

# FNA helps youth with alcohol problems

If a youth 18 and under is caught driving under the influence of alcohol, he may be referred to the Fairbanks Native Association, Inc.'s Youth Counselor, Carol Anthony, for alcoholism counseling. Youth Services, a component of the Comprehensive Alcoholism Program services, is for youth under 18

who are alcoholics or have problems with alcoholism around them, such as a parent or family member.

An individual may be referred from the court, Juvenile Intake, members of the family, or self-referred. Most referrals are from the court, involving minor consuming alcohol, opera-

ting a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol, and misdemeanors committed while drinking.

Anthony holds alcohol information classes for youth once a week on Wednesdays from 3:30 to 5 p.m., in four or five sessions. They include "The Nature of Alcohol." "Blood

Alcohol Content," "The Human Body," "Alcohol is a Drug," and "Phases of Addiction," in addition to open discussion.

The alcohol information school dispels such myths as "A cold shower should help sober you up," "Drink more coffee," or "Exercise the liquor off," etc. The liver can only process one ounce of alcohol per hour, so drinking any more than that can lead to drunkenness, numbness, uninhibited behavior, and lessen one's judgement, for example, in driving a car recklessly.

Other problems may be related to the alcoholism of a family member such as the youth having to fill in for the one who is drinking by cleaning the home, cooking or taking care of other children. Parental consent is required for youth to be counseled.

Youth Services teaches youth how to spend their time constructively, to recognize the feelings or emotions that lead to taking a drink, to cope, make responsible decisions, and improve one's self-image.

If the problem is apparent at school, a teacher should not talk directly to the parent, but assess the situation with the student and school counselor before taking action. Sometimes a student may be punished at home for having authorities find out, so the most safe means is best pursued, depending on the individual situation.

A student may be ashamed to admit there is a problem at home, and try to keep up a facade of doing well; however, at times, this may be difficult. Teachers can help by learning more about alcoholism or contacting someone such as Anthony to get some advice on what to do. There are many resources on alcoholism available in Fairbanks.

Anthony and others have

gone into schools to give a talk on alcoholism and other related problems. Even first graders can tell when there is a problem. However, Anthony says, one can determine a problem, but there is sometimes nothing the school can do, often until a student is court referred.

The police have a number of actions they may take if a youth has committed a status offense or misdemeanor involving alcohol, depending on the situation. Youth Services receives calls if youth are admitted to the Detoxification Center to dry out, with parental permission. Sometimes youth refer themselves for detoxification, which is a supervised "dry-out" from alcohol, with nurses and counselors on duty to assess, in cooperation with the youth, where the youth should go for further help.

Other services available to youth are the Short Term Unit, where youth may go for 30 days for individual and group counseling. A.A. meetings, alcohol information school, and learning a life style of keeping sober in a supportive environment. Anthony counsels youth through the whole process, from detoxification to short-term treatment to outpatient or aftercare services.

After youth have gone through short-term treatment, counseling can continue until the youth can maintain a sober life style. One whole year is recommended for outpatient/aftercare counseling, and thereafter, A.A. meetings if possible.

By the time students reach Youth Services, they may be in eighth or ninth grade and have dropped out of school or have been suspended. It is a crucial time for them to be able to learn to stay sober in a supportive environment, and learn a new way of life with techniques designed for sobriety.