

Community Partnerships for Adult Learning

Partnership Profiles



Nine Star Enterprises and its partners in Anchorage, Alaska

Nine Star Enterprises is a private, nonprofit organization that provides comprehensive adult education services over a vast geographic area through partnerships with a variety of other agencies and community-based organizations.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN THE ANCHORAGE REGION . . .

- **Nine Star Enterprises** and the Anchorage Regional Adult Education Program provide comprehensive adult education services in the region.
- **The Gateway Learning Center** brings educational services to families in a low-income housing site.
- **The Anchorage/Mat-Su Workforce Investment Board Operators Consortium** manages Job Centers and supports partnerships across the region.
- **The Cook Inlet Tribal Council** brings social services, including adult education, to Native Alaskans.
- **Five Anchorage community schools** offer GED preparation, English literacy instruction, and family literacy services to a diverse population.

AND WHY THEY WORK . . .

- **Geography compels partnerships.** A huge region makes partnerships a necessity for getting services to clients in remote areas.
- **The client comes first.** Partners share a strong commitment to meeting community needs.
- **Partners divide the work according to their strengths and expertise.** This helps avoid duplication of services and allows each partner to do what it does best.
- **Everybody wins.** Partners share resources without worrying about who pays the bill or gets the credit.
- **Partners take a long-term view.** They understand that building successful partnerships takes time and effort.

INTRODUCTION

Michael had been injured and was trying to get back to work. For 26 years, he had worked as a cook, a job that did not require extensive literacy skills. Now, searching for new opportunities, he knew that he would need to improve his basic skills in English and math to move into a new, living-wage job. Michael was a student at the Anchorage Literacy Project (ALP), one of Nine Star's partners in the Anchorage Regional Adult Education Program (ARAEP). Asked about his experience with the program, he said, "I feel that my life has taken a 180-degree turn. When I first came here, I was reading at a second-grade level, and now I can help my children read. I feel better and am now able to do more things for myself."

Nine Star Enterprises is a private, nonprofit corporation with a focus on community service and a broad vision for adult education that is realized through numerous community partnerships. Its mission is "to develop Alaska's workforce through education, job readiness, and employee development." In collaboration with public service agencies, neighborhood

learning centers, Job Centers, and other organizations, Nine Star offers a wide variety of educational and training programs in the areas of adult basic education, English literacy (EL), family literacy, welfare-to-work transition, and job readiness. As Nine Star's employment and training program manager Tammy Douglass summed up the organization's purpose: "Our focus is literacy in the service of employment."

REACHING LEARNERS OVER VAST DISTANCES

Nine Star and HRC serve a large geographic area, combining Anchorage, Wasilla, and the Matsunika-Susitna (Mat-Su) Valley.

<http://www.muni.org/iceimages/Planning/vicinity.gif>

BACKGROUND

Alaska covers an area that is approximately one-quarter of the entire United States; the municipality of Anchorage alone covers 1,961 square miles.¹ Nine Star Enterprises and its partner Human Resources Corporation (HRC) serve a region that covers 27,220 square miles, with a population of only 334,124 (Anchorage's population is 42 percent of the state's total population.)² Extrapolations of data from the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey indicate that 130,000 Alaskan adults were at the lowest levels of literacy.

Like many states in the "Lower Forty-Eight," Alaska's population is extremely diverse, and this diversity drives a demand for English literacy services. In Anchorage schools, students speak more than 100 languages.³ In one Anchorage neighborhood, for example, more than 40 languages are spoken in one elementary school alone. Unemployment and poverty rates are also of concern. With up to 23 percent of families with female heads of household living in poverty,⁴ the adult education services provided by Nine Star and its partners are crucial.

"Anchorage is a truly urban city. We have all the same problems, plus little light for five months, frozen roads, and a long winter."



