

# All Alaska Pediatric Partnership

## Standing together for Alaska's Kids and Families

**Date:** October 5, 2009

**To:** Pediatric Project Participants / Key Stakeholders

**From:** AAPP Executive Team: Stephanie Birch, DH&SS and AAPP chair; Jon Lyon, MD and KSA Project Chair; Matt Hirschfeld, MD, SCF; Dick Mandsager, MD, PAMC

**Subject:** Alaska Pediatric Subspecialty Distribution Plan

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We are pleased to announce that the All Alaska Pediatric Partnership (AAPP) and affiliates have officially commenced the pediatric subspecialty distribution planning process. The purpose of this plan is to develop a distribution strategy that provides the optimal balance of access to care for Alaska's children with an environment that is attractive to new providers, identifies the best use of outside specialists and primary care providers, and ensures volumes necessary to maintain skill sets and provide high quality, safe care. To assist in this process, we have engaged the services of Kurt Salmon Associates (KSA), a worldwide healthcare consulting firm with experience in children's healthcare, rural/frontier markets, physician development, and strategic planning in complex environments. With this memo, we would like to invite you to participate.

During the month of November, representatives from KSA consisting of Mark Wietecha, Shelley Oberlin and Laura Rehfeld will be onsite to meet with various stakeholders to discuss the current challenges and future opportunities to improve the delivery of pediatric subspecialty care in Alaska. Interviews will last between 45 to 60 minutes, in which they will ask a variety of questions designed to understand the qualitative components of our health care market. While the interviews are intended to be freeform and flexible, we have included a brief list of example questions that may be used to help guide the discussion.

- ¶ How are pediatric needs in Alaska currently met? What are the greatest health concerns for Alaska's children? Which geographies are in particular need of specific subspecialties?
- ¶ Who is referred for subspecialty care? Which services are referred out of state and why?
- ¶ What services are currently not available in Alaska that should be provided? Are there major gaps by region? Are there any subspecialty services that should not be provided in Alaska (i.e., should always be referred out of state)?
- ¶ How much outreach activity is reasonable to expect from physician practices?
- ¶ Under what conditions is it appropriate to rely on adult specialists to serve the pediatric population? Are there certain specialties and/or certain sparsely populated geographies where this might be a reasonable model?

## **Expected Outcomes and Benefits**

- ¶ The planning timeframe will focus on a 5 + year perspective.
- ¶ The primary goal is to be able to provide complex quality care as close to home as possible. For example, currently many Alaskan children with special needs and their families need to leave Alaska for extended periods of time for their care. In addition, it is common for children in Alaskan communities to have to travel to Anchorage for initial evaluation or for follow-up of their special needs.
- ¶ An additional goal is to be sure to provide a timely response to urgent specialized care, i.e., “a medical safety net for our children and their families”. For example, many children with complex specialized illnesses are fragile and can have extremely rapid onset of complications requiring urgent specialized care. Travel long distances with-in Alaska and especially outside Alaska poses additional risk and potential poor outcomes
- ¶ We expect that this shared vision will assist recruitment and retention of needed specialized health care providers.
- ¶ We expect that this shared vision will assist in understanding the financial challenges and facilitate financial strategies. For example, it is assumed that state or philanthropic support will always be required to realize complex quality care as close to home and to provide “a medical safety net for our children and their families”. It is hoped that articulating a consensus opinion and a blueprint will help others with financial resources to understand the need and to themselves join as financial partners of the shared vision.

Over the next few weeks, representatives from AAPP or KSA will be contacting you to confirm your availability for an interview with KSA. Thank you in advance for your support of this important initiative.

Best regards.