

2/02/11

**PRESENTA-
TION:**

DENALI

FAMILY

SERVICES

<TARGET><BILL></BILL><SUBJECT>2-02-11 PRESENTATION
DENALI FAMILY
SERVICES</SUBJECT><COMM>SHSS27</COMM></TARGET>



More about Denali Family Services & Little Steps Preschool

Brief History of the Organization

Denali Family Services (DFS) was incorporated in May 1995 as *Alternatives Child and Family Guidance Clinic*. At that time, the agency operated as an outpatient psychological and psychiatric provider with a child protection visitation program. In December of 1995, Denali Family Services was accepted as an Alaska Youth Initiative (AYI) provider. As an AYI provider, DFS was allowed to serve the most acute children with mental illness residing outside of psychiatric residential settings. By 1996, the agency grew from approximately 15 employees to 98 employees and provided wrap-around services for the "severely emotionally disturbed" (SED). In 1997, DFS became a child placement agency with the ability to recruit, license, train, and supervise foster homes and place children in those homes. In 2002, the agency joined in a partnership with Life Quest to provide therapeutic foster care services for that agency's AYI clients. Also, in July 2002, *Alternatives* changed its name to *Denali Family Services* to better communicate to the community the focus of its services. Denali's mission is "Supporting Children and Families through Individualized Community Based Services."

Denali Family Services (DFS) provides mental health rehabilitation services from a wrap-around model to approximately 300 clients at any one time. Approximately half of the clients we serve are under the age of twelve, with the remaining 50% in the adolescent range, particularly older teens who are aging out of the system and for many there is no natural support network. DFS provides a full range of support services, which include all of the rehabilitation services, including psychiatric care. By providing such a wide array of supports within DFS, we are able to meet the mental health needs for most of the families within our agency through a unified team, without fragmentation of services. However, the transition from adolescence to adulthood



also marks, for many of our adolescents, a transition from one system of care to another and teens aging out of the system find themselves with little or no assistance in navigating the systems designed for adults.

DFS maintains an active foster care program, licensing treatment foster homes, placing children in those homes and working in partnership with the foster parents and the DFS clinical staff to ensure the child is making progress toward his/her treatment goals. The foster care program accepts a number of placements of children in OCS custody who are returning to Alaska after receiving residential treatment in the Lower 48. Denali Family Services believes in providing as much support as possible to foster parents. DFS is one of only a few agencies that provide liability insurance coverage for foster parents. Because the behaviors of the children placed in their homes can often become destructive, foster parents need a way to have some insurance covering loss to their home or household belongings due to the omission or commission of an act by a child placed in their home. This has been viewed by foster parents as an extremely positive benefit.

Finally, DFS operates a therapeutic pre-school, "Little Steps." The goal of this program is to provide a safe structured environment where children may work on developing social competency. Little Steps, located at 545 5th Avenue in Anchorage, provides developmentally appropriate activities for children ages twelve months through five years.

Little Steps Preschool is a licensed preschool dedicated to serving young children and their families. A part of Denali Family Services (DFS), the Center operates from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday year-round. This program is the only one in Alaska that accepts children meeting the criteria for *severely emotionally disturbed (SED)* as well as typically developing children and places special emphasis on their social/emotional development. In addition to the program director and teaching staff, Little Steps has a full-time, master's level clinician located at the preschool. In order for Little Steps to best meet the needs of all of the children, the program maintains low child to staff ratios. The program is currently licensed for 60 children, is operating at capacity and presently has a one-year waiting list.

Legislative request: A one year waiting list at Little Steps in Anchorage has prompted the agency to locate a larger facility and to find suitable space in the Valley where a similar waitlist exists without a Little Steps program in operation. Finding space that can be remodeled for a preschool at a reasonable cost and that will meet child care regulations is a challenge. DFS hopes to purchase a building in at least one of the two locations. We realize capital funding is limited and we are asking for assistance from the Legislature on a down payment – not on the total purchase.

Request amount: \$400,000.



LITTLE STEPS PRESCHOOL

...A GUIDED TOUR



WHAT WE ARE

- “Little Steps” is a therapeutic preschool and the only early development program in the State serving both typically developing children and children who have been diagnosed with serious emotional issues.
- Little Steps is one of only six demonstration projects in the country utilizing the Pyramid project design for enhancing the learning environment for children.
- In addition to a high staffing ratio (1 staff for every 3 children), a clinician is on site fulltime.

The early years are the “critical” years.

- Our current site has the capacity to serve 60 children.
- We have a waiting list of almost 70 children in Anchorage.
- We have a similar waitlist in the Valley and are hoping to open a “Little Steps-too” in the summer of 2011.



United Way volunteers hung Bamboo blinds to add privacy for the children.



What makes Little Steps special?

- 12 AMAZING CLASSROOM TEACHERS
- A WONDERFUL COOK
- A SPUNKY ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
- AN ALL KNOWING CLINICIAN
- ...AND OF COURSE OUR WEEKLY CONSULTATIONS WITH 'DR MIKE'



Classroom Break Down

- Little Steps has four classrooms:
 - 1 for 12-24 months old
 - 1 for 2-3 year olds
 - 2 for 3-5 year olds



1'S and 2'S classroom



2'S and 3'S classroom

Individualized plans & positive behavioral support : keys to positive growth & development



3-5 year old classroom

A recipe for success:

- A positive workforce
- Providing children with structure and resources for social and emotional development



Little Steps utilizes “evidence-based practice”



- Early childhood research has shown that learning problem solving techniques early lead to positive successes in school and as adults.



To serve the children in our communities, we need:

- To open a program in the Valley
- To double our capacity in Anchorage



Program Expectations....

Healthy, creative, enthusiastic learners who communicate effectively become responsible & ethical members of our communities!



COME VISIT US SOMETIME!!



FAX: 907-465-6615

Letter Requesting ACTION on (Alaska State) Senate Bill 3

Name: SCOTT Heyworth

Address: P.O. Box 100531

ANCH, AK 99570

Phone Number: (907) 277-9981

Senate Bill 3, "An Act providing for funding for school lunch and breakfast," is sponsored by Senator Bill WIELECHOWSKI and 9 other Senators (including Majority leaders Johnny ELLIS, Bettye DAVIS, and Hollis FRENCH.) This bill will directly impact the lives of 10,000 Alaskan children by increasing the reimbursement rates for school lunches by 15 cents and school breakfasts by 35 cents. This is the second time WIELECHOWSKI has sponsored such a bill and as a citizen of the Great State of Alaska I ask that it be passed because . . .

We are the richest State in the U.S.A. - \$40 Billion + Cash!!
Surely we can help feed our hungry children (!??!!)
Pass SB 3 this session. Please. *AK*

Thank you for taking my thoughts into consideration. Yes, we "ARE" - ending child hunger in America!

AK
Signature

11/7/11
Date

This letter campaign is organized by local citizens and is not affiliated with any politicians, political organizations or political action committees. *AK*