David Alexander,
director of Nine Star Enterprises

¹U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population, Housing Units, Area, and Density, Summary File 1, Geographic Comparison Table, Alaska. Available at: http://factfinder.census.gov/bf/_lang=en_vt_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U_GCTPH1_ST2_geo_id=04000US02.html. [09/29/03]

²U.S. Census Bureau, 2002 Population Estimates, Detailed Tables, Geography. Available at: <http://factfinder.census.gov> [9/29/03]

³Anchorage School District. Available at: <http://www.asdk12.org/aboutasd/languages.asp>. [10/08/03]

⁴U.S. Census Bureau, Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics: Census 2000, Summary File 3, Alaska. Available at: http://factfinder.census.gov/bf/_lang=en_vt_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U_DP3_geo_id=04000US02.html. [10/8/03]

For many years, Alaska's economy was based primarily on natural resource industries, such as petroleum, forest products, and seafood. Even with the state's high cost of living, Alaskans typically did not need a high school diploma to earn a good salary. However, the crash in world oil prices in the mid-1980s, the closing of pulp and saw mills in the 1990s, and the depletion of fish stocks and competition from farmed fish have all had a major impact on how Alaskans earn a living. Growth in the tourism, healthcare, construction, and business service industries has now created a demand for employees with a high school diploma or at least a minimum level of math and literacy skills.

Responding to this increased demand for literacy skills is complicated by Alaska's unique geography. Much of the state's population resides in remote areas, making it difficult and expensive to connect people to services. Even where public transportation is available, many small hamlets are not connected to the system.

Given these circumstances, the GED diploma has always been seen as a viable alternative to a high school diploma. In many of the smallest villages around the state, there is limited secondary education available and no formal adult education programs. In some, the state, in collaboration with village schools or Native Alaskan corporations, offers GED programs by flying instructors into the villages for short periods of time. Between these visits, teacher aides or volunteers (usually someone living in the village) help tutor students. Other learners take advantage of the PBS television program, *GED Connection*, or work on their studies via correspondence programs or the Internet. On average, 25 percent of

Roughly 960 GED diplomas are earned yearly by students enrolled in preparatory programs run by Nine Star and its partners. This represents almost 50 percent of all GED diplomas earned in Alaska.



diplomas issued in Alaska each year are based on passing the GED test (compared to about 14 percent nationally⁵), and the program has earned a high degree of respect in the state, accepted by employers and the state university.

Alaska's seasonal economy presents another challenge. Almost three-quarters of the state's workers are in occupations that are either highly or moderately seasonal.⁶ Industries such as construction, seafood processing, tourism, and retail sales, for example, are busy during the warmer months, but they slow down or halt completely during the winter. For adult education programs, this often means that many students must interrupt their studies during the warm months to work.

Making the Most of Resources

Alaska provides more than \$1.5 million in funds for adult basic education and related literacy services each year, with an additional \$967,444 (fiscal year 2003-04) coming from the federal government. With just three state-level adult basic education staff, partnerships among local programs are essential.

⁵American Council on Education, Center for Adult Learning & Education Credentials, *Introduction to the GED*. Available at <http://www.acenet.edu/calec/ged/intro-A.cfm>. [8/14/03]

⁶Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section, *Alaska Economic Trends—Seasonal Employment*, July 2003. Available at <http://www.labor.state.ak.us/research/trends/jul03seasonality.pdf>. [8/14/03]

NINE STAR AND ITS PARTNERS

Nine Star Enterprises is the largest provider of adult basic education services for the Anchorage/Mat-Su Valley region; with its partners, Nine Star provides 65 percent of the adult basic education services in the state. Nine Star relies heavily on its multiple partnerships to accomplish its goals. At the state level, Nine Star collaborates with other regions (Juneau and Fairbanks) on statewide issues such as improving teacher quality, developing a common intake form, and creating a centralized database system. Regionally, Nine Star forms partnerships to share resources, develop new programs, and find ways to improve services to clients. Locally, Nine Star provides services directly to clients and collaborates with partners to expand the range of services offered.

Last year, roughly 7,300 adolescents and adults participated in programs offered by the organization and its partners. Nine Star Enterprises' partnerships fall into three broad categories: adult education providers, state and workforce development agencies, and community-based organizations. Some examples of each type of partnership are described below.

