

1976

# Evaluation of the Urban Indian Health Program's Management and Administrative Capabilities and Training Conference to Reinforce Desirable Management and Administrative Techniques

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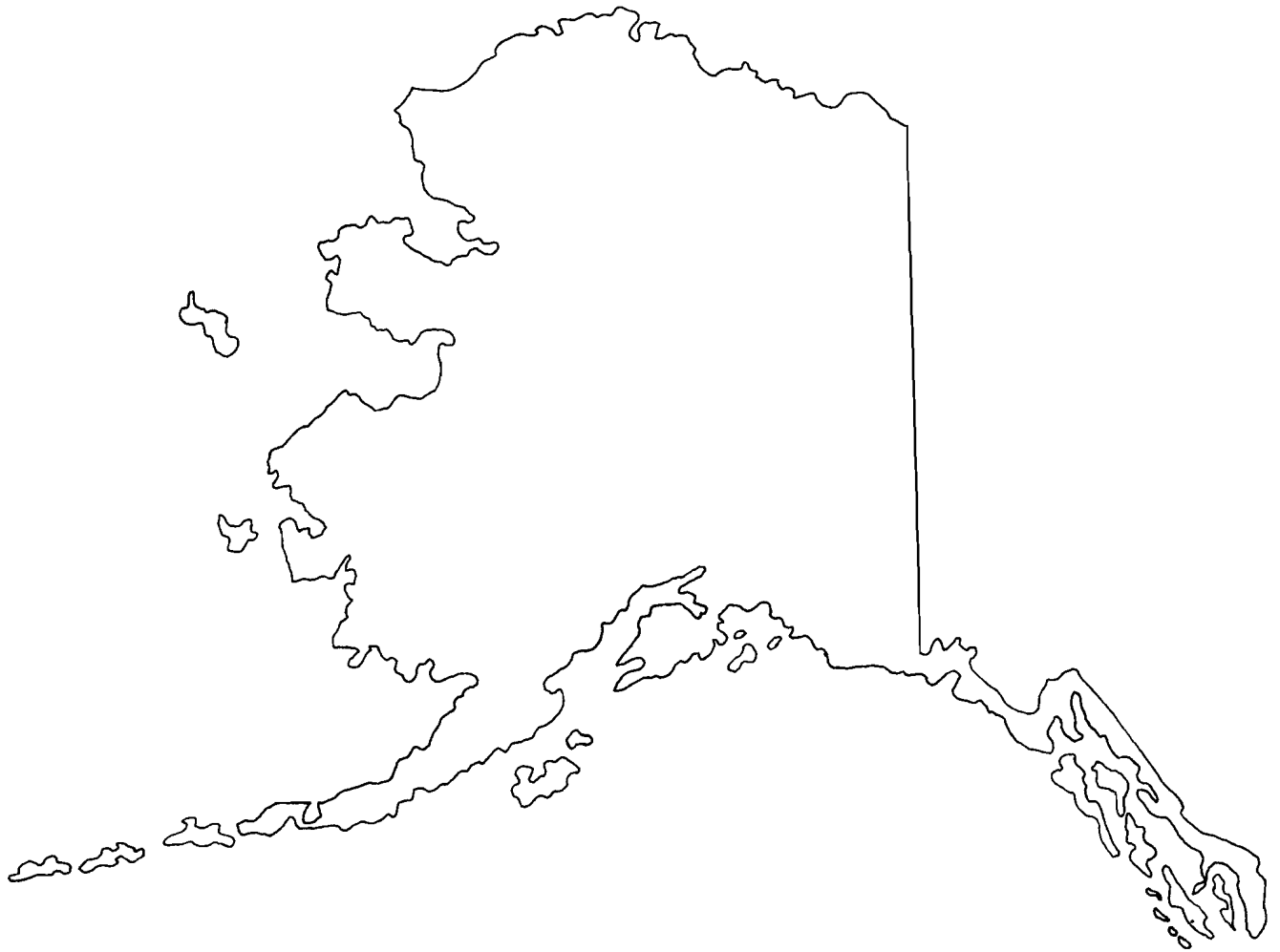
Adult alcoholism severity and client characteristics in Alaska. Indian Health Service, Staff Office of Planning, Evaluation and Research, Rockville, MD 20857 (E-40). 1976

