

HCR

8

• *Representative Mary Kapsner*

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House District 38

Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta

MEMORANDUM

Akiachak

Akiak

Atmautluak

Bethel

Chefornak

Eek

Goodnews Bay

Kasigluk

Kipnuk

Kongiganak

Kwethluk

Kwigillingok

Lower Kalskag

Mekoryuk

Napakiaak

Napaskiak

Newtok

Nightmute

Nunapitchuk

Oscarville

Platinum

Quinhagak

Toksook Bay

Tuluksak

Tununak

Tuntuliak

Upper Kalskag

TO: Representative Peggy Wilson, Chair  
Health, Education, and Social Services Committee

FROM: Representative Mary Kapsner

*Rep Kapsner/pj*

DATE: February 19, 2003

RE: HCR 8 – Inhalants Awareness Week

I would like to request a formal hearing for House Concurrent Resolution 8 in the Health, Education and Social Services Committee. I have attached a copy the Resolution, my Sponsor Statement, as well as an additional fact sheet with background information.

If at all possible, I would prefer to have the hearing to take place during the week of February 25, 2003, to coincide with the presence of Jim Henkelman, Statewide Outreach Coordinator for the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation Tundra Swan Inhalant Treatment Program in Bethel, Alaska, and an expert on the issues surrounding the abuse of inhalants.

Thank you for your consideration.

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### House Concurrent Resolution 8 - Inhalant And Poisons Awareness Week Sponsor Statement

Although the abuse of inhalants is not a new problem, it is reaching rampant proportions throughout Alaska and among youth across the nation. Part of what makes the problem so frustrating is that the substances used in "huffing" are commonly available and often necessary for their intended uses, but highly dangerous, even fatal, when misused. Many abusers simply are not aware of how physically destructive the "high" they seek really is.

House Concurrent Resolution 8 calls upon the Governor to declare March 16-22, 2003 as Inhalants and Poisons Awareness Week. The week would coincide with the National Inhalant and Poisons Awareness Week.

It is our hope that public and private agencies as well as citizens all across the state will recognize National Inhalants and Poisons Awareness Week, and will observe it through appropriate activities that will educate and inform the people of Alaska of the dangers of inhalants and poisons.



Inhalants →

# Contact Information

## Residential Treatment

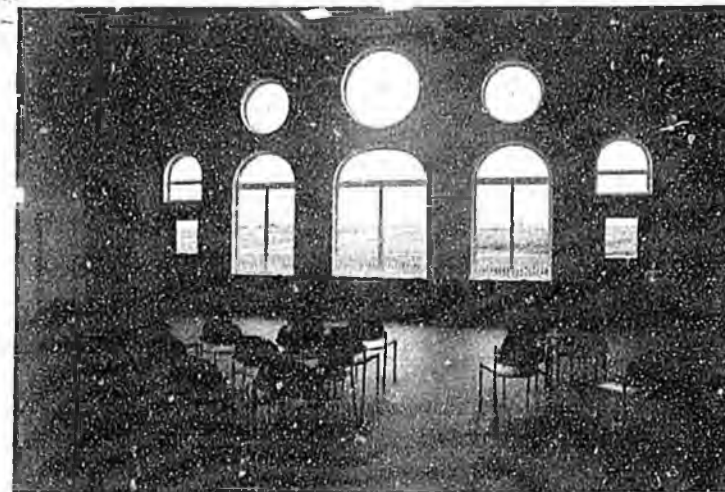
McCann Treatment Center  
Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation  
P.O. Box 528 • Bethel, Alaska 99559  
1-907-543-6800

## Admission/Referral

907-543-6803 • fax: 907-543-6830

## Statewide Outreach Office

Tundra Swan Outreach Program  
2110 E. Northern Lights, Suite 102  
Anchorage, Alaska 99508  
toll free: 1-866-HUFFING (483-3464)  
or 907-646-0778 • fax: 907-646-0738



- 1,400 products accessible.
- Limited treatment options.
- In Alaska, inhalants are used mostly by children.
- "Sudden Sniffing Death" is high risk with inhalants.
- Inhalant abuse can quickly cause permanent damage to the brain.
- Cost for care of a person damaged by inhalant abuse can be more than \$1.4 million.

### Challenges To Treatment:

- Impulsive, aggressive behavior towards others can occur suddenly while under the influence.
- Two to six weeks of 24-hour supervised detoxification time needed.
- Poor attention span.
- Poor decision making.
- Short term memory problems.
- Sometimes physical coordination problems.