Partnerships with Adult Education Providers

The Anchorage Regional Adult Education Program

In the Anchorage Regional Adult Education Program, Nine Star collaborates with the Anchorage Literacy Project and the Human Resources Company, a nonprofit organization that provides a variety of educational and social services in the Mat-Su Valley, to supply comprehensive adult education services to the region. This is Nine Star's largest adult education partnership, serving approximately 3,000 learners per year. Enrollment in ARAEP's work services programs is also substantial and, last year, represented almost 40 percent of all such enrollment for the state. ALP is a

nonprofit with strengths in early reading instruction and working with clients who have low literacy levels. Work is divided according to each organization's strengths. ALP typically works with those who read below fourth-grade level, and Nine Star works with those with higher reading levels. Both ALP and Nine Star are centered in Anchorage, while HRC provides case management, employment services, and instruction in the Mat-Su area.



The partners meet on a regular basis to align class schedules, curricula, professional development, and instructor assignments. In addition to classes at their own buildings, ARAEP offers services through Job Centers, recreation centers, a low-income housing site (see below), community schools, hotels and hotel unions, a local hospital, other businesses, and workforce development centers. Specific arrangements are spelled out in a memorandum of understanding that ARAEP has with each site.

ARAEP partners learned that offering services at multiple locations not only increases accessibility for clients, it also offers opportunities for staff to work closely together. Almost uniformly, staff members report a high degree of cooperation across agencies. This is not accidental. ARAEP directors meet monthly as a "core group." This core group reviews resources, looks for ways to reduce duplication and increase services, shares information about upcoming grant opportunities, and plans training for staff. ARAEP also supports committees that tackle specific ongoing issues, such as professional development, quality reviews for the Job Centers, and marketing.

Individual partners also foster collaboration. For example, HRC hired a staff member whose specific responsibilities include promoting collaboration among all of the agencies at the Wasilla Job Center. ARAEP partners share staff training as well, enabling staff to learn more about other agencies, build a common language, and cultivate shared values. HRC has developed a **letter of consent** for clients to aid in the sharing of information among the partners. Partners actively work to align services so that the adult education system is integrated and easier for clients to manage.

The Wasilla Job Center

Among their sites in the Mat-Su area, HRC staff operate a busy Job Center in Wasilla. Housed in a small converted shopping mall, the agencies are close together, and the staff members know each other. Inside, stuffed game animals (on loan from a museum) overlook banks of computers, walls of posters and announcements, and small class-



rooms. After intake, a staff person takes new clients to meet whomever they need to see – someone from the division of public assistance or Alaska Works, for example. Classes and workshops are targeted to the needs of the local clients. EL instructor Galina, herself an immigrant from Russia, coaches a student from Ghana. Other clients work independently on computers.



Learning with Every Sense

ALP instructors developed a special curriculum for learners with low levels of literacy. Based on research in multi-sensory instruction, the approach targets adult learners who read below fourth-grade level. For example, learners use their arms to trace the shape of a letter while they say the sound and look at the letter. They practice using the letter in words and sentences relevant to their lives. Classes are lively as learners build their literacy skills. To view the article that appeared in NCSALL's In Focus on ALP's MSI method of instruction, go to

<http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu/fob/2001/geertz.html>

The Gateway Learning Center

The Gateway Learning Center is located in a housing complex in Anchorage, home to a population that is mainly low-income and transient. Some 50 – 80 percent of residents there move every year. The Learning Center is a collaboration among Nine Star, the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC), multiple social service agencies, volunteers, and the residents themselves. Nine Star provides staff (paid and volunteer) for the center. The facilities, extremely clean and well organized, bring multiple services directly to clients and their families. The center offers adult basic education and GED preparation classes in addition to an open, supervised computer lab for adults and young people. Grants and donations have brought in brand-new computers, learning software, and books. Other services are offered to support resident families in reaching their goal of self-sufficiency, including:

- The Homework Club. Children living at the complex can come after school or during the evening to work on homework and enjoy enrichment activities, building skills in art, social interaction, and computer technology.

