

Alaska faces severe nursing shortage

The state of Alaska has numerous positions for experienced public health nurses, but according to Assistant Chief of Nursing Jean Lucius of the Alaska Division of Public Health, these positions remain unfilled because of a nursing shortage which she described as "severe and frightening."

Positions are now available in Bethel, McGrath, Tok, Fairbanks and Anchorage. Lucius said it is even difficult filling entry level positions in urban areas, but the situation is far more critical in remote areas.

"Positions in rural areas are historically hard to fill," she said. "We've been recruiting for some of these positions for six or seven months and we are not getting responses. We need experienced nurses for these positions who are unafraid of the challenges presented by nursing in Alaska."

In addition to competitive pay and benefits, Lucius points to a number of other benefits of public health nursing with the state of Alaska. These include relocation expenses, an opportunity for an independent practice, especially

in rural areas, exceptional promotional opportunities, a chance to work in various locations and excellent training opportunities.

Lucius said a training program is imperative since 30 percent of the current staff are entry level nurses.

"We're preparing a two-year basic training plan now that will augment and develop nursing skills."

Lucius said she views the training programs as one element of a long-term solution to the nursing shortage in Alaska. She said another element is encouraging rural Alaskans to enter

the nursing profession and to eventually fill these positions in their local communities.

Those who want more information and application forms, are encouraged to contact Jean Lucius by writing the Nursing Section, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Social Services, P.O. Box H, Juneau 99811-0611 or by calling (907) 465-3150 collect.

Application forms and Public Health Nurse recruitment bulletins are also available at any Division of Personnel office or Job Service.