State/Tribal/Adolescents at Risk Suicide
Prevention Grantee
Technical Assistance Meeting
Telling the Story: A Pathway to Sustain Suicide
Prevention Programs
Portland, Oregon

Coping with provider shortages:
A challenge for rural and frontier grantees
December 12, 2007
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Jenny Shaw
WICHE – Established 1953

- Mission: To expand educational access and excellence for all of the West’s citizens

WICHE Mental Health Program - Established 1955

- Mission: 1) assist states in improving systems of care for mental health consumers & families; and

2) advance the preparation of a qualified mental health workforce in the West.
WICHE Mental Health Program Functions:

• Primary focus Rural Mental Health

• Research and technical assistance center

• State Specific Technical Assistance
  – Workforce Development
  – Primary Care Integration Training
  – Systems of Care
  – Cultural Competence

• Western States Decision Support Group

• WICHE Center for Rural Mental Health Research
WICHE Region

- Alaska
- Arizona
- California
- Colorado
- Hawaii
- Idaho
- Montana
- Nevada
- New Mexico
- North Dakota
- Oregon
- South Dakota
- Utah
- Washington
- Wyoming
Behavioral health trends, issues, and influences are magnified in RURAL communities!
The Cold, Hard Facts

- > 60% of rural Americans live in mental health professional shortage areas
- > 90% of all psychologists and psychiatrists, and 80% of MSWs, work in metropolitan areas
- > 65% of rural Americans get their mental health care from their primary care provider
- Rural Americans enter care later in the course of their disorders, with more advanced symptoms, resulting in more intensive & expensive interventions
Unique Workforce Issues in Rural Communities

- Geography
- Rural culture
- Transportation
- Aging workforce population
Challenges to Recruit and Retain Rural Placements

• Urban-trained individuals are reticent to move to a rural places
• Lower than standard wages and salaries
• Life in the “Fish Bowl”
• Lack of rural specific training opportunities
• Limited access to supervision & mentorship opportunities, & peer support
Strategies for Responding to the Challenges
Identified Strategies

• Create New Rural Educational Delivery Methods and Models
• Grow Your Own
• Partnering, Natural Community Supports, & Leadership
Addressing Suicide Prevention Training for Primary Care Providers In Rural And Frontier Areas

• WICHE Center for Rural Mental Health Research project
• PCPs are often first point of contact for persons with suicide potential
• Training will be developed to help PCPs feel more comfortable identifying signs of suicidality
• Ultimately train PCPs to screen, treat and/or refer
Rural Workforce Innovations
Rural Workforce Innovations

• Rural Human Services Program Model
• Behavioral Health Aide Program Model
• Behavioral Health Career Clubs
• Applied Bachelor’s and Master’s Degrees
• Training to Primary Care
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