- On-site case management. The Department of Health and Social Services Division of Public Assistance (DPA) trains and supports case managers so that services are available on site. In fact, the GED instructor, an employee of Nine Star, is a trained case manager and also oversees the Homework Club.
- Employment-readiness services. A range of workshops, classes, and support helps residents search and prepare for work. For example, Skills for Life is a youth employment program focused on work-readiness skills and provided by the Alaska Youth and Parent Foundation. The center also offers vocational testing, women's finance workshops, job search assistance, and other types of support from the University of Alaska, the YWCA, the Educational Opportunity Center, and the Alaska Youth and Family Network.

Learning and Saving

The Gateway Learning Center offers a unique support program for residents. Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) is a voluntary program designed to promote economic self-sufficiency. Heads of household who join the program choose an employment goal and receive a combination of referrals for education, job training, counseling, and other assistance in finding employment. A special FSS case manager works with the family on completing an action plan. As the family's income rises and money becomes available for savings, FSS matches accrued savings with funds provided by the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation and invests the money for the family in an interest-bearing escrow account. When the family has achieved self-sufficiency and remained off public assistance for twelve consecutive months, they are given the invested money. Roughly 260 families participate in this program each year.



Partnerships with State and Workforce Development Agencies

The Anchorage/Mat-Su Workforce Investment Board's Operators Consortium

Nine Star led the effort to establish a Job Center in an area of Anchorage with a high level of unemployment. It was the first organization to rent space in an abandoned mall in the heart of the Muldoon community. This was a new venture for Nine Star, but partners such as the Anchorage Municipal Workforce Investment Office, Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Division of Employment Security, and the Division of Public Assistance soon joined the effort. These partners were ready when the federal Workforce Investment Act was passed, and they evolved into the Anchorage/Mat-Su Workforce Investment Board's Operators Consortium.

The Operators Consortium manages the Job Centers and supports partnerships across many locations in the Anchorage/Mat-Su region. The Consortium includes such other major partners as the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, Senior Community Service Employment Program, the Anchorage Literacy Project, and the Human Resources Company. Nine Star, ALP, and HRC jointly staff several grant-funded initiatives, including EL Civics and Northwest LINCS. EL Civics combines English literacy education with curriculum that encourages learners to become fully participating citizens, community members, and civic leaders. The program covers the basics of citizenship: the roles of citizens, immigration procedures, and American history and culture. (For a brief article on EL Civics, go to <http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/newsletr/win02/win02a.htm>.) LINCS is a web-based resource supported by the National Institute for Literacy to provide a communications network for those involved in adult and family literacy. Nine Star serves as the LINCS state specialist for Alaska and, with its partners, helps gather information for the site. (To view, go to <http://www.ninestar.com/lincs/index.htm>.)

In addition to services such as vocational rehabilitation, welfare-to-work training, and family support in addressing child abuse issues, Nine Star, HRC, and their partners offer adult basic education, GED preparation, English literacy instruction, assessment, and academic counseling services at the Job Center. Staff note that their close relationships with partners allow them to understand how and when to refer clients. When making referrals, staff often walk clients directly to a specific staff member in another organization; they say they lose fewer clients that way.

Job Centers

Job Centers are located in several neighborhoods and communities around the Anchorage/Mat-Su region. Each offers a wide range of adult education, job search, counseling, and support services. The Job Centers focus primarily on employment services, and, in collaboration with Nine Star or HRC, offer English literacy, adult basic education, or GED instruction. Nine Star and HRC provide instructors, generally AmeriCorps or VISTA participants and other volunteers, and the Job Centers make classroom space available. Nine Star and its part-



ners serve approximately 255 adults a year in Job Centers in the Anchorage/Mat-Su region.

To facilitate cross-agency collaboration, the partners sponsor a Job Centers Academy. The Academy is held four times a year to train staff from every agency to understand all of the available services. Local adult education providers and state agencies are invited to do presentations about their programs and services. Staff who have been trained at the Academy are better prepared to assess clients' needs and know how to refer them to services. This Job Centers Academy program is so successful that the partners have won an Alaska Department of Labor grant to expand the program statewide.

