

# Tanana Hospital to close

By LINDA LORD-JENKINS

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The Tanana Hospital will be closed down on Sept. 30 according to the Indian Health Service but efforts are being made to keep the 20-bed facility open.

A statement issued last week by Indian Health Service Director Dr. Everett R. Rhoades said the hospital will be closed but William "Spud"

Williams, president of the Tanana Chiefs Conference said TCC is working to get that decision rescinded.

Williams, however, declined to elaborate on what efforts were being made, saying he preferred to deal quietly with the "bureaucracy."

The 40-year-old hospital was designated to be closed because it is an "under utilized."  
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# Hospital closure causes concern

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ized, obsolete facility and its small size and staff severely limit the scope and medical sophistication of inpatient care services that can be provided," according to an IHS press release.

In the place of the hospital, an ambulatory care clinic will be established for use by Tanana residents. That clinic will have a physician and physician's assistant on staff to provide medical care to Tanana village residents only, according to Tom Hartrich, director of the Interior Alaska Service Unit in Fairbanks. The hospital serves people from outside Tanana.

Hartrich said similar clinics are provided in Galena, Ft. Yukon, McGrath and Tok.

The patients who otherwise would use the hospital would be sent to hospitals in Fairbanks and some other services have been reported to be moving into the hospital building.

Those services include an elderly residential care center sponsored by the Tanana Chiefs Conference, and a foster care center and a multiple impact family therapy program, said Hartrich.

He said that the hospital is being closed because it is rarely used.

Hartrich said that the hospital averages only 25 percent occupancy on a daily basis. "That means that on some days we might have five patients, some days 10 and some days none at all."

The hospital in 1980 delivered about 70 babies but in 1981, only 30 were delivered.

The hospital provides no surgical care.

Hartrich said that the majority of patients at the hospital were not there for primary medical care. Many were awaiting transportation to their villages, had problems at home that kept them from returning there, or were just out of the hospital and needed some minimal care. The remaining 40 percent needed to have 24-hour medical supervision, he said.

Hartrich said that the hospital has been averaging 23 patients per day in the outpatient clinic but when the main hospital is closed that number will drop to about 14 per day. He said the drop in clinic is because some specialized clinics which have been scheduled in Tanana for Interior residents will be stopped.

Those clinics included surgical check-up visits, orthopedic visits, and radiology visits. Those clinics now will be handled in Fairbanks by private physicians, said Hartrich, who said the money saved by closing Tanana Hospital will help pay for the Fairbanks physicians' visits.

Tanana Hospital is operating on a \$1.9 million annual budget and only \$360,000 will be needed to run the clinic. The remaining will be used for health care in the area, he said.

With the shutdown of the hospital, about 22 Tanana residents will be out of work. Of the hospital's 42 employees, Hartrich said about 20 had come from the Tanana area. The remainder had moved to the area to find work.

He said only four jobs will be retained for local people — two maintenance workers, one clerical worker, one part-time housekeeper and one part-time supply clerk.

He said that some of the nurses on staff already have found other jobs which has speeded up the closure a little faster than he would like.