

Written Public Comment

(received after 08/19/20)

08/19/2020

Mr. Christopher R. Cooke
Alaska Mental Health Trust Chair
4501 Business Park Blvd., Building L
Anchorage, AK 99503

RE: Letter of Support for the Alaska Training Cooperative

Dear Chairman Cooke,

My name is Nathan Allen and I want to share with you the impact the Alaska Training Cooperative has had on my career, my professional development, and my profession.

Currently, I am a Community Care Licensing Specialist I with the State of Alaska's Assisted Living Licensing Program. I have been with the program for six years and am one of the co-instructors of our new provider orientation. Previously, I managed a seven bed Assisted Living Home in Seward, Alaska for three years, and spent three years as a DSP for Hope Community Resources.

On a personal level, the Alaska Training Cooperative has had a huge impact on my life. I first met Lisa Cauble and Jill Ramsey when they came to Seward to provide my staff and I a CPI course. Working and serving a small community with limited resources, access to this training was critical and changed our service delivery and the ability to assist our stakeholders. Later, I would attend the Frontline Leadership Institute which I consider to be a training that changed my life and set in motion my movement to reach my current position. It is hard to find the words to describe the impact of this training, as it gave me hope that I was on a career path that gave my own life meaning, but also allowed me to enrich and giving meaning to the lives of my staff and our stakeholders. One of the most lasting trainings provided by the Alaska Training Cooperative has been the Alaska Core Competency. I have been a student and trainer of this course. This training alone has had a huge impact on service delivery throughout the State, especially on Assisted Living Homes. I have been witness to the individuals that have accessed the training and seen the impact it has had on stakeholders and the improvement it has had on their quality of life.

On a professional level, the Alaska Training Cooperative provides a key resource to assisted living homes. This is especially important as the Assisted Living Licensing Program cannot provide or source enough training which is affordable, quality, continuing education and training to Assisted Living Homes. With the cost of paying staff to attend training and paying for the training itself, if these costs increase it will be one of the first items Assisted Living Homes will stop accessing. The end result will have a direct impact on service delivery and quality of care stakeholders receive. The Alaska Core Competencies is currently the only accepted Administrator Training Program the Licensing Program will accept for individuals wanting to become an Administrator of an Assisted Living Home. The Core Competencies is also included in enforcement actions at times to ensure providers are getting quality training that will impact service delivery that will hopefully lessen involvement with the Licensing Program. Access to

this training is critical and decreasing class frequency could have a lasting impact on assisted living homes applying to becoming licensed and qualifying Administrators to oversee them. On a more recent note, Covid-19 has provided many challenges, especially when it comes to the classroom delivery of trainings. As a result of these challenges, the Licensing Program had to cancel two of its New Provider Orientations, but because of a partnership with the Alaska Training Cooperative our Program was able to provide a virtual presentation of our orientation, with plans to provide more. This virtual presentation would not have been possible without the Alaska Training Cooperative and their access to technology and knowledge.

I cannot stress how important the Alaska Training Cooperative is to the lives of the stakeholders who ultimately benefit from the trainings the Cooperative provides. Any cuts to the Alaska Training Cooperative budget will have negative results. Assisted Living Homes and Stakeholders already face enough challenges with being underpaid and facing the cutting block every budget season. In no world should a budget be balanced on the backs of those facing any sort of mental, developmental, or cognitive impairment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nate Allen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nate" being more prominent than the last name "Allen".

Nate Allen

Community Care Licensing Specialist I



August 21, 2020

To: Mr. Christopher R. Cooke
Alaska Mental Health Trust Chair
4501 Business Park Blvd., Building L
Anchorage, AK 99503

Dear Chairman Cooke,

As a stakeholder and collaborator with the Alaska Training Cooperative (AKTC), I'd like to share thoughts on the impact caused by the proposed AKTC budget reductions for FY 22.

The AKTC has worked for years on increasing the quality of direct service staff training, performance and competency. This started years ago with the Mental Health Trust's focus on quality supports for beneficiaries in response to an overall ongoing shortage of direct service staff, not only in Alaska but across the country. There is still a growing need for non-academic, affordable or free training for people serving beneficiaries. The Core Competency training has supported the visibility and professionalism of the Direct Service Professional (DSP) as a career, whether on its own, or part of a larger career path.

