

# CIRI health agency gets ANMC contract

by Jeff Richardson  
*Tundra Times staff*

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The Indian Health Service has awarded the first contract to a Native health corporation to operate services offered by the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) in Anchorage.

In a letter to the Southcentral Foundation, Gerald Ivey, director of the Alaska Area Native Health Service, wrote:

"I am pleased to inform you that your P.L. 93-638 proposal, as revised on July 22, 1993, to provide psychiatry services within the Anchorage area has been ap-

proved."

Virtually all federal Native health facilities and programs in Alaska have been under the control of tribal health contractors for some time, thanks to the passage of Public Law 93-638, the Indian Self-Determination Act of 1976. But because the Alaska Native Medical Center is a large statewide facility, deciding whether or how to contract some or all of its services has been a dilemma.

"For our operations at the hospital, this is a historic, groundbreaking development," said Dr. Richard Mandsager, ANMC di-

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rector. He says the difficulty arises when a Native health contractor says they want to manage what in effect is their constituents' share of the statewide service: how do you satisfy such logical aspirations without diminishing or degrading service to the remainder of the population served by ANMC?

In the case of Southcentral Foundation, Mandsager said the key was developing a close relationship with ANMC's psychiatry unit managers and maintaining a high level of respect for the unit's statewide responsibility.

"It appears it will be successful because it involved a lot of teamwork," said Mandsager.

Katherine Grosdidier, executive director of Southcentral Foundation, agrees. She said the organization, which serves Alaska Natives and American Indians

resident in Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna Valley region, adopted a cautious and methodical approach to developing their contract proposal over a period over many months, involving many meetings and revisions.

Grosdidier said she is very proud of the contract award.

"It goes along with our mission which is to encourage our people to take charge of their own lives by managing this program."

Southcentral currently manages several programs and staff positions housed at ANMC, but these were contracted from the Alaska Area Native health Service, not from the hospital. While these programs serve all Indian Health Service beneficiaries, Southcentral's funding is derived from a formula based on the organization's service area population.

The Southcentral Foundation proposal to contract outpatient psy-

chiatry services from ANMC contains several features, including:

- the psychiatry department will remain at the hospital, which will continue to be the primary service location. However, expanded services will also be provided at Southcentral's larger and more inviting offices near Fireweed and

Arctic in Anchorage;

- there will be no change in service levels to IHS beneficiaries who reside outside Southcentral's service area;

- five of the eleven psychiatry staff positions will remain IHS employees serving the statewide population. The chief of psychia-

try will continue in that position and supervise both IHS and Southcentral staff.

Grosdidier says the new contract will allow for continued improvement and expansion of services because of the greater management flexibility exercised by tribal health organizations.