

## Ernie Turner Center

Innovative program is helping Alaskans break the cycle of drug and alcohol addiction

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An innovative program is helping Alaskans break the cycle of drug and alcohol addiction.

It's called the Ernie Turner Center. It's run by the Cook Inlet Tribal Council. Recently, they were awarded the contract to provide detox services here in Anchorage. But, as CBS 11 News found out, that is just one of the programs they offer to help break the cycle of addiction.

The Ernie Turner Center looks like a home on the outside. Inside it feels like one too, complete with a resident dog and welcoming signs. The idea is that people in recovery are part of a family, in this case, a family who lives in an Alaskan Native village.

"It's set up like you would see in a village. We have the village chief, the village council and our participants, not the staff, run the house," said Shannon Sommer of Cook Inlet Tribal Council.

Lauren Smith participated in one of the three residential programs offered at the center. She calls her recovery a journey.



"I wanted to stop using; and I wanted to stop drinking, but I couldn't. I tried my hardest to do it; and I couldn't do it. So I came into treatment here and I stayed for three months," said program graduate, Lauren Smith.

Today, Smith is a graduate of the program and now works at the center, while pursuing a nursing degree at UAA.

The other two programs breaking the cycle at the Ernie Turner Center are Wisdom Place, for elders over 55, and Transitions, for people who are homeless.

Moody Charles broke the cycle through a program at the center.

"I'm glad I went through it. It helped me a lot," said program graduate, Charles.

Today, Charles is passing his skills on to others and feeling proud that he has gained the respect that his drinking once took away.

"You know they've lost that special feeling: people seeking their guidance. They are regaining that. And for those who are younger, they may not have had that type of relationship with an elder. So we are fostering different types of relationships that are common in our tribes and they are common within our culture," said Charles.

Workers at the Ernie Turner Center believe it's the family setting that can make a big difference in turning people's lives around.

The programs at the Ernie Turner Center are not just for Alaska Natives. Anyone can participate, although most do have waiting lists to get in.

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