Call Toll-free:  
**1-866-HUFFING (483-3464)**



# Statewide Outreach



YUKON-KUSKOKWIM HEALTH CORPORATION

## The Project's Story

- 1997 - 1998 Rural Human Services students organize Inhalant Prevention Conference.
- March, 1998 Billy McCann asks Senator Murkowski, "What can you do about inhalant abuse?"
- 1998 - 2000 Multiple proposals submitted by ANTHC and YKHC.
- October, 1998 Senator Murkowski organizes National Inhalant Awareness Day.
- January, 2000 Federal funding announced.
- August, 2000 Groundbreaking for inhalant abuse treatment facility in Bethel.
- October, 2000 Workshop to develop guidelines for inhalant treatment program. Statewide outreach efforts begin.
- Aug. 31, 2001 Grand Opening of 11,000 sq. ft. residential treatment facility.
- Sept., 2001 First group of Alaskan youth begin treatment at the new McCann Treatment Center.

### Mission:

*The Inhalant Treatment Program is a statewide, inhalant program providing specialized services for all Alaskan youth, their families and the communities in which they live.*

Program funded through SAMHSA-CSAT



Above: School presentations are the basis of prevention.



Left: Opening the McCann Treatment Center in Bethel

## Residential Treatment – Helping Youth to Heal

The multi-culturally based program treats up to 14 youth, ages 10 - 17, per treatment session.

Residential treatment has four phases of care and includes involvement by families and community care providers — followed by ongoing outpatient follow-up and support. Treatment takes four to six months.

Strength-based treatment acknowledges Alaska's cultural diversity.

Assessment and treatment incorporate the cultural values, beliefs and practices of the population being served.

The wisdom and input from elders is an integral part of the program.

## Statewide Outreach & Early Intervention Program

The Inhalant Treatment Program has a statewide focus, providing information, assessment, training and treatment throughout Alaska

### Early Intervention – Training

Inhalant abuse treatment . . . programs at conferences, workshops and in community meetings to increase awareness and capacity to respond to inhalant abuse issues.

### Statewide Advisory Council

Family members of inhalant abusers, persons who have abused inhalants themselves, service providers and leaders in the healthcare system bring perspective and input.

### Inhalant Prevention Conferences

The Tundra Swan Program participates in planning the conference and producing educational components.

### Brief Intensive Intervention

Mobile Intervention Teams travel to regional hubs and communities throughout Alaska to provide intensive outpatient assessment and intervention services to children ages 8 to 18 who are using inhalants. A multi-disciplinary team works with local providers to facilitate the clinic/camp program.

### Evaluation

Reviews the program's performance in order to help strengthen its effectiveness.





## ***INHALANTS & POISONS***

***They are right under your nose***

**CAUTION:** *This information can be quite dangerous if used by children or youth to find out about how to abuse inhalants. We do not want this to happen, so PLEASE be careful with this information and do not allow anyone under the age of 18 to review this material without a parent or educator with the person.*

### **INHALANTS FACT SHEET**

- ▼ Inhalants are not drugs. They are toxic chemicals that when used inappropriately, such as by sniffing or "huffing" the vapors, can cause toxic effects, similar to the "high" obtained with drugs.
- ▼ Inhalants can kill the very first time they are used. Death is usually from heart failure or suffocation.
- ▼ Inhalant highs are the result of intensive penetration of toxic chemicals into the brain tissue, where they are capable of causing irreversible damage.
- ▼ In addition to brain, liver, lung and bone marrow damage, there is evidence that chronic abuse of some inhalants causes chromosome and fetal damage.
- ▼ Inhalants are the fourth most abused substance after alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana among high school students.
- ▼ A 1999 nationwide survey of students indicates that 19.5% of eighth graders have used inhalants compared to 22% who have used marijuana/hashish.
- ▼ However, there are Alaska communities where it is reported that up to 90% of the elementary school students have tried or are using inhalants.
- ▼ Chronic inhalant users can suffer severe and permanent brain damage; some die the first time they try it; other possible risks include loss of consciousness and irreversible damage to the liver, kidneys and bone marrow.
- ▼ Inhalants are often a "gateway" to the abuse of other illicit substances. 70% of one group of substance abusers, in treatment, indicated they had started with inhalants and 50% of those indicated they would go back to inhalants (primarily gas) if alcohol was not available.
- ▼ More than 1,400 common, useful and legal household, office and classroom products can be used to "get high".
- ▼ Every year kids die from inhalant use, but many parents and educators remain ignorant of this silent epidemic.
- ▼ Because the chemicals in inhalants enter the lungs in such high concentrations, they have a more formidable toxic profile than other types of abused drugs.
- ▼ Inhalant treatment is significantly more complex than most drug abuse treatment. The toxic chemicals remain in the body tissues for extended periods of time, resulting in the need for a four to six week period of detoxification, prior to actual intensive treatment having much positive effect.
- ▼ Youth with a history of chronic inhalant use have strikingly high rates of relapse. Because of the difficult problems associated with inhalant abuse treatment, these youth are often excluded from some drug abuse programs.
- ▼ Chronic inhalant users may suffer withdrawal symptoms, including: hand tremors, chronic headaches, nervousness, anxiety and excessive sweating.

