Alaska’s SHARP Program
Re: Mission Moment presentation
By: Robert Sewell, SHARP Director
To: The AMHTA Board of Trustees
Date: January 29th, 2020

The System Problem
Alaska has several healthcare workforce headaches: shortages, mal-distributions and significant turnover. These entrenched problems directly reduce access to healthcare. Alaska does not provide training for numerous occupations (e.g. psychiatry, dentistry), and for those that it does train, the resulting supply remains short (e.g. physician assistants, nurse practitioners).

The SHARP Solution
SHARP is a long-standing Trust-supported program that has made a significant difference in the lives of Trust beneficiaries. The purpose of SHARP is to increase access to healthcare statewide, and especially for Alaska’s priority populations. SHARP provides financial support to a practitioner other than his or her standard wage and benefit. It is a public-private partnership working to improve the recruitment, retention and distribution of health professionals for Alaska. The program offers two types of benefit: education loan repayment and direct incentive.

Program Progress
SHARP-1 began in 2008, with first clinician contracts in June 2010. The program has made solid progress ever since. SHARP is well beyond the “pilot” or “demonstration” phase. To date, we have issued 347 contracts (Beh Hlth 27%, Dental 14%, Medical 58%) to 300 clinicians.

The AMHTA
For more than ten years, SHARP and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority have collaborated in a public-private partnership to improve access to healthcare by enhancing support-for-service here in Alaska. The role and impact of AMHTA in SHARP’s progress can scarcely be overstated. More deeply, the Trust has lent its vision, moral suasion, and thus its influence on the service system.

Interagency Collaboration
The program received guidance and ongoing oversight from an interagency collaborative know as Alaska’s SHARP Council. The Council has 15 voting members and 4 more as ex-officio. The Council has helped tremendously to build and maintain system-wide consensus, and has garnered widely varied funding from federal, state, philanthropic and especially employer resources. During the five-year period SFY 2015-2019, clinician contract expenditures totaled $10,497,287, while AMHTA contribution has been $1,000,000 ($200K/yr). The Trust return-on-investment is 950%.

The Road Ahead
Our SHARP-1 component is based on a four-year federal grant ($4,000,000), which is heavily leveraged. During CY 2020, we expect to issue another 100 SHARP-1 contracts, and as well, we plan to open our new SHARP-3 component. SHARP-3 will greatly expand the eligibility for tax-exempt loan repayment to practitioners who work in more occupations, practice settings, and locations and with more employers. Overall, we are now focused on program institutionalization. SHARP is working, and we are making progress.
1. Practitioner Data
- 300 contracts
- 260 distinct practitioners
- 66 distinct behavioral health practitioners
  - 52 Physicians
  - 33 Pharmacists
  - 29 Dentists
  - 28 Nurse Practitioners
  - 27 Registered Nurses
  - 22 Social Workers
  - 20 Counselors
  - 17 Physician Assistants
  - 9 Dental Hygienists
  - 7 Psychologists
  - 7 Psychiatrists
  - 4 Nurse Midwives
  - 4 Physical Therapists
  - 1 Marriage & Family Therapist

2. Clientele- Care Visits

3. Communities Served
- 38 communities
- 72 employers
- 24 tribal employers
- 31 Community Health Centers

4. Clientele Breakdown
- Age of Clientele:
  - age 65+, 15%
  - age 0-5, 9%
  - age 6-18, 20%
  - age 19-64, 56%

- Payer Mix:
  - Medicare 29%
  - Medicaid 18%
  - Private Insurance 21%
  - Sliding Fee Scale 5%
  - Full Fee 3%
  - No Change 5%
  - Other 8%

FY2015-FY2019
*Data from practitioners’ Quarterly Work Reports

376 average unduplicated patients per quarter per FTE