

Testimony to AK Rural Justice and Law Enforcement Commission
Domestic Violence and Child Abuse
February 24, 2005

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

2004 statistics from the Alaska State Troopers show that domestic violence and sexual assault make up 90% of the crime and assaults to which they responded in the villages. In Kotzebue 80% of crime and assaults concern domestic violence and nearly 95% or more involved alcohol. In January of 2005, 9 out of 11 domestic violence arrests were alcohol related. During the last 10 days of January of this year there were 7 sexual assaults in the region.

The Maniilaq Crisis Center is responsible for providing emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Additional services provided are a 24 hour Crisis Line, intervention services for both women and their children, services for non-offending family members, referral services and community education. A volunteer Safe Home network in the villages provides immediate refuge for victims and their children. Each village has at least 2 Safe Homes. We also provide protective orders for men and counseling. We have a Sexual Assault Response Team and are developing a Multidisciplinary Team for child victims of sexual assault.

Child Abuse

In 2002 there were 481 child abuse and neglect referrals in the region. For FY 1998-2002 the Northwest Arctic Region had 83.2 report of harm per 1,000 children under age 18. The majority of child abuse cases can be linked to alcohol abuse. Unfortunately, substance abuse treatment in the villages is very limited.

There are various professionals who are involved in the system of care. State social workers work with Maniilaq Family Services staff and village based ICWA workers to investigate and intervene. Family Services staff bridge the gap between the village families and the social workers since all social workers are recruited from outside the region. Children are placed in Putyuk Children's Home or licensed foster homes. Casework is done by Family Services to assist parents in doing what is needed to have their children returned.

Recommend Tribal Courts be supported to combat Domestic Violence and Child Abuse

The establishment and support of Tribal Courts in each village is the best hope of preventing the continued cycle of violence in village families. Only if the people themselves are responsible for the solution of social problems will any headway be made to strengthen families.