

Bush Health Priorities

Health Planning Seminar in Offing

By MARGIE BAUMAN

ANCHORAGE — A rural health planning seminar, to establish basic health needs and make decisions on health priorities in the Alaskan bush, will be held in Anchorage April 26 - 27.

The directive went out to the 12 regional Native corporations from Carl Jack, director of the health affairs division of the Alaska Federation of Natives.

Jack organized the seminar to prepare for a health planning conference this autumn, to be attended by five representatives from each corporate region.

Jack said that upon completion of the seminar, participants would be ready to assume leadership roles of the 12 larger groups to participate in the autumn conference.

A number of persons representing federal, state and private health related agencies have also been invited to attend, to acquaint bush participants in the conference with the larger perspectives in health planning and of the realities of existing health resources, Jack said.

These include the Alaska Department of Health, Public Health Service, Indian Health

Service/Alaska Area Native Health Service, Region Ten of Comprehensive Health Planning, Alaska State Medical Association, Alaska State Hospital Association, University of Alaska,

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Alaska Methodist University and the Surgeon General's Office of the Alaska Command.

In a memo to the 12 regional corporations, Jack stressed the importance of the seminar.

"It is generally conceded that, in order for meaningful health services to reach the community level, the communities who receive those services must establish their own health needs and make basic decisions about health priorities," Jack said.

"In order to do that, community members must have adequate information upon which decisions may be made, this is what comprehensive health planning is all about, and is essentially what we hope to begin to accomplish with the April seminar.

"Hopefully, when communities have organized themselves to make decisions about establishing their own health priorities, the result will be that providers of health will actually deliver a better service and the total health of the local communities will be upgraded," he said.

Jack said there are also significant economic considerations to be made by Alaska Natives, as they discuss the delivery of health services in rural Alaska.

"The health industry in Alaska for example, is perhaps one of the top four or five, in terms of manpower utilization," he said. "Native groups and communities therefore have a vital interest in that industry as a potential resource for the utilization of Native manpower."

Health affairs advised regional groups to pick as their representative to the seminar the new 12-member health, education and social services board of AFN, Inc. This board will be setting policy for health affairs affecting Native people in the future.

"We think it may be important to select on the basis of interest in health matters," Jack said. "It is quite possible that at some future date, the various Native organizations will manage and deliver their own health services through their own established health entities"

The agenda is tentative, subject to approval of participants in the seminar, but at present, this is it:

The seminar begins the morning of April 26 with a tour of health facilities in Anchorage, including the greater Anchorage

area borough health facilities.

John Shively, executive vice president of AFN, Inc., will deliver the keynote address that afternoon, followed by a presentation of the Alaska Area Native Health Service of the U. S. Public Health Service. Next on the agenda is a discussion, and debriefing sessions for various Native and agency groups.

State health department officials will make their presentation the next morning, followed by reports from the Surgeon General, the Alaska State Medical Association, Comprehensive Health Planning and several discussions.

For the last half day of the seminar, Native delegates will work until noon, April 28, developing the work agenda for the fall rural health planning conference. Staff assignments from this group will be given to AFN staff to work on the fall conference.