Senior Community Service Employment Program

As a result of its position in the Job Centers and its partnerships with the Alaska Commission on Aging and senior citizen centers, Nine Star has taken a leadership role in the Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training Program (MASST). MASST helps low-income clients over age 55 to build skills and find employment. Classes, a computer lab, assessment, and training help participants develop marketable skills (the MASST participant manual is available at <http://www.health.hss.state.ak.us/dsds/MASSTforms/ParticipantManual.doc>). The program also places participants in jobs or volunteer positions at nonprofit or public service agencies. MASST clients staff the reception desk at the Job Center in Muldoon, for example.

The Anchorage Senior Employment Program typically serves 65–80 clients a year, and the program's success has resulted in waiting lists. Recently, the program placed as many people in a single month as are expected to be placed in a year, according to David Alexander, Nine Star's director. Partner agencies, including the Palmer Senior Center and HRC, operate a similar program in the Mat-Su region, also with great success. In some years, the Mat-Su program has a 100 percent placement rate, according to Jeri Beall, the senior employment program coordinator.

Sharing Leadership

Nine Star and its partners use several strategies to manage the Job Centers. While the Operators' Consortium provides leadership across the region and focuses on resource sharing, policy, funding, and long-term planning, individual centers have their own local committees to manage the day-to-day operations of the center, as well as their own site directors to manage their operations.

The Division of Public Assistance

Nine Star has a long history of collaboration with the Division of Public Assistance (DPA). Under contract to DPA, Nine Star provides case management services for more than 1,000 families receiving public assistance. For the DPA, contracting with Nine Star has produced better results, and the agency now sends the majority of its outsourced casework to Nine Star and its partners.

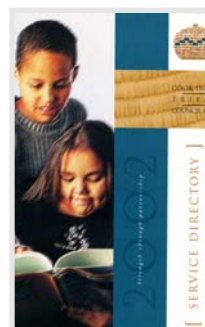
Nine Star also joined with DPA on a U.S. Department of Labor grant requiring that 70 percent of case management services be directed toward long-term clients on public assistance. To meet the grant requirements and address the most pressing community needs, Nine Star and DPA agreed that Nine Star would assist all long-term clients needing English literacy services. Nine Star administrators and staff decided to specialize in a hard-to-serve segment of Anchorage's immigrant population, the Hmong. To understand the group's needs and problems and to establish credibility within the Hmong community, Nine Star staff began attending community banquets and church events.

To serve this population effectively, Nine Star created the special position of junior case manager. The junior case managers, hired by Nine Star but trained by DPA, speak the Hmong language, understand the culture, work directly with clients on job searches, and provide referrals to job training and English literacy instruction, all under the oversight of senior case managers at DPA. This division of responsibility allowed Nine Star to hire case managers quickly; DPA's hiring process is lengthy and complicated. Nine Star staff are now considered specialists in working with Southeast Asian clients. Stephanie Hoyt, field services manager for the Department of Health and Social Services, says that because of the collaboration with Nine Star, now their "clients can get what they need." She adds, "Nonprofits have the flexibility to provide services in a way that state bureaucracies never can."

One result of the partnership between Nine Star and DPA has been a change in the way DPA works with adult education providers and outside case managers. In the past, DPA would assign new clients to any available case manager in DPA, and Nine Star staff might have to coordinate with up to 60 DPA staff members. Now, one DPA team handles all Nine Star cases, a more efficient and effective arrangement for helping clients. As the DPA field services manager described this evolving relationship, "Familiarity breeds cooperation."

Partnerships with Community-Based Organizations

The Cook Inlet Tribal Council



The Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) is a nonprofit arm of one of the thirteen Native Alaskan Corporations that serve Native Alaskans and Pacific Islander communities throughout the state. CITC provides a range of services, including adult education, GED preparation, basic skills and computer training, work-readiness training, and social services such as childcare, parent education, family literacy services, and substance abuse prevention. Nine Star and CITC began a partnership to help clients take

greater advantage of these services.

Success Stories

In a central spot at the CITC offices, one wall is covered with photographs and stories of clients who obtained their GED diplomas. Colorful bulletin boards frame the success stories, highlighting the accomplishments of the students, while encouraging others to persist toward their goals.



