Luncheon: 60th Anniversary Celebration of the WICHE Mental Health Program and Presentation on Mental Health Activities in Alaska

Monday, May 11, 2015
12:15 – 1:45 pm
Kahilitna Court
Monday, May 11, 2015

12:15 - 1:45 pm
Kahiltna Court

Luncheon and Presentation:

60th Anniversary Celebration of the WICHE Mental Health Program and Presentation on Mental Health Activities in Alaska

The WICHE Mental Health Program was founded in 1955, and is celebrating its 60th anniversary during 2015. Alaska has been a key partner in the Mental Health Program's work since its inception. The panel of Alaskan partners will have a moderated conversation about several key initiatives. These will include the Alaska Psychology Internship Consortium, the development of workplace learning initiatives, and the Alaska Core Competencies for the Behavioral Health Workforce. Finally there will be a look to the future of the Alaska partnership.

Speakers:
Kathy Craft, director, Alaska Workforce Coalition; Sarah Dewane, psychologist and director of behavioral health, Providence Hospital; and Jeff Jessee, chief executive officer, Alaska Mental Health Trust

Facilitator:
Dennis Mohatt, vice president for behavioral health, WICHE

Biographical Information on the Speakers

Kathy Craft works for the University of Alaska Anchorage as the director of the Alaska Health Workforce Coalition. She worked for the Department of Health and Social Services in various capacities for 15 years and, prior to her public service, was the founder and executive director of Family Centered Services of Alaska, a child and family mental health center for 10 years. Craft received her B.S. in social work from Bowling Green State University in Ohio; her M.A. in community psychology from the University of Alaska Fairbanks; and is a licensed professional counselor. Craft, her husband Mike, and their children and grandchildren live in Fairbanks or Anchorage.

Sarah Dewane, a licensed psychologist, serves as the director of behavioral health at the Alaska Family Medicine Residency and Providence Family Medicine Center in Anchorage, Alaska, overseeing the integrated behavioral health program within the family medicine center. She is also the co-director of training for the APA accredited Alaska Psychology Internship Consortium. Dewane earned her doctoral degree from the University of Alaska (UAA), doctoral program in clinical-community psychology with a rural, indigenous emphasis. Her dissertation, entitled Medical Providers’ Perceptions about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders in Alaska, explored knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs related to the prevention of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders in Alaska. This research endeavor prompted her to pursue a career in a primary care behavioral health environment. Dewane has over 18 years of clinical experience working with adults, children, adolescents, and families in outpatient, residential, and primary care settings. She specializes in
health behavior change and integrated behavioral health services in primary care settings. In her previous position Dewane served for nine years as a project manager and research professor at the UAA Center for Behavioral Health Research and Services focusing on mental health and substance abuse research implementation, program evaluation, and behavioral health training. In 2012 she completed the behavioral science and family systems educator fellowship administered by the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine. Dewane serves on the Alaska Psychological Association Board as the early career psychologist and member-at-large. Dewane has lived in Alaska for over 20 years and enjoys spending time in the outdoors, hiking and biking with her family and friends.

Jeff Jessee serves as the chief executive officer of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (the Trust). The Trust is a state corporation that administers the Mental Health Trust, a perpetual trust managed on behalf of people with mental illness, developmental disabilities, chronic alcoholism and other substance related disorders, Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia, and traumatic brain injury. The Trust operates much like a private foundation, using its resources to ensure that Alaska has a comprehensive mental health program and to affect long-term change and improvements in the systems that serve Trust beneficiaries. Jessee began his career in Alaska in 1980 as an attorney for the Disability Law Center. Over the next 15 years he represented hundreds of individuals with mental disabilities. He was involved in many successful statewide task forces and committees working to address issues such as deinstitutionalization, guardianship, civil commitment, funding formulas, special education and housing. In 1985 Jeff represented a subclass in the litigation involving the state’s mismanagement of the Alaska Mental Health Land Trust, which was created by the federal government before statehood. He worked to forge a coalition of interested parties, including consumers, developers, environmentalists, tourism interests, and others, to construct a settlement. In 1995 Jeff became the chief executive officer of The Trust. As a leader and advocate for Trust beneficiaries, he is responsible for leveraging Trust income and developing partnerships to enhance beneficiary related services throughout the state. A native of California, Jeff earned a B.A. degree in criminal justice from California State University, Sacramento, and a J.D. from the University of California, Davis School of Law.

Dennis Mohatt is the vice president for behavioral health at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). He directs the WICHE Mental Health Program and the WICHE Center for Rural Mental Health Research. Mohatt has over 30 years of public mental health services. His work has included direct clinical care, clinical supervision, and CEO tenure in a rural CMHC serving Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. Additionally, he led an effort in the early 1990s, funded by HRSA, to successfully integrate mental health and primary care in multiple rural family practice settings. During the late 1990s, Mohatt served as the deputy director for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, a position where he also served as the state’s commissioner of mental health. His duties included executive
management of multiple state HHS divisions including: child welfare, juvenile justice, public health, mental health, developmental disabilities, substance use, services for the older adults, public assistance, Medicaid, services for the visually impaired, and public institutions. Since 2001, Mohatt has led WICHE’s efforts in behavioral health. He has served as a member of the National Rural Health Advisory Committee, and led many national efforts relating to rural mental health including his role as the chief consultant to the President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. He is actively engaged in efforts focused on improving services to veterans, and those serving in the Guard and Reserve as well as their families; rural mental health policy; workforce development, and increasing adoption of integrated approaches to behavioral and primary care practice. His graduate training was supported by a NIMH Fellowship and focused on rural community-clinical psychology.