



News Release

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Anchorage Hospitals Connect to Address Homelessness *Seven local organizations stepping forward*

Anchorage — In an historic move, seven local organizations are stepping forward to address the health needs of Anchorage homeless individuals. The agencies representing the major Anchorage hospitals—Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Alaska Regional, Providence Health & Services Alaska, and Southcentral Foundation—as well as Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center, the Municipality of Anchorage, and Catholic Social Services are working together to create new services and connections.

People in homelessness are three-to-six times more likely to become ill than those in housing, according to a National Health Care for the Homeless Council 2008 report. When someone experiencing homelessness becomes ill they may not successfully complete or even seek medical treatment due to factors like poor nutrition, poor personal hygiene, lack of access to transportation, lack of trust in systems, embarrassment, lack of knowledge and many more factors. Homelessness also tends to exacerbate health problems.

With the guiding Catholic Social Services principles of reverence for humanity, striving for excellence, empowering personal fulfillment, and strengthening community through collaboration—the group agreed to work on three different projects to address healthcare among those in great need and to address rising service costs for all Alaskans.

The coalition intends to have these three projects underway by February 2017:

- Respite program of designated beds at Brother Francis Shelter that people without stable and permanent housing can be released to from the hospital—giving them time and space to heal
- Expanded primary healthcare clinic onsite at Brother Francis Shelter to connect people with healthcare services before emergencies occur

- Transport service to move non-emergency cases from Brother Francis Shelter to healthcare services around town that already exist

“Many people living in poverty are unable to pay for medical services that lead to a healthier life and may postpone basic care until a health crisis occurs. Funds available through Medicaid expansion support these programs, making this basic care more economically accessible for them,” says Dr. Richard Mandsager, Chief Executive at Providence Alaska Medical Center.

“This collaboration is just one example of how the investment in Medicaid expansion has led to the development of creative solutions to chronic problems we face as a community. This approach actually saves money through shorter hospital stays and reduced admissions for conditions that can be treated in a less expensive environment. I am proud to be a part of a community committed to working together and thankful for the support of forward thinking leaders who saw the value of investing in prevention as we tackle the high costs of healthcare as a state.” says Julie Taylor, CEO at Alaska Regional Hospital.

“In the coming months we will unveil these projects as they come online at Brother Francis Shelter,” says Lisa Aquino, Executive Director of Catholic Social Services. “We are excited at the possibilities in terms of improving the health and lives of people in homelessness. The steps being taken in partnership with the community and the medical institutions in Anchorage are groundbreaking and revolutionary in their focus on those in need and improving services.”

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About Catholic Social Services

Since its founding in 1966, Catholic Social Services has grown, and continues to grow, in response to unmet needs. CSS programs help over 90,000 children, families and individuals each year, regardless of their faith. CSS provides shelter, meals, employment assistance and medical care to those experiencing homelessness. CSS offers assistance to children and their families, helps immigrants and refugees adjust to life in Alaska, and serves people with disabilities. CSS is working to improve quality of life for the entire Anchorage community by advocating on behalf of its most vulnerable members. For more information visit www.cssalaska.org.

Catholic Social Services’ Brother Francis Shelter (established 1982) provides temporary, emergency shelter for men and women, an evening meal, use of shower and laundry facilities, case management services, advocacy, job readiness, and referrals for employment, permanent housing, mental health issues, and treatment options for alcohol and substance abuse. During **FY 2016**, Brother Francis Shelter provided **96,498** nights of stay and served **77,636** dinners to **3,688** men and women without a home. Among

*guests using comprehensive case management services, **39%** moved into permanent housing.*