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**E-40**

9701738

**Adult Alcoholism Severity  
And  
Client Characteristics In Alaska**



**A Report by the Alaska Native Health Board**

**July 1976**

ADULT ALCOHOLISM SEVERITY AND CLIENT CHARACTERISTICS IN ALASKA

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July, 1976

Funded under Grant # 2R18-AA-01922-01, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse  
and Alcoholism

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The staff and consultants of the Alaska Native Health Board were assisted by several individuals in the development and implementation of this project. These providers of health care services assumed responsibilities beyond the scope of their normal tasks; without their assistance this research would not have been possible. We thank those dedicated public servants who gave of their valuable time, and the regional health consumer advocacy boards whose thoughtful suggestions were incorporated into this project design.

Our gratitude extends to innumerable individuals and groups concerned with the health of Alaska natives, but there are some individuals who must be acknowledged in this report. We wish to underscore the efforts of Mr. Bruce Giffen, Director of Program Evaluation, Alaska Alcoholism Treatment Center; Ms. Donna McMeekin, Director of Information and Education, and Ms. Bette Ford, Executive Director, Kodiak Council on Alcoholism; Mr. Robert Cole, Coordinator, Mr. Rick Elphic, Research Analyst, and Dr. Dennis Kelso, State Office of Alcoholism; Ms. Karen Coady, Program Director, Fairbanks Native Association Comprehensive Alcoholism Program; Mr. Mac Armstrong, Director, and Ms. Susan Holt Sitka/Mt. Edgecumbe Alcoholism Therapy Services; Mr. Bennett Stower, Executive Director, Sitka Council on Alcoholism; Ms. LaPrele Rasmussen, Director, and Ms. Marsha Hanson, Gateway Mental Health Clinic; and Mr. Bill Brodt, Indian Health Service. We offer our thanks to these people and to the many others who provided indispensable encouragement and support.

## ADULT ALCOHOLISM SEVERITY AND CLIENT CHARACTERISTICS IN ALASKA

### Introduction

During the past several years, considerable time and money have been spent to deal with alcohol abuse problems in the State of Alaska. Despite current expenditures,<sup>1</sup> the severity characteristics of alcoholism clientele still remain a mystery. We still do not know if clients with differences of severity share common characteristics or are different, and if so, in what ways. Such information would be very valuable. It would contribute to the planning and management of secondary and tertiary prevention programs, treatment and rehabilitation programs, and staff training to provide a more rational basis to meet the needs of the clients and the communities being served.

The Alaska Native Health Board research projects conducted in previous years have laid the foundation for the current efforts. In 1972, a Mental Health Evaluation Project, Phases I and II, developed a mechanism to stage the severity of alcohol abuse problems, evaluated the problem solving process,<sup>2</sup> and conducted an attitude survey. In 1973, the Mental Health Evaluation Project, Phase III, developed a data base system to correct some of the deficiencies identified in Phases I and II.<sup>3</sup> In 1974, the expanded Mental Health Evaluation Project extended the Phase III effort to additional demonstration sites and began risk analysis for alcoholism and other mental health problems.<sup>4</sup> The Mental Health Evaluation Project, Phase IV, is the current effort to examine adolescent alcoholism/mental health problem relationships and develop an instrument identifying students at risk to alcohol abuse and document characteristics of adult alcoholics.

The evaluation of adult alcoholism severity and the associated characteristic relationships is the primary focus of this paper.

## Methodology

This effort involved two data collection instruments, one to assess the severity of the alcohol abuse problem and another to determine the characteristics of the client population. The first instrument was the "Data Base for Alcohol Problems", previously developed by the Alaska Native Health Board and implemented for state-wide monitoring and evaluation by the State of Alaska Office of Alcoholism. The format assessed the severity of alcohol problems, utilizing a variety of physical, social, and economic parameters, and was constructed for use by the agency.

The second instrument was designed in consultation with forty state-wide individuals, providers and non-providers. It consisted of a list of historical events and individual characteristics that appear to be commonly related to the development of alcoholism. The consultant group included health professionals alcoholism counselors, social service administrators, and health care consumer advocates.

In selecting the items, the consultants were instructed to use the following criteria for inclusion in the list:

1. Quantifiable - items should be answerable by a simple "yes" or "no"
2. Discrimination - items should be limited to the high risk group and not present in the population as a whole
3. Timing - the items must be present prior to the onset of the problem
4. Etiology - items do not have to be etiologically related
5. Stability - presence of the items should not vary over time.

A list of 75 items or characteristics was derived. They were arranged for self-administration in order to eliminate inter-observer bias and represent the subjective responses of the individuals.

At the beginning of the project, state-wide alcoholism programs were contacted to solicit their cooperation. Of those who responded, the field was narrowed (due to time and travel constraints) to the following:

Sitka Council on Alcoholism, Sitka, Alaska  
Gateway Mental Health Clinic, Ketchikan, Alaska  
Alaska Alcoholism Treatment Center, Anchorage, Alaska  
Fairbanks Comprehensive Treatment Program, Fairbanks, Alaska  
Kodiak Council on Alcoholism, Kodiak, Alaska

The research team contacted each agency, described the conceptual basis to the staff and instructed them on the procedures for administering the characteristic item forms. A "Data Base" for each client in the study was completed at the same visit during which the individual answered the self-administered questionnaire. The self-administered forms were then coded to insure confidentiality and forwarded to the Alaska Native Health Board, Health Care Evaluation Projects Office in Anchorage. The completed "Data Base" forms were forwarded to the State Office of Alcoholism in Juneau.

Data was collected between June and December, 1975. At the end of the third quarter, both sets of data were placed on computer tape by Alaska Data Systems, Inc., and transferred to the University of Arizona, Tucson, for processing and analysis by the staff and consultants of ANHB.

### Results

Severity information from the "Data Base for Alcoholism Problems" and characteristic item data were received on four hundred nine clients from the participating alcoholism treatment centers. Of the 409, 110/27% were female and 299/73% were male. The severity of the alcoholism problem is summarized in Table I.

TABLE I

DATA BASE FOR ALCOHOL RELATED PROBLEMS  
TO DEVELOP A PROGRESSIVE TREATMENT PROGRAM

FACTORS WHICH  
MAY INDICATE  
SEVERITY OF  
DRINKING  
PROBLEM

SYMPTOMS - DISABILITY INDEX

INSTRUCTIONS: STAGES REFER TO FACTORS  
PRESENT IN PAST 3 MONTHS ONLY. CIRCLE  
APPROPRIATE BOXES - WRITE ADDITIONAL  
INFORMATION ON REVERSE SIDE

		STAGE 0	STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4	STAGE 5
PHYSICAL	INTOXICATION & ADDICTION	None	Alcohol abuse averages less than once per month	Alcohol abuse averages more than once per month	Alcohol abuse averages once a week	Evidence of addiction. Can't go more than one day without drinking and/or DTs	
	INJURIES DUE TO INTOXICATION	None	Only one alcohol related injury in the past 3 months that required medical att'n.	More than one injury in the past 3 months that required medical att'n.			
	PATHOLOGIC CHANGES - (This section may be completed by a physician)	None	None	Subtle medical symptoms of organ damage	Obvious symptoms of organ damage	Functional evidence of liver damage	Functional evidence of brain damage
SOCIAL	FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS	No problems related to alcohol abuse.	Some quarrels related to alcohol abuse (with spouse, parents, etc.)	Threatened breakage of family ties because of alcohol abuse	Breakage of family ties because of alcohol abuse (Divorce, drinker leaves home, etc.)		
	NON-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS	No problems related to alcohol abuse		Usually associates with alcohol abusers.	Only associates with alcohol abusers.		
ECONOMIC	EDUCATIONAL / VOCATIONAL or other Activities	No problems related to alcohol abuse with school, job, employability, or normal activities.	Some problems related to alcohol abuse with school, job, employability, or normal activities	Threatened with expulsion from school or loss of job because of alcohol abuse.	Out of school or unemployed because of alcohol abuse.		

SEVERITY OF ALCOHOL PROBLEMS PRESENTING THEMSELVES AT FIVE ALCOHOLISM PROGRAMS BETWEEN JUNE 1 AND DECEMBER 1, 1975 - REPRESENTING 409 CLIENTS

	STAGE 0 NO PROBLEM	STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4	STAGE 5	MISSING DATA
		INCREASING SEVERITY →					
INTOXICATION & ADDICTION	7/02%	18/04%	38/09%	72/17%	145/35%		129/32%
INJURY DUE TO INTOXICATION	134/33%	70/17%	51/12%	14/03%	2/01%		138/34%
PATHOLOGIC CHANGES	71/17%	25/06%	97/24%	55/13%	12/03%	1/01%	149/36%
FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS	40/09%	51/14%	39/10%	140/34%	2/01%		137/32%
NON-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS	24/06%	16/04%	130/31%	102/25%	2/01%		135/33%
EDUCATIONAL & VOCATIONAL	24/06%	48/12%	30/07%	147/36%	24/06%		136/33%



The characteristics of the study population are presented in Tables II, III, and IV.

TABLE II  
NUMBER OF SIBLINGS IN FAMILY WHILE GROWING UP

<u>NUMBER OF SIBLINGS</u>	<u>NUMBER OF CLIENTS</u>	<u>PERCENT OF STUDY POPULATION</u>
0	87	21.6
1	49	12.2
2	43	10.7
3	46	11.4
4	45	11.2
5	25	0.2
6	18	4.5
7	19	4.7
8	22	5.5
9	19	4.7
10	11	2.7
11	6	1.5
12	5	1.2
13	1	0.2
14	3	0.7
15	2	0.5
16	0	0.0
17	1	0.2
TOTAL:	<u>402*</u>	<u>100.0</u>

\*7 cases had missing data

TABLE III  
NUMBER OF CLIENTS WITH OLDER SIBLINGS IN FAMILY WHILE GROWING UP

<u>NUMBER OF OLDER SIBLINGS</u>	<u>NUMBER OF CLIENTS</u>	<u>PERCENT OF STUDY POPULATION</u>
0	174	43.3
1	76	18.9
2	53	13.2
3	42	10.4
4	16	4.0
5	15	3.7
6	9	2.2
7	3	0.7
8	3	0.7
9	4	1.0
10	1	0.2
11	4	1.0
12	1	0.2
13	1	0.2
TOTAL:	<u>402*</u>	<u>100.0</u>

\*7 cases had missing data

TABLE IV  
CLIENT CHARACTERISTICS

N= 409

CHARACTERISTICS	RESPONSES		
	YES (%)	NO (%)	BLANK (%)
Are you a heavy smoker?	233/57%	158/39%	18/04%
Do you dream of drinking?	137/33%	259/63%	13/03%
Are you moving constantly?	197/48%	201/49%	11/03%
Have you stopped going to church?	266/65%	133/33%	10/02%
Are you bored with life?	122/30%	267/65%	20/05%
Are you sick often?	91/22%	299/73%	19/05%
Have you stopped believing in a god figure?	67/16%	324/79%	18/04%
Are you intelligent and sensitive?	260/64%	91/22%	58/14%
Do you dislike competing?	119/29%	262/64%	28/07%
Are you having housing problems?	185/45%	213/52%	11/03%
Do any people close to you never drink?	253/62%	148/36%	8/02%
Have you been separated from home and sent to a hospital?	200/49%	198/48%	11/03%
Are you shy?	186/45%	199/49%	24/06%
Are you impatient?	260/64%	129/32%	20/05%
Are you lonely?	219/54%	168/41%	22/05%
Are you homesick?	126/31%	263/64%	20/05%
Has anyone close to you separated from their spouse?	185/45%	205/50%	19/05%
Do you have arguments with people close to you?	204/50%	196/48%	9/02%
Has anyone close to you had an unwanted pregnancy?	99/24%	280/68%	30/07%
Do you expect too much from yourself?	176/43%	204/50%	29/07%
Do you have trouble speaking English?	57/14%	343/84%	9/02%
Have you ever been kicked out of school?	98/24%	304/74%	7/02%
Has anyone close to you had a miscarriage?	93/23%	277/68%	39/10%
Do you think you have too much responsibility?	46/11%	346/85%	17/04%
Are you earning less money than you used to earn?	244/60%	140/34%	25/06%
Would you rather live in the old Native ways than have a job?	71/17%	287/70%	51/12%
Have you ever been fired from your job?	186/45%	208/51%	15/04%
Does anyone close to you have an unhappy marriage?	173/42%	206/50%	30/07%
Did you ever live in a foster home as a child?	85/21%	318/78%	6/01%
Were you ever sent from home to a boarding school?	116/28%	281/69%	12/03%
Do you think you have too little responsibility?	127/31%	252/62%	30/07%
Have you ever dropped out of school?	216/53%	179/44%	14/03%
Has anyone close to you had an abortion?	61/15%	316/77%	32/08%
Does anyone close to you have a drinking problem?	310/72%	91/22%	8/02%
When you were growing up did your parents live together?	294/72%	91/22%	24/06%

TABLE IV (Continued)

CHARACTERISTICS	RESPONSES		
	YES (%)	NO (%)	BLANK (%)
Have you ever been unhappy with your job?	241/59%	148/36%	20/05%
Do you dislike yourself?	133/33%	236/58%	40/10%
Do you plan too far ahead?	190/46%	197/48%	22/05%
Are you easily depressed?	229/56%	152/37%	28/07%
Do you have a physical handicap?	80/20%	317/78%	12/03%
Did your parents neglect you as a child?	100/24%	291/71%	18/04%
Have you tried drugs like majijuna, LSD or speed?	213/52%	184/45%	12/03%
Are you using them now?	12/03%	377/92%	20/05%
Do people close to you look down on you?	118/29%	246/60%	45/11%
Has anyone close to you died of drinking?	179/44%	210/51%	20/05%
Have you been arrested in the past year?	195/48%	208/51%	6/01%
Has anyone close to you been arrested in the past year?	147/36%	251/61%	11/03%
Do people close to you reject you?	153/37%	231/56%	25/06%
Has anyone close to you had a mental or nervous breakdown?	101/25%	292/71%	16/04%
Have you had a recent death among people close to you?	183/45%	211/52%	15/04%
Have you ever had problems with your sex life?	88/22%	295/72%	26/06%
Have you dropped out of alcohol rehabilitation?	127/31%	248/61%	34/08%
Are you dependent on agencies like BIA, Manpower or Welfare?	93/23%	297/73%	19/05%
Have you had a nervous or mental breakdown?	72/18%	325/79%	12/03%
Have you ever tried to hurt yourself physically?	106/26%	288/70%	15/04%
Are you trying to kill yourself?	95/23%	280/68%	34/08%
Have you ever been divorced?	159/39%	220/54%	30/07%
Are you separated from your spouse?	136/33%	190/46%	83/20%
Do you have a happy marriage?	60/15%	164/40%	185/45%
Has your spouse been gone from home for a long time?	99/24%	127/31%	183/45%
Have you been in the military in the past?	110/27%	157/38%	142/35%
If you are a student, are you in a foster home or have you ever been in one?	29/07%	135/33%	245/60%
If you are a student, are you in a boarding school?	15/04%	126/31%	268/66%
If you are going to school now, does the school seem strange or hard to you?	10/02%	111/27%	288/70%
Do you think you have a drinking problem?	267/65%	16/04%	126/31%
Do you think you are an alcoholic?	245/60%	34/08%	130/32%
If the above 2 questions are true, do you think you can be helped?	247/60%	14/03%	148/36%
Have you ever had contact with an agency that treats people with a drinking problem?	193/47%	81/20%	135/33%
Have you ever had treatment before for a drinking problem or alcoholism?	172/42%	105/26%	132/32%

QUESTIONS SPECIFIC TO WOMEN - N= 110

CHARACTERISTICS	RESPONSES		
	YES (%)	NO (%)	BLANK
Have you had an unwanted pregnancy?	34/31%	76/69%	0
Have you had an abortion?	13/12%	97/88%	0
Have you had a miscarriage?	30/27%	80/73%	0

## Discussion

One goal of the project was to compare client characteristic items to the various stages of severity as recorded on the "Data Base for Alcohol Problems". The study population could then be analyzed to determine if the different stages of severity presented different profiles of characteristics. The Project was also interested in tracking clients during the six-month period to evaluate any transition in severity related to client characteristics. The agencies will be able to address the program delivery needs of their target population by determining what type of clients are being served. By identifying the different characteristics of the clients who improve and those who do not, screening tools can be developed to identify those likely to make that transition and appropriately direct the necessary resources.

Of the 409 clients in the Project, follow-up data was received on 32. Of that follow-up group, 17/53% indicated increased severity and 15/47% decreased. It is unfortunate that this was too small a group to establish any meaningful statistical inferences. Perhaps a more serious problem was the high percentage of severity data that had missing information. That factor alone completely ruled out any analysis of client characteristic data by stage of severity.