CITC staff reported that some Native Alaskan clients were not comfortable going downtown to the Nine Star offices or the busy Job Centers, so Nine Star and CITC set up classroom space and an open computer lab at the CITC building. Classes are staffed by volunteers and certified instructors (paid jointly by both organizations), and Nine Star and CITC are collaborating to develop curricula focused on employment skills. Nine Star and CITC also share professional development. CITC staff help train Nine Star instructors on cultural issues, and CITC staff can attend any of Nine Star's professional development programs.

The Tundra Pipeline Brings In Learners

After Nine Star and CITC set up services at the CITC offices to make them more accessible to Native Alaskans from remote villages, the offices became crowded. But staff are very pleased that word-of-mouth is filling their classes. Alaskans call this informal spread of information the "Tundra Pipeline," and administrators say their long waiting list for GED instruction is proof that the partnership, which allows them to bring services to the client, is working. Because it can take a month or two to move from the waiting list into the classroom, CITC staff encourage students to take advantage of both structured and unstructured courses offered through their on-site Computer Development Center. Students generally have some interest in developing basic computer skills, and this enables them to make good use of their time while waiting to join a GED class.

Covenant House

Covenant House serves youths aged 13-20 who are homeless and suffering from addiction, mental health problems, or abuse. Nine Star trained the youth resource coordinator at Covenant House, Roger Hamacher, so that he could administer GED tests and pre-tests. He also can bring in Covenant House youth to Nine Star offices for testing at a time convenient for the student, rather than just at specific hours. Hamacher notes that this flexibility is the key to the improved rates of GED completion for

Partnership Increases GED Graduates

In the two years since Covenant House and Nine Star joined forces, 87 young people have obtained their GED diplomas. In the previous decade, before the partnership, only two young people from Covenant House received GED diplomas.

Covenant House clients. Nine Star also makes tutors available if these students need extra help. This flexibility has enabled Covenant House to help more clients obtain GED diplomas. Says Hamacher, "The GED has a dramatic impact on homelessness. You see a huge increase in self-esteem when a kid goes from homeless to GED-holder."

Anchorage Community Schools

Nine Star and ALP work closely with five of Anchorage's schools to bring services to communities by providing instructors to lead classes in GED preparation, English literacy, and family literacy. Fifty-nine families with 134 children participated in the partners' Even Start program last year. To support these partnerships, Nine Star created a new staff position of community coordinator. The community coordinator attends neighborhood council meetings and other community events, helps with case management, coordinates with the Reading Excellence Act program in the schools, and teaches English literacy or family literacy classes.

One school, Fairview Elementary, serves about 10 percent of the partners' Even Start program participants and recently won a national grant to ensure that children were reading at grade level by third grade. Out of fourteen districts, Fairview was chosen, along with two other schools, because of its demonstrated need for English literacy instruction. Fairview's minority population is large and diverse: 40 percent Hispanic, 20 percent Samoan, plus Native Alaskan students and those of Hmong and Filipino descent.

In this collaborative program, Nine Star sends instructors to the school (and pays their salaries) four days a week to run a family literacy program. Fairview Elementary staff members provide support for the family literacy activities in the school, including space, and work with Nine Star staff to help forge a connection to the home, for example, by providing books for participating families to take home.

CHALLENGES AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Serving the complex needs of a large region with many clients located in remote and nearly inaccessible areas is not easy. Logistical problems are a daily challenge for Nine Star and its partners. Technology problems occur regularly, and finding adequate classroom space is difficult. Sustaining classes in many locations is expensive. Despite these difficulties, Nine Star's director, David Alexander, emphasizes the importance of a long-term commitment. "You have to be flexible," he says. "You have to go where the students are and have the patience to allow good programs to mature."

Access to educational opportunities is limited in Alaska. Although technology potentially offers access from remote areas, many residents do not have Internet access or television, or they cannot reach a classroom. Nine Star and its partners are addressing this issue by expanding their PLATO project to increase program access for those able to use the Internet. PLATO is an adult education learning system, available in web-based and CD-ROM formats, with curricula in reading and writing, math, social studies, science, English literacy, work skills, and life skills. Nine Star offers the program at several sites in Anchorage, with the computer labs supported by AmeriCorps members. An AmeriCorps VISTA member is currently developing a distance education program, so that PLATO materials can be accessed from home or a public facility.