I was lucky to collaborate on the initial development of the Core Competencies. I also serve the community of Alaskan long term support providers by providing regulatory required ongoing education. Many service agencies rely on the AKTC for basic and ongoing training for their staff. In the course of my work I am called upon by other state divisions to answer questions about what we are doing to train people who do direct service, and what we are doing to help increase the quality and amount of trained staff. The AKTC is the source for these answers.

The DSP is an essential worker and is always at or near the top in need/availability of open job positions in Alaska. The AKTC offers different trainings to meet learners' needs to serve beneficiaries. Ultimately the outcome of their efforts is for beneficiaries, who can receive quality, respectful, knowledgeable services from staff who are consistently supported with quality training.

The AKTC has also been very responsive to the crisis need for training as we all face COVID-19 related challenges! They offered classes free of charge to the caregiving community and were very well attended.

Those who need continuing professional or regulation required education can use AKTC classes for credit. Learners working in long term community care and their employer agencies are not able to absorb higher costs for AKTC class tuition. In some cases the classes must be offered free of charge as required by governance. The cost of employee training is not reimbursed by Medicaid, which funds long term supports for beneficiaries.

I am particularly concerned for the training that AKTC does to serve DSPs who support individuals who experience intellectual/developmental disability (IDD). People and their families need trained staff and coordinated supports to engage in their community with safety, empowerment and respect. Training in the field of serving people with IDD is specialized and requires more preparation, research and delivery time as it remains a relatively newer field of research and support. Topics of advocacy, freedom and empowerment are often embedded within themes of care and safety. The DSP must have specialized knowledge to meet beneficiaries' life-long needs. All topics learned within the IDD supportive curriculum can be powerfully applied to all other kinds of human services.

The AKTC has long worked to build and maintain high quality curriculum to meet the needs of those who support the community of people with IDD. I am concerned that these classes and options for training would be the ones that would disappear in the face of the budget cut, and that these agencies could not afford to send their staff to training if tuition costs were raised.

Senior and Disabilities Services has collaborated with the AKTC to offer the Full Lives Conference, to help gather care coordinators, agencies and beneficiaries to share expertise on services, advocacy, and new directions for Alaskans who experience disabilities. Through this partnership we've been able to offer a high quality well attended conference for the last three years. (We offered online class options in 2020).

The AKTC, course offerings, current tuition level/costs, and structure must be valued and supported at the current level with no cuts. This budget reduction would be too large a risk for the quality of service to beneficiaries, the years of work and gains already made, and future directions for DSPs, agencies and beneficiaries. There is no other resource specifically for this level of non-academic affordable training for DSPs. The AKTC remains a vital part of the big story of supports for beneficiaries.

Respectfully,



Kara S. Thrasher-Livingston, M. Ed.
Training Specialist III, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services
Department of Health and Social Services
State of Alaska

Mr. Christopher R. Cooke
Alaska Mental Health Trust Chair
4501 Business Park Blvd., Building L
Anchorage, AK 99503

RE: Letter of Support for the Alaska Training Cooperative

Dear Chairman Cooke,

Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska serves two beneficiary groups through its programming, and is therefore well-positioned to recognize the importance of affordable workforce training and increased professionalism for their benefit. News that the Alaska Training Cooperative is facing a 10% reduction in its funding from the Trust in each of the next two years is a source of concern to us.

We collaborate with the Training Cooperative as part of our strategic vision in bringing skills-based training to formal caregivers who assist Alaskans living with dementia. Far too often, those who provide care for our neighbors who live with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia do not understand why and how progressive brain failure requires adaptation in care practices to maintain a high quality of life. The Alaska Training Cooperative has collaborated with ARA's Education Program for many years to bring access to our formal caregiver education opportunities to providers in underserved parts of Alaska. At present, the Training Cooperative is assisting our efforts to continue training certified trainers in the Positive Approach to Care™ methods developed by one of the world's foremost authorities on what works in dementia care, Teepa Snow. It is the Cooperative's collaboration that allows us to bring next month's certification training to participants outside Alaska's urban centers.