It should be pointed out that the client characteristic data was collected through the voluntary cooperation of the participating agencies. The "Data Base for Alcohol Problems", alcoholism severity data, was collected as a monitoring requirement by the State of Alaska Office of Alcoholism.

Despite the problems which prevented the establishment of important associations on the statistical basis, a number of the factors indicated interesting characteristics in the population. Clients in our study described themselves as intelligent and sensitive (64%), though impatient (64%). They had no physical handicaps (78%), and no trouble speaking English (84%).

They are not often sick (73%) though they do admit to having a drinking problem (75%).

It is interesting to group related issues and look at their responses. For example, 106 (26%) said that they had tried to hurt themselves, and 90% of this group admitted attempting suicide; 33% reported that they disliked themselves, and 56% were easily depressed.

Marijuana, LSD, speed, and other drugs had been used by 52% of the clients. Only 3% reported that they were currently using them,; however, acknowledgement of current drug dependence could bring legal reprisal.

Three questions were asked that directly related to the individuals' attitudes toward a drinking problem.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N.R.*</u>
Do you think you have a drinking problem?	65%	4%	31%
Do you think you are an alcoholic?	60%	8%	32%
Do you think you can be helped?	60%	3%	37%

Considerable insight can be gained by looking at where the "yes" and "no" and no response answers come from, in terms of severity. For two of these questions, that information is presented in Tables V and VI.

\* No response

TABLE V  
DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE A DRINKING PROBLEM?

PARAMETER	STAGE 0	STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4	BLANK
INTOXICATION & ADDICTION	Y 2 N 0 B 5	Y 12 N 0 B 4	Y 19 N 2 B 18	Y 52 N 1 B 21	Y 107 N 3 B 37	Y 75 N 10 B 41
INJURIES DUE TO INTOXICATION	Y 103 N 1 B 33	Y 44 N 3 B 26	Y 30 N 2 B 20	Y 12 N 0 B 2	Y 1 N 0 B 0	Y 77 N 10 B 45
FAMILY RELATIONSHIP	Y 23 N 0 B 14	Y 40 N 1 B 19	Y 29 N 1 B 9	Y 96 N 4 B 40	Y 2 N 0 B 0	Y 77 N 10 B 44
NON-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS	Y 14 N 0 B 10	Y 9 N 1 B 3	Y 92 N 2 B 36	Y 74 N 3 B 34	Y 2 N 0 B 0	Y 76 N 10 B 43
EDUCATIONAL & VOCATIONAL	Y 15 N 0 B 9	Y 32 N 2 B 13	Y 18 N 0 B 11	Y 103 N 4 B 44	Y 23 N 0 B 5	Y 76 N 10 B 44

Y= Yes  
N= No  
B= Blank

TABLE VI  
DO YOU THINK YOU ARE AN ALCOHOLIC?

PARAMETER	STAGE 0	STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4	BLANK
INTOXICATION & ADDICTION	Y 97 N 5 B 35	Y 44 N 3 B 26	Y 27 N 3 B 22	Y 11 N 1 B 2	Y 1 N 0 B 0	Y 65 N 22 B 45
INJURIES DUE TO INTOXICATION	Y 44 N 4 B 22	Y 20 N 0 B 8	Y 74 N 4 B 21	Y 27 N 3 B 22	Y 7 N 0 B 6	Y 73 N 23 B 51
FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS	Y 22 N 1 B 14	Y 39 N 2 B 19	Y 24 N 4 B 11	Y 93 N 5 B 42	Y 2 N 0 B 0	Y 65 N 32 B 44
NON-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS	Y 13 N 0 B 11	Y 9 N 1 B 3	Y 86 N 7 B 37	Y 71 N 4 B 36	Y 2 N 0 B 0	Y 64 N 22 B 43
EDUCATIONAL & VOCATIONAL	Y 13 N 1 B 10	Y 34 N 2 B 11	Y 17 N 1 B 11	Y 96 N 7 B 48	Y 21 N 1 B 6	Y 64 N 22 B 44

Y= Yes  
N= No  
B= Blank

## Conclusion

This report represents the conclusion of efforts by the Alaska Native Health Board to stimulate a program of data collection in the field of alcoholism, the stages of severity and related client characteristics. The Project staff feels that this is not only good client care, but a valuable tool for program management. Considerable energy has been devoted to this effort, and it is hoped that the program agency personnel will continue the data collection and that it will be accepted as an on-going effort.



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