Nine Star wants more employers in the area to see themselves as partners in workforce development and adult education. Around Anchorage, some of the larger hotels and other industries support adult education, but they are a small sample of the employers in the region. Nine Star has worked to involve the business community by creating a staff position dedicated to that purpose. Caroline Gill-McLemore, Nine Star's business liaison and job developer, works closely with local business leaders and employers' human resource departments to place Nine Star clients. She emphasizes the importance of knowing the culture of a company, being candid about whether prospective employees need a sheltered work environment (due to low levels of English literacy, for example), and following up once a client has a job. Follow-up can include visiting clients at the work site, providing special on-the-job training, developing a special curriculum to support a client's employment goals, or offering work-site literacy courses.

Nine Star aims to continue improving the quality of services for communities with the fewest educational opportunities by expanding its work in the following areas:

- **Family literacy.** In response to both new federal legislation (the *No Child Left Behind* act) and the growing need in its region, Nine Star plans to develop new family literacy programs with its partners and to expand partnerships with faith-based and community-based organizations.
- **Case management.** Nine Star currently provides case management services for the Division of Public Assistance. Staff would like to expand this work with DPA and other social service agencies because it will help them integrate services more effectively.
- **Healthcare partnerships.** Nine Star hopes to build a relationship with local healthcare providers, such as Providence Hospital in Anchorage, to establish new workplace literacy programs. This effort will help Nine Star meet its goal of integrating adult basic education and workforce development.

CONCLUSION

Anchorage has many people who are undereducated and underemployed, and Nine Star is committed to expanding their access to services that can help improve their lives. Despite considerable challenges, Nine Star is adept at creating and sustaining partnerships. As Nine Star's director David Alexander says, "We give until it hurts. We don't demand a *quid pro quo*." Staff work hard to support their partners by attending partners' events, sharing resources, finding ways to meet mutual goals, and providing advice and mentoring. They recognize that each partnership is unique and must be treated accordingly. Partners strive to maintain an open-door policy for staff and clients, coordinate regular meetings, and cultivate open communication.

As staff seek constantly to solve problems and reach more clients, they draw on their passion for service. As Alexander describes it, "Nine Star has allowed and encouraged community involvement, the development of relationships, and not being limited to one's own program...an entrepreneurial attitude." The focus is firmly on the needs of the client, and staff work with each other and with partners to keep that always foremost in mind. As Nine Star's operations manager, Amy Young, observes, "It doesn't happen by magic. People work hard."



HRC, Inc.

Work Services
Fax (907) 376-0147 Phone (907) 352-2559

Letter of Consent

I _____, give my permission to the Work Services Programs to provide information to and obtain information from the agency / agencies checked below:

<input type="checkbox"/> Adult Basic Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
<input type="checkbox"/> Dept. of Labor/ Employment Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Division of Public Assistance
<input type="checkbox"/> WIA (formerly JTPA)	<input type="checkbox"/> Mat-Su School District --- <i>Dzuuggi</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Life Quest	<input type="checkbox"/> Mat-Su College
<input type="checkbox"/> Family Learning Partnership	<input type="checkbox"/> Multi-Rush Center
<i>Chugiak Children's Services</i>	
<i>Healthy Families Mat-Su</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Mat-Su Recovery	<input type="checkbox"/> other _____

It is my understanding that only information that is relevant to my work and educational goals will be exchanged. THIS RELEASE OF INFORMATION WILL EXPIRE WITHOUT EXPRESSED REVOCATION UPON COMPLETION OF MY TRAINING OR SPECIFIED DATE _____
This consent is subject to revocation (in writing) at any time except that action has been taken thereon.

> Parent / Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Customer's Signature _____ Date _____

* Witness Signature _____ Date _____

Customer's Social Security Number _____

* Witness Signature _____ Date _____

Customer's Date of Birth _____ Month / Day / Year

> If a customer is a minor, signature of parent or guardian is required.

* If unable to write his or her name, the customer should enter an "X" or another mark. Signatures of two witnesses are required.

Up-Dated on 6/21/2002 10:30 AM Letter of Consent.doc by Tarany Sellars / Marlene Ratzlaff