



## **FNA gets \$4.1 million to help young adults and those affected by COVID-19**

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Fairbanks, Alaska—Fairbanks Native Association has received three grants totaling nearly \$4.1 million to enhance Behavioral Health Services to treat at risk youth, young adults, and those impacted by COVID-19.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration awarded FNA BHS a five-year, \$2.1 million grant to provide outpatient treatment for young indigenous young adults aged 21-25; a five-year, \$1.2 million grant to reconnect at risk youth and young adults to a substance free and mentally health life; and lastly; a \$798,000 grant to expand FNA's Mental Health Trauma Team services for those impacted by COVID-19.

“Our board of directors and membership have directed FNA to provide as much behavioral health services as possible to our people and the Fairbanks community,” said Steve Ginnis, FNA executive director. “Improving the quality of life by promoting healing and wellness has been FNA’s mission for years. These new grants will enhance the already dynamic system we operate.”

- The \$2.1 million five year grant, called Preparing our Future Leaders, will work with Alaska Native/American Indian young people ages 21-25. Considered transitional aged youth, they are most at risk for substance use disorder and mental health issues. The young adults has not been previously targeted for intervention appropriate for their age group, and this grant will allow FNA staff to focus on them. The new grant will provide outpatient services using culturally appropriate and evidence based materials.
- The \$1.2 million, five-year grant, Reconnecting Youth, will seek coordination among all agencies working with at-risk youth up to age 24. This will insure a common standard of care among various agencies. Most importantly, the new grant will provide follow up services for youth who have attempted suicide and use substances.
- The Mental Health Trauma Treatment was extended for another year with the \$798,000 SAMSHA grant. MHTT was established in 2020 to address mental health issues and domestic violence that have come about because of COVID-19. The extension grant will provide staff to focus on suicide and domestic violence prevention training for community members, coalition members, and clinical providers.



The three grants are in addition to the two previous grants that FNA Behavioral Health Services has received this summer. FNA BHS was awarded a \$2 million SAMHSA grant to treat trauma in indigenous families, and another \$1.5 million SAMHSA grant to address the opioid epidemic in the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

Indigenous families can carry historical and intergenerational trauma due to loss of land, culture, spiritual practices, language, and traditional family structures. The trauma makes certain people at risk for mental health issues and substance use disorders, for whom the new grant will provide treatment.

Recently, the Epidemiology Section of the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services released a public health alert saying emergency departments have seen an increase of heroin overdoses. According to the epidemiology section, the average number of heroin overdose visits doubled during March–May 2021 from 2020 during the same time period. In Alaska, 60% of drug overdose deaths involved opioids, for a total of 68 cases in 2018, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse. The new grant will address the public health crisis.

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