

SUCCESS
STORY

Aleut Community of St. Paul Island: Strengthening Relationships to Improve Service

Community:

Located 800 miles west of Anchorage and 300 miles north of the Aleutian chain in the Bering Sea, St. Paul Island is a small island of 475 people, including 58 older adults. The island's residents represent the largest Unangax population in the world and nearly 20% of the population speak Unangam Tunuu (Aleut). The grant recipient, the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island Tribal Governments Department of Healing and Wellness, is located on St. Paul Island, and is one of two organizations responsible for caring for aging elders on the island. Before the grant, the community noticed an increase in symptoms and diagnosis of Alzheimer's and other dementia yet lacked programs for people living with dementia. This grant was an opportunity to strengthen the infrastructure for and outreach to Unagax people impacted by dementia on St. Paul Island.

Grant Approach:

In order to increase effectiveness, the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island Tribal Governments Department of Healing and Wellness focused on strengthening infrastructure through partnerships. To streamline services and supports for elders, they partnered with the Southcentral Foundation, the local Tribal Health Organization. These services and supports included a need to clarify referral processes and services, provide education in the community, and address risk factors for dementia. As the

two organizations responsible for caring for aging elders on the island, they worked together to create information, lead outreach and education to the community and staff, adapt the elder's food program, and to strengthen their relationships for improved referral and support processes.

Strategy 1 Strengthen relationships between organizations to streamline services:

Recognizing that the two organizations had the support services their community needed, they worked to improve their communication and service coordination process. They first identified who would be responsible for the activities, the needs in the community, and any gaps in staffing. They held regular meetings to understand what work was already being done and what still needed to be accomplished. They met directly with the experts in the organizations who were delivering services and documented who provided each of the services to make sure that the available services were being utilized effectively. As the nearest city people travelled to for extra services, they worked to see if any services in Anchorage, could be combined with local services or moved to the island.

Road Map for Indian Country Action #8:

Educate health care and aging services professionals on the best way to support families and caregivers of older adults with dementia.

Strategy 2 Use their combined knowledge to create new resources for the community:

The two organizations used the knowledge they gained through their relationship building and service mapping process to develop specific resources for their community. They created a Trail Map of what to expect as you age and ways to support healthy aging. Working with community members and caregivers, they developed resource fliers and shared them at three local health fairs. They trained aging services staff and caregivers on warning signs, diagnosis process, and treatment options for dementia. To support dementia risk reduction, they added local brain healthy foods to elders programs and food demonstration courses and provided education on mental health, sleep quality, and diet and nutrition quality.

Road Map for Indian Country Action #1:

Work with community members to understand brain health, early warning signs of dementia, and benefits of early detection and diagnosis for persons with dementia and their caregivers.

Looking forward:

The Aleut Community of St. Paul Island will continue training more caregivers and community members on risk reduction and early detection of Alzheimer's and other dementias, eventually using a video they are developing on these topics. By partnering with the Southcentral Foundation, they strengthened the relationship between agencies and made accessing services easier for community members. Moving forward the organizations will use this relationship to make sure that if someone has signs of dementia, the right organizations will be contacted and their elders and their families will have the support and services they deserve.



For more information on the public health response to Alzheimer's, visit alz.org/publichealth