



ALASKA STATE HOSPITAL &
NURSING HOME ASSOCIATION

HOSPITALS IMPROVING COMMUNITY HEALTH JANUARY 2017

Hospitals are more than just places to go when you are sick. Increasingly, hospitals are centers for community health, improving well-being in the community through services both inside and outside of their walls. Following are a few ways that Alaska's hospitals are working beyond traditional health care to improve the lives of Alaskans.

Anchorage hospitals connect to address homelessness.

Providence Alaska Medical Center, Alaska Regional Hospital and Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium have partnered with Catholic Social Services, through the Brother Francis Shelter, the Municipality of Anchorage, Southcentral Foundation and Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center to work toward ending homelessness. The partners have developed a medical respite program and expanded hours at the Shelter's volunteer health care clinic.

Clients at Brother Francis Shelter often have significant unmet medical needs. Medical issues can cause people to become homeless and then keep them homeless, as they are unable to find work or maintain housing. A pilot medical respite program for the homeless was developed with Providence Home Health and has been expanded from four to ten beds, with all three hospitals contributing to the expansion. The Caring Clinic at Brother Francis Shelter, staffed by volunteers in the past, will see expanded hours this spring to accommodate growing need. Transportation to hospitals or other appointments will be provided by the Municipality. The group is working with the University of Notre Dame School of Economics to track progress and assess program effectiveness. In other communities, the respite program has reduced the use of emergency services, freed up hospital bed capacity and reduced readmissions.

Mountain View Clinic serves unmet needs.

In 2013, the Department of Health and Human Services released a study showing that the Mountain View area of Anchorage had a disproportionate number of Medicaid recipients using local emergency rooms for non-emergent health needs. In fact, many area residents sought primary care services in Alaska Regional Hospital's emergency department. Recognizing this need, in December 2016 Alaska Regional Hospital opened a primary care clinic in the neighborhood, which holds claim to the most diverse census tract in America.

The clinic, housed in a former pawn shop, provides easily accessible primary care for an underserved population, where primary care needs had not been adequately met for many years. Opening the facility has been an important step forward toward reducing the use of emergency rooms for services that could be provided in a physician office or clinic. The new clinic, which is open Tuesday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., offers services ranging from newborn exams to well-child visits to geriatric care, and treats routine illnesses as well as providing preventive care.

Alaska ED Collaboration Project seeks to improve care.

Emergency rooms are necessary when you need them, but not intended to serve as primary care. Many Alaskans, lacking primary care providers, use the Emergency Department (ED) for non-emergent needs. While the ED is the appropriate place to seek treatment during an emergency, frequent use of the ED for non-emergency needs can sometimes mean basic health care needs like primary care and behavioral health, aren't

getting met. In addition, the ED is one of the most expensive places to receive care. To address this problem, Alaska hospitals are partnering together to improve care in hospital EDs.

Key elements of the Alaska ED Collaboration Project include implementation of an ED information exchange to give ED physicians immediate access to critical information they need about past ED visits and care plans, integration of the ED information exchange with the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP), uniform statewide guidelines for prescribing narcotics in an ED, care coordination, and patient education on the appropriate use of ED services and alternative services for non-emergency care.

Through the project, hospitals hope to both improve care in hospital EDs and to connect people to appropriate outpatient services to better address their underlying physical or mental health needs. The Emergency Department Information Exchange (EDIE) is launching this spring for hospitals on the Railbelt, with the goal of eventually expanding to include all of Alaska's hospitals.

Sitka Community Hospital takes the lead in preventing injuries.

Sitka can be dark in the winter and many bicycle and pedestrian fatalities and injuries happen in low visibility. At Sitka community hospital's emergency department in 2015, 12 pedestrians, nine cyclists and five motorists were injured on Sitka roadways. 57% of the accidents happened in times of low visibility. To address this, Sitka Community Hospital partnered with the State of Alaska, the Police and Fire Commission, the Sitka Police Department, local businesses, schools, and a local bank to develop a "Be Bright At Night" project. High visibility jackets and arm bands were displayed, raffled and given out to students and people in need. A multimedia campaign helped to get out the message. In October 2015, an observation survey of 87 local walker and cyclists revealed that just seven were visible to motorists in dark conditions from about 150 feet. The program's goal was to move from 8% to 20% visibility in three months. The post-project survey showed a quadrupling of visible walkers and cyclists, from 8% to 34%.

Central Peninsula Hospital fills need for community services.

The Soldotna hospital has identified unmet needs in the community and supports services to fill those needs. These include funding the Healthy Kids and Safe Kids lifestyle and injury prevention programs, providing diabetes education, conducting an annual drive-through flu shot clinic which provides 350-400 vaccinations, hosting provider-led presentations on health topics and supporting a sexual assault response program. In addition, the hospital serves as a gathering place for community groups supporting health, such as narcotics anonymous, cardiac patient support groups, overeaters anonymous and a prostate cancer support group.

Providence Kodiak Island Medical Center works to enrich the community.

The local hospital touches the Kodiak community in many ways, including donating leftover food and care packages to the Kodiak Island Brother Francis Shelter, teaching preschool students about infection prevention, conducting free depression screenings, and providing drug and alcohol abuse intervention outreach to the community by conducting 50 free assessments and referrals.