



ALASKA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Committed To Advancing Alaska's Public Health Since 1978

ALPHA RESOLUTION 4-2008

Reinstatement of SEARCH Program (Student/Resident Experiences and Rotations in Community Health)

Sponsor: Alaska Primary Care Association
Shelley Hughes

WHEREAS the Alaska Public Health Association strives toward the goal of a healthy population, and recognizes the necessity of improving access to primary care for all Alaskans as one of the key ingredients in improving the public health of all Alaskans; and

WHEREAS Alaska is suffering labor shortages in most health care professions, and that these shortages are hitting primary care safety net agencies and rural clinics particularly hard and impacting their ability to provide adequate access for Alaskans; and

WHEREAS the harsh conditions of Alaska and the fiscal limitations of safety net clinics reduces the ability for these providers to compete in the national hiring market; and

WHEREAS Alaska is competing with other states and nations for the finite pool of available health care professionals and the Student/Resident Experiences and Rotations in Community Health (SEARCH) program exposes students to Alaska's unique culture and communities, provides distinctive insight into the operation of rural health clinics and rural health needs, and functions as an important tool in the recruitment and retention of health care providers; and

WHEREAS the cost-effective SEARCH program has provided for rotations for clinical students and residents in underserved communities at a cost of \$158,000 in 2007, with 57 students completing 4-week rotations: physicians, MSWs, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, and dentists; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that based upon the current needs for primary care providers in underserved communities and the need to support innovative approaches towards clinical staff recruitment, the Alaska Public Health Association supports reinstatement of the SEARCH program at the federal level and adequate funding for the program by Congress for FY 2009.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska Public Health Association will promote and advocate for reinstatement of the SEARCH Program and engage in low and no-cost advocacy efforts for this purpose such as:

- Circulation of advocacy action requests to membership
- Circulation of advocacy action requests to partners and other individuals
- Posting of ALPHA resolutions on the Alaska Public Health Association's website
- Participation in email advocacy campaigns
- Contact with policy makers via phone, letter, email and/or in-person meetings
- Public testimony in legislative hearings, town hall meetings, and other public forums
- Contribution of op-ed articles and/or letters to the editor
- Contributions to radio programs via calling-in or scheduled interviews
- Distribution of this resolution statement to policy makers and key officials.

Fiscal Impact

The fiscal impact on ALPHA by the proposed resolution will be minimal. This action will result in minor costs associated with sending this resolution and accompanying cover letter to federal policy makers.

Public Health Impact

This public health impact by the proposed resolution will be significant. This action will benefit public health by helping to increase the number of health care professionals who chose to work in Alaska which will increase the number of Alaskans

1. Who will have ready access to health care services
2. Who will receive health care services

This action will also benefit public health by improving overall health outcomes for Alaska's residents.