Signs of Use	Harmful Effects
<p>There is a common link between inhalant abuse and problems in school – failing grades, chronic absences and general apathy. Other signs include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▼ Paint or stains on body, clothing, rags or bags</li> <li>▼ Spots or sores around the mouth</li> <li>▼ Red or runny eyes or nose</li> <li>▼ Chemical breath odor</li> <li>▼ Drunk, dazed or dizzy appearance</li> <li>▼ Nausea, loss of appetite</li> <li>▼ Anxiety, excitability, irritability</li> <li>▼ Restlessness or unexplained moodiness and anger outbursts</li> <li>▼ Missing abusable household items</li> <li>▼ Slurred or disoriented speech</li> </ul>	<p>Potential long-term effects of inhalant use include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▼ Short-term memory loss</li> <li>▼ Hearing loss</li> <li>▼ Limb spasms</li> <li>▼ Permanent brain damage</li> <li>▼ Bone marrow damage</li> <li>▼ Liver and kidney damage</li> <li>▼ Possible fetal effects similar to fetal alcohol syndrome</li> <li>▼ Intoxication</li> <li>▼ Death</li> </ul>
<p><b>Typical Profile of an Inhalant Abuser</b></p>	<p><b>RESOURCES</b></p>
<p><i>There is no typical profile of an inhalant abuser. Sniffers and huffers are represented by both sexes and all socioeconomic groups throughout the country and Alaska. It is not unusual to see elementary and middle-school age youth involved with inhalant abuse. Although often typified as a "rural" problem, the misuse of inhalable products, besides gas, is, unfortunately, very common in schools and homes throughout both urban and rural Alaska.</i></p>	<p>Local Substance Abuse Programs and/or Local Community Mental Health Services</p> <p>Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation Tundra Swan Inhalant Treatment Program Bethel, Alaska</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- McCann Center – 907-543-6800</li> <li>- Jim Henkelman, Statewide Outreach Coordinator</li> <li>- Toll Free: 866-HUFFING [483-3464]</li> <li>Or: 907-230-6693</li> </ul>
<p><b>Inhalant Prevention Curriculum</b></p> <p>There is a good curriculum guide for Kindergarten thru 12<sup>th</sup> grade available from the State of Virginia, Dept. of Education. It can be downloaded as a PDF file: <a href="http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/Inhalantbook.pdf">www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/Inhalantbook.pdf</a></p> <p>If you are unable to access it, go to: <a href="http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE">www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE</a> and under Instructional Support Services find Office of Compensatory Programs and under that find Frequently Requested Information and under that "Inhalant Prevention Guide".</p> <p>Great Britain Website: <a href="http://www.re-solv.org">www.re-solv.org</a></p>	<p>National Inhalant Prevention Coalition 1-800-269-4237, or on the World Wide Web at: <a href="http://www.inhalants.org">http://www.inhalants.org</a></p> <p>National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Service – 1-800-662-HELP</p> <p>National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information – 1-800-729-6686 <a href="http://www.health.org">http://www.health.org</a></p> <p>Search for inhalant information at: <a href="http://www.jointogether.org/sa/">www.jointogether.org/sa/</a></p> <p>Another good information resource: <a href="http://www.drugabuse.gov/drugpages/inhalants.html">www.drugabuse.gov/drugpages/inhalants.html</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.intheknowzone.com">www.intheknowzone.com</a></p>