would benefit other rural communities interested in LTC in their communities.

Activity 2: Project reports; Display process and outcome data, lessons learned, general information, and key links to information related to the development of village-based programs.

Timeframe: Year 1, 2 & 3, Months 6-36

Person(s) Responsible: Administrative Assistant and Elder Services Director

Discussion: The Elder Service Director will prepare monthly reports for MSTC staff meetings, quarterly reports for Tribal Council Meetings, and semi-annual required AOA Program Reports.

Outcomes:

- 3 of the 4 process reports are finished and used to evaluate program in 3 year period.
- Reports, outcome data, lessons learned, and general information with key links will be added to website over time w/ a possible forum for comments or questions.
- Reports will be given wherever needed to clarify program intent to the concerned or interested.

2. What, if any, challenges did you face during the reporting period and what actions did you take to address these challenges? Please note in your response any changes, if any, to your project goal(s), objective(s), or activities that were made as a result of challenges faced.

Challenges faced and Action Plans

The program is meeting most of its objectives and further efforts are expected to improve services and outcomes during the third year. This evaluation revisits earlier issues identified during the previous Process Evaluations and identifies some new issues discovered during this period.

Issue 1: Retaining Qualified Staff Revisited

Outcome: The Administrative Assistant position has not been filled.

Analysis: During the first Process Evaluation we discussed the importance of retaining a qualified Director. Having now retained the current Director throughout the two previous periods has brought stability to the program and helped staff concentrate on providing services. Turnover at the Administrative Assistant position that occurred in January continues to slow progress as a large portion of the Director's time is still consumed with administrative duties.

Our lesson learned here is that all staff members play a critical role in the program and that turnover in any position can cause a setback to the program. Certainly turnover is an issue with all programs but for rural communities the success of their program may well depend upon their ability to maintain a consistent, qualified staff who are able to work together to carry out program objectives.

Issue 2: Case Plans – Services - Coordination

Outcomes

- Case plans are completed and filed in a secure area
- Services are ongoing

Analysis: Staff members have completed case plans by consulting directly with the Elders to ensure the services meet their needs. The Director has been contacting partners, providers and consultants this period to improve coordination and collaboration, which is helping the program, but more collaboration is needed particularly with regional long-term care providers to prevent duplication and improve coordination of services.

Action Plan: The Director will meet directly with Connecting Ties, a regional service organization to discuss services and coordination as well as other regional resources.

Issue 3: Elder Involvement – Protocols - Evaluation

Outcome: There is no Elders Committee in place

Analysis: No doubt, Elders are being consulted about their case plans, the program and services individually but an Elders Committee is still needed to empower Elders to provide input and evaluation of the program as a group. The Director has discussed the need for an Elders Committee with tribal leaders who have embraced the idea but no one has yet acted on it. The Director has been waiting on a tribal leader to bring the Elders together and

formalize the committee but time has slipped by without action. In this case it would be a breach of tribal protocol for the Director to move forward on this without coordinating it with the tribal leader.

Action Plan: The Director will meet with the tribal leaders at upcoming tribal meetings to explain the importance of the Elders Committee to the program and ask permission to move forward with setting up the committee so that she does not violate tribal protocol.

Issue 4: Training Issues Revisited

Outcome:

- Training is ongoing but is still not a high priority for staff
- A training room has been established and the training is being recorded to provide institutionalized knowledge for the program but is not being used by staff as anticipated

Analysis: During this evaluation we drilled down to assess this problem. Initially, we thought the distance delivery model might be the problem but after speaking with Instructor from the University of Alaska this did not appear to be the case. The Instructor has offered to amend the training format in any way that would help the staff, including making onsite visits but staff have not responded. The Instructor saw the problem primarily as a motivational issue with staff.

In speaking with staff, the Director believes the problem has more to do with the structure of formal classes that require homework, which places a heavy burden on staff who are already busy. In designing the program we made some assumptions that didn't prove out. First, we assumed training would be initiated at the beginning of the program and would become routine with staff. When this didn't happen, training was added later on which was perceived as more of a burden on staff than a help to them. Secondly, we assumed that staff would be excited with an opportunity to participate in formal classes that could eventually lead them to pursue higher education after the program. What we didn't count on was that staff would be older and more interested in earning a living than in pursuing a degree. We also didn't anticipate the degree of difficulty of some of the classes and that some of the staff may need tutoring.

Lessons Learned: Tailor training to meet the needs of staff. It should help them with their job not be an added burden on top of job duties. Don't assume everyone enjoys formal classes or is interested in getting a degree.

Issue 5: Differences Between the Villages

Outcomes: The perception of the program is more negative in one village than the other

Analysis: Cheesh'na and Mentasta are closely connected by family, clans and culture but there is often conflict between the villages over services. MSTC and Cheesh'na are both located in Chistochina. Members in Mentasta have often been critical of hiring practices, the types and amount of services that are provided to their community vs. those in Cheesh'na and related issues. The following is a perspective provided by the Director who must deal with this conflict on a regular basis.

“Considering that the villages have 59 miles between them, it is easy to have instances of miscommunication and misinterpreted perceptions of the organization. As a young, newly employed Director who is not from either village the tension between the villages was apparent early on as were some obvious differences between the two villages.

In Mentasta I was questioned about how I was hired for position and whether I would be able to carry out the program. Nepotism was one of the concerns as I was in fact in a relationship with an MSTC staff's relative. I explained how the interview process had taken place with my resume, application, and interview and stated that it was fine with me to question the hiring committee. Other concerns were raised including equality, equality in services and equality in job opportunities. I understood then that these were concerns for that Tribal Council that was frustrated with a high unemployment rate, ineligible applicants, limited space for services, and the long distance communication with MSTC. It was not so much that I was from another village, tribe, and family, but that they are looking out for their community. Although I knew most of the people growing up, I now had to develop a professional relationship with them. Over time I have been able to orient myself within both communities. I have learned through my Direct Support Specialist courses on culturally diverse workplaces, that it is especially important to listen, interact, and become accustomed to the community. In my case I have two distinct villages that I have to be able to listen to, interact with, become accustomed to, and make myself available

3. How have the activities conducted during this project period helped you achieve the measurable outcomes identified in your project proposal?

Throughout this reporting period the activities that were conducted were:

- Trip to Alaska urban areas of Fairbanks and Anchorage gave staff an in-depth look at the variety of services and provided and expanded staff knowledge of relocation of Native Elders. Also gained partnerships with Native programs in each city.
- More on-site, interactive training for staff, elders and, families have been beneficial.
- Planning towards a regional Elder/Senior workshop including resources for most needs of our elders will be up and coming soon hosted by CRRHN (Copper River Regional Health Network) which program is a member of.
- Process Evaluations created to provide lessons learned.
- Newly created pamphlets and update to website to express goal of project.
- Draft to Resource Booklet and planning towards sustainable outcomes for Elders after program ends.
- Established elder committees will have an influential impact on community and can be a sustainable aspect to community and it's elders
- Director has had considerable development with project being young and new to the goal with the intent of majoring in rural development

4. What was produced during the reporting period and how have these products been disseminated? Products may include articles, issue briefs, fact sheets,

newsletters, survey instruments, sponsored conferences and workshops, websites, audiovisuals, and other informational resources.

- Reports:
 - Performance Report
 - MSTC Board Reports
 - MSTC Annual Report
- MSTC Newsletter articles for AOA
- 3rd Process Evaluation Draft
- Resource Booklet Update to Draft
- AOA Updated Pamphlet
- MSTC Website update - www.mstc.org/aging.html