Those agencies that provide direct care for Alaskans living with ADRD can better speak to the impact of a significant increase in training costs. My fear is that far too much of that training will be foregone, or will migrate to "one-size-fits-all" training that fails to address the unique needs of Alaskan providers, especially those who do not operate on the road system or do not serve the dominant culture. I am also concerned that as a result of cuts, the supports that the Training Cooperative provides for the senior sector will necessarily take a back seat to the essential work it does in support of other beneficiary groups. Seniors are those most significantly impacted by ADRD, as Alaskans with a dementia-causing condition or as a family caregiver. My thoughts run to the impacts on seniors who depend on respite care to refresh themselves to continue in the yeoman's work they perform every day. When direct care personnel do not know how to apply the best practices in dementia care, we add to their burden unnecessarily. We likely also shorten the time they are able to maintain their care recipient at home.

Anchorage
1750 Abbott Rd.
Anchorage, AK 99507
Phone (907) 561-3313
Fax (907) 561-3315

Fairbanks
565 University Ave, Suite 2
Fairbanks, AK 99709
Phone (907) 452-2277
Fax (907) 457-3376

Juneau
3225 Hospital Dr, Suite 101
Juneau, AK 99801
Phone (907) 586-6044
Fax (907) 586-6084

Mat-Su Valley
777 N. Crusey Street, Suite B101
Wasilla, AK 99654
Phone (907) 746-3413
Fax (907) 746-3439

But in addition, our Care Coordination program serves hundreds Alaskans living with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in Southeast, the Mat-Su Valley and Anchorage under the ISW and IDD Medicaid waivers. Our Care Coordinators receive training themselves through the Training Cooperative. Importantly, their clients see the benefits from a workforce that is gaining in professionalism as a direct result of the high quality training available through the Alaska Training Cooperative. Reducing access to affordable training moves us in the wrong direction. I know that if each training our staff obtained cost \$20 more, we would obtain some of that training less frequently so as to maintain our training costs within our own budgets.

Therefore, I am asking the Board to reconsider the proposed budget cuts to the Training Cooperative for FY22 and FY23. After years of building the infrastructure and recruiting the outstanding personnel in place at the Cooperative, and watching its impact expand for the betterment of the beneficiaries we serve, level funding appears to be the best way to conserve this asset.

Respectfully,



Pamela R. Kelley
Executive Director

Cc: Lisa Cauble, Alaska Training Cooperative



Southeast Senior Services

A Division of Catholic Community Service, Inc.



Helping elders in Southeast Alaska stay healthy, safe and independent

August 25, 2020

Mr. Christopher R. Cooke, Chair
Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
4501 Business Park Blvd., Building L
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Chairman Cooke and Trustees:

On behalf of the staff of Southeast Senior Services (SESS) and the special people we serve, I would like to submit this letter of concern in regard to the proposed 10% budget reduction to the Alaska Training Cooperative. The Alaska Training Cooperative has continuously reached out to service providers throughout the State of Alaska to help us meet our varied and changing training needs.

The training offered by the Alaska Training Cooperative is affordable and practical, helping us comply with the requirements of the Division of Senior & Disabilities Services, such as the ASAM (Assistance with Self-Administration of Medications) training for our adult day beneficiaries. The recent Fall Prevention training it offers effectively enables us to address the number one risk to the health and independent living of older Alaskans.

As non-profit social service agencies, such as ourselves, constantly struggle to keep up with the increased costs of doing business and comply with the growing number of governmental regulations and requirements, we appeal to you to keep the training costs to a minimum. Please do not cut funding to the Alaska Training Cooperative in FY22 and 23. The Cooperative is a wise investment which helps beneficiaries statewide.

Thank you for your consideration. Do not hesitate to contact me at (907)723-0226 or marianne.mills@ccsjuneau.org if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

Marianne Mills, M.S.W., M.B.A.
Program Director



1803 Glacier Highway, Juneau, AK 99801 • Toll-free Telephone: 1-866-746-6177 • Fax: (907) 586-9018

Find us on Facebook@CatholicCommunityServiceInc • www.ccsjuneau.org