

Organization works to solve public inebriate problem

FAIRBANKS -- Several organizations, including the Fairbanks Native Association Inc. have begun a public inebriate project, a pilot project which began in January and will run until June 30. Its main goal is to develop a community-based approach to attack the problem of chronic public inebriates in downtown Fairbanks.

Funded with \$76,278 from the State Office of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, the project hired Bud Willard as project coordinator; a nurse, and two drivers, and fund five beds at the Detoxification Unit at 117 Slater Drive.

In addition, a van, radio equipment, supplies and advertisements were being purchased to further the goals of encour-

aging the public inebriate to seek treatment.

The PI Project hopes to educate the public concerning local ordinances and laws dealing with intoxicated persons, public drunkenness, and others affected by alcohol, to increase community awareness of the problem of the chronic public inebriate, to increase accessibility of treatment and related services to the targeted public inebriate group, and to initiate involuntary commitment of the chronic inebriate.

The chronic inebriate is termed as someone who has been an alcoholic for many years, and whose lifestyles indicates such. Willard has surveyed the public on how public inebriates have caused problems for individuals,

and found that they bothered the public less than other types of groups in the downtown area. The chronic public inebriate tends to want to leave everyone alone, so that he can go on drinking without going to jail, or being taken away from his booze.

The Community Alcohol Advisory Committee is overseeing the project, and with a subcommittee of CAAC, will be responsible for developing methods for the evaluation of the demonstration project, and will have the responsibility for monitoring the development and progress of the project. The project has requested funding for fiscal year 1982 which begins July 1.

By then there should be more

measurable terms of the impact the project is having on public inebriates.

In terms of chronic public inebriates downtown, and the impact, they cannot be confused with transients who come to Fairbanks and are downtown to see friends and relatives, or with the younger set of people downtown. The public inebriate will only be measured in terms of the group he is in.

To date nine persons have entered treatment, 38 have been in the Detoxification Unit, and two have been counseled on an outpatient basis. In addition, the

jail is visited daily to counsel individuals arrested for an open container or drinking in public and 43 of these people have been counseled to date.

A long term facility is planned in Anchorage for chronic public inebriates to keep them in a sober and supportive environment for an extended period of time.

Such programs have found that the chronic public inebriate needs to be taught practically a whole new way of survival and new tools to stay sober, and often new skills to survive in the working world.