A One Health Approach to Sexual and Domestic Violence in Alaska

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Holistic view of historical and current conditions / forces contributing to Alaska’s social pathologies

- Historical and Multi-generational Trauma
- Alcohol and Drug Abuse
- Sexual and Domestic Violence
- Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
- Poor Mental Health
- Suicide
- Frontier Attitudes
- Rapid Socio-Economic and Cultural Change
- Non-Intervention or Non-Confrontation
Cyclicality and Intractability

• Multi-generational trauma and rapid socio-economic change have disrupted traditional lifeways and normalized violence in many rural and Indigenous communities.

• Rurality, close family ties, and non-intervention norms discourage victims/survivors from “making trouble.”

• Shortage and inadequate training of law enforcement and health professionals inhibit reporting, seeking help
Cyclicality and Intractability (cont.)

• Child and adult survivors suffer in silence and shame.
  - Low self-esteem
  - Re-victimization
  - Self-medication w/ alcohol, drugs
  - Perpetuation of violence
  - Suicide
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)

- Affects of stress in children’s lives, inc. physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; domestic violence; and alcohol abuse in the home, have been well documented.
  - Vincent Felitti et al. (1998) The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study

- Children with one ACE are more likely to experience others.

- Greater number of ACEs → poorer mental and physical health outcomes in adults.
Alaska’s Frontier Attitudes and Alcohol Culture

• Foster public indifference to **alcohol abuse and violence** – rural and urban.
  • Wariness of government interventions and aversion to taxes
  • Acceptance of high risk behaviors, including excessive drinking
• We ignore evidence of these problems / this suffering *in our midst*.
• We resist considering the crushing, lifelong and inter-generational effects *that impact all Alaskans.*
  • Alcohol (and drug) abuse costs Alaskans $3 billion per year.
Alcohol Abuse, Sexual & Domestic Violence, and FASD
Collaboration with graduate students Brenda Dow and Katie Hayden

- Alcohol abuse correlates strongly with sexual and domestic violence.

  - Use of alcohol complicates prosecution of such violence.

  - Often both the perpetrator and the victim have been drinking.

- Individuals with FASD more likely to be both victims and perpetrators.
Climate Change: Another exogenous assault on traditional lifeways

- Impacts animal migrations and populations,
  - interferes with subsistence practices,
  - poses increased hazards to travel on river and sea ice,
  - endangers housing, fresh water sources, and sanitation in coastal areas
  - threatens destruction of whole communities.

- Males likely to be impacted disproportionately, which may contribute to increased mental stress and unhealthy responses.
Moving Forward

• **Breaking the silence** and focusing on **primary prevention** is essential.

• Changing norms and reducing these pathologies will require
  
  • local initiative,
  
  • holistic approaches to community well-being,
  
  • coordinated community responses,
  
  • national and subnational support,
  
  • health policies that permit holistic approaches to health and well-being,
  
  • persistence!
Thank you


