



Who is SEARHC?

- The SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) is a non-profit inter-tribal health consortium founded in 1975 under the provisions of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act.
- SEARHC serves the health interests of the Tlingít, Haida, Tsimshian and other Native people living in a remote region about the size of Florida. Many of the communities served by SEARHC can be reached only by plane or boat, and most villages have populations of fewer than 1,000 people.
- There are 18 Native communities that belong to SEARHC, and each of the 18 Native communities has a seat on the SEARHC Board of Directors.
- SEARHC is one of the oldest, largest and most innovative tribally operated health organizations in the country.

SEARHC: A Brief History

- Before SEARHC was created, health care for Alaska Natives was dictated by the Indian Health Service in Washington, D.C.
- The creation of SEARHC allowed local tribes to manage Indian Health Service programs and facilities, which allowed us to be more responsive to the health care needs and priorities of our communities.
- SEARHC received its first IHS contract in 1976, when it took over management of the Community Health Aide/Practitioner program in Southeast Alaska. In 1982, SEARHC began managing the IHS Juneau clinic (now known as the Ethel Lund Medical Center). In 1986, SEARHC took over operation of Mt. Edgecumbe Hospital in Sitka. SEARHC now has nearly 1,000 employees and an annual budget of about \$93 million.
- SEARHC runs a nationally accredited regional hospital, several ambulatory care clinics throughout the region, a full-service behavioral health division, and provides services in dental, optometry, chronic disease care, wellness and health provider education. Many of these programs are models for similar tribal health programs in other parts of the state and nation.

SEARHC's key leaders

- Ethel Lund, who served as SEARHC's first President from 1975-2000 and now is SEARHC President Emeritus.
- Roald Helgesen became the current President/CEO in 2007.
- Victoria Demmert of Yakutat became Chair of the SEARHC Board of Directors in 2008. The previous two SEARHC Board Chairs — Jan Hill of Haines and Lincoln Bean Sr. of Kake — remain on the Board and help provide continuity of leadership.

SEARHC health care innovations

The SEARHC mission is “to provide the highest quality health services in partnership with Native people.” Due to its remote location and sparse population, SEARHC finds innovative ways to meet our mission.

- **Bring health care home** — Improved clinic space throughout our communities allows SEARHC to add more local staff and services, so patients do not have to leave their families or jobs to receive care. SEARHC builds partnerships with other health care organizations in the region so those organizations provide contract health care services for SEARHC patients.
- **Provide behavioral health services** — SEARHC provides a full-service, nationally accredited behavioral health care program headquartered in Sitka. The behavioral health program includes residential substance abuse treatment programs for adolescents and adults. The Community Family Services program provides basic substance abuse prevention and treatment services in nine remote communities under the supervision of upper-level providers in Sitka.
- **Frontier Extended Stay Clinic** — SEARHC is the lead agency for a national demonstration project designed to provide hospital-like services to patients in ambulatory clinics who need a monitored outpatient treatment or are awaiting a medevac. The FESC program includes two SEARHC sites (Klawock and Haines), as well as other non-SEARHC sites around Alaska and Washington.

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- **Leadership in telemedicine services** — Community Health Aides/Practitioners (paraprofessionals) use videoconferencing technology so they can have a doctor in Sitka or Juneau at their side when they examine a patient. Telepharmacy lets patients at the Alicia Roberts Medical Center in Klawock receive medications dispensed by a pharmacist at Mt. Edgecumbe Hospital in Sitka. Telebehavioral health allows patients in remote villages to consult via videoconferencing with a psychiatrist, clinical psychologist or behavioral health clinician based in Sitka or Juneau. Dieticians in Juneau and Sitka also provide telenutrition services to remote communities.

The future of SEARHC

- **Systems transformation** — Our project will make the consortium better prepared to deliver health care by introducing a new electronic health record that ties all the patient health care and business systems together into one comprehensive system. It also will allow SEARHC to be more proactive in providing prevention services, so patients stay healthier.
- **Prevent disease and promote wellness** — SEARHC has several wellness programs designed to prevent patients from becoming sick or injured.
 - ❑ WISEWOMAN has been one of the leaders in the national cardiovascular health program for women.
 - ❑ SEARHC partners with Bartlett Regional Hospital in Juneau to provide mobile mammogram services to more than 2181 women in nine remote communities since 2007.
 - ❑ The SEARHC Lifestyle Balance Program for Natives with prediabetes has been effective in teaching students how to avoid or delay getting Type 2 diabetes.
 - ❑ The SEARHC Tobacco Program has enrolled 1,596 patients in its tobacco cessation program (and has served 1,742 patients if you include the extra 146 educational encounters it made to see if clients were ready to enroll) since 2004.
- **Train more health care workers, especially Alaska Natives** — Alaska has a shortage of health care workers, and in rural Alaska this is a critical need.
 - ❑ In 2009, SEARHC opened the Southeast Area Health Education Center (SE AHEC), which is part of a state and national program designed to attract students to health care careers and help current workers get the additional training they need.
 - ❑ For several years, SEARHC has managed in Sitka one of the state's four Community Health Aide/Practitioner training centers for the Alaska CHAP Program.
 - ❑ SEARHC also supports the Dental Health Aide Therapist training center run in Anchorage and Bethel by the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium.