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FPCC Awarded Grant for Addiction Counselors

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POPLAR, MT - Fort Peck Community College was awarded a grant through the Montana Department of Labor, Apprenticeship Program and Northwest Area Foundation to provide services in assisting college students interested in becoming state licensed addiction counselors. The grant will track students through the academic, practicum, and licensing phases and provide much needed professional, educational, and financial support. Each participant will have an opportunity to complete the academic requirements for addiction counselors, attend a national addiction conference for networking and professional development, complete the 1000-hour practicum, and sit for the state licensing exam. The grant will provide essential financial support including tuition, fee, and books, individual support services, a stipend for programs supervising the practicum, licensing application, fees, and testing, and an additional stipend for students who successfully complete the practicum.

The need for Improved Treatment in “Indian Country”.

Alcohol and drug abuse represents a significant public health problem in the United States. Recent reports estimate that in 2012, approximately 7% of U.S. adults reported heavy drinking in the past month, 25% reported binge drinking, and approximately 17 million adults (over 7%) met criteria for an alcohol use disorder.⁴ Annual alcohol-related deaths reach approximately 88,000, making it the third leading preventable cause of death in the U.S.⁵

While these general population statistics are alarming, rates of alcohol abuse are disproportionately higher in American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) communities compared with other ethnic groups.⁶ In fact, AIAN communities have the highest addiction rates of any group in the United States,⁶ coupled with one of the most difficult treatment records.⁷ Despite these disturbing discrepancies, surprisingly little research on appropriate and effective treatment is being devoted to this population. There is of yet no substance abuse treatment method with well-documented efficacy for AIAN adults, nor evidence-based treatments specifically adapted for AIAN populations.⁸⁻¹⁰ Few randomized alcohol treatment trials have included a significant

number of AIAN individuals, nor assessed the relative response of these individuals to different treatment methods.¹¹⁻¹³

A related prevalent, enduring, and destructive trend in AIAN communities is violence and victimization. Rates of violent perpetration are elevated in many AIAN communities.^{1-3,14} Further, extensive research shows that alcohol abuse and violence are closely interconnected in AIAN communities, as they are for other U.S. populations.^{3,14} The lack of funding, culturally appropriate services, mental health professionals, and high turnover of clinicians working in Indian Country renders access to mental health and substance abuse services difficult for many AIAN individuals.^{15,16} Low cost, sustainable, culturally tailored, and evidence-based programs are essential to address the egregious alcohol-related health inequities in *Indian Country*.¹⁷

The Fort Peck Addiction Counselors project is actively engaged in recruiting local students interested in the field of addiction, to provide evidence-based, as well as culturally-compatible education, treatment and recovery modalities to reservation communities, and to support efforts at creating and sustaining community-based healing and wellness. The partnership with the state labor department and the Northwest Area Foundation is proving to be integral in achieving the objectives of this project.

“We are very glad to support FPCC’s work and are very excited about this project!” Morgan Marks, MT Apprenticeship Project

“We’re looking forward to your work implementing this project!” Valerie Piet, Northwest Area Foundation

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