

Kristin Tolbert
Southcentral Foundation
(907) 729-6317
ktolbert@scf.cc
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ANCHORAGE-BASED ORGANIZATION SHARING ITS TRADE SECRETS FOR A SUPERIOR HEALTH CARE MODEL

Details How Alaska Native People Transformed Health Care Into Award-Winning System Presented During Summit With Cambridge-based Group

(Anchorage, AK) – Southcentral Foundation (SCF) participated in a web conference with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) and the Indian Health Service (IHS), April 1 to 2. The conference was titled Innovations in Planned Care II. While national leaders look to cure the current health care systems, SCF has already transformed health care with laudable results. Health care 2.0 is here.

“Southcentral Foundation’s Nuka Model of Care is the result of a partnership with the Alaska Native community,” said SCF Chief Operating Officer Chuck Clement. “With the incredible improvements and successes, we’re learning a village can lead a nation.”

Based in Cambridge, Mass., IHI is an independent not-for-profit organization that aims to lead the improvement of health care throughout the world. IHS is based in Washington, D.C., and is responsible to ensure Alaska Natives and American Indian people receive health services. Originally, IHI and IHS were sending over 250 participants for a site visit to SCF’s Anchorage campus. Mt. Redoubt’s volatility forced a change in the format.

Serving approximately 55,000 Alaska Native and American Indian people, SCF’s health care system is accredited by The Joint Commission. SCF operates the only campus accredited by The Joint Commission that includes a Traditional Healing program, which incorporates Alaska Native values and traditions with Western-style medical care.

The health campus includes the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC). ANMC is jointly owned and managed by SCF and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. The American Nurses Credentialing Center, the world’s largest nurse credentialing organization, awarded ANMC with Magnet status twice. ANMC remains the only hospital in Alaska and the only tribal hospital in the nation to have earned Magnet status.

SCF’s Nuka Model of Care is created with the Alaska Native community by assembling proven best practices from around the world. The results include national and international recognition, including a site visit from People's Republic of China Minister of Health and seven other delegates in May 2007, and a Malcolm Baldrige site visit in 2008. SCF is visited by many organizations around the world who seek to learn from its successes and identify opportunities for improvement within their own systems.

CareOregon is just one example of an organization that has implemented SCF's Nuka Model, at least in part, and has seen substantial results.

In 1982, SCF began the journey toward a health care system managed by Alaska Native and American Indian people for Alaska Native and American Indian people. The transfer from a federally-run system to a locally-run system, now called the Nuka Model, was completed in 1999. The Nuka Model is built upon four key pillars.

First, SCF serves customer-owners and not patients. Everything SCF customers define as needs, goals and values become the system's focus. The doctor and care team provide expertise, explain options and make recommendations. But the customer is in control and makes decisions, providing a true degree of empowerment.

Second, SCF has developed integrated care teams built upon the medical home model. Customers select the doctor, be it a family physician, pediatrician or internist. Each team has a doctor with one or two medical assistants, a full-time nurse who focuses on care coordination and an administrative assistant who provides case management support. Additionally, the team concept has been extended by assigning specialists and ancillary providers to each primary care team.

Third, SCF has virtually eliminated the barriers of time by offering same-day access. The system has been offering same-day access for nearly a decade with 70 to 80 percent of appointment slots open at the start of any given day. Teams handle what they can over the phone. If a visit is needed, the customer can be scheduled for that same day to meet with any members of the team, based upon the customers' needs. This eliminates bottlenecks by shifting work to where it's most appropriately done, which also creates cost efficiency.

Finally, a strong supporting infrastructure is active. Every new employee goes through a three and one-half day orientation to review SCF processes, philosophy and Alaska Native people and cultures. The care teams receive regular feedback, including data on how each team is performing in dozens of clinical measures. Physicians' salaries are based on their team's overall performance.

"The Alaska Native people applaud the national leaders who continue to discuss the current serious problems in health care," said Clement. "Our hope is for these decision-makers to recognize that Southcentral Foundation has a proven, shovel-ready health care model with a decade of results."

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Established in 1982, SCF's mission is to work together with the Native Community to achieve wellness through health and related services. The non-profit health care affiliate of Cook Inlet Region, Inc., SCF has grown in its 26 years, from a single dental clinic to an internationally recognized, award-winning health care organization that employs more than 1,350 people and administers a budget of more than \$181 million annually to manage more than 60 health care programs and services.