



healthcare

Increasingly, healthcare settings are focusing on the prevention of chronic disease in addition to treatment. For this inventory, we conducted telephone interviews with every hospital and community health center in Alaska to find out about prevention services they provide relating to physical activity. In addition to questions about physical activity, each healthcare site was questioned about cardiovascular disease risk factor screenings and follow-up services they provide. Response rates for the telephone survey were high, with executive directors or head administrators from twenty-two hospitals (100%) and ten of eleven (91%) community health centers taking part.

A key informant interview was conducted with the largest community hospital, Providence Alaska Medical Center, to get even more details about the services it provides. Interviews were also conducted with representatives from Alaska Native Health Corporations to find out what is being done in the multitude of Alaska Native hospitals, health centers, and clinics around the state. Attempts were made to conduct a key informant interview with staff from the largest Alaska Native hospital, Alaska Native Medical Center, with no success.

Providence Hospital

The Providence Health System has been providing medical services to Alaskans for more than 100 years. Currently it operates medical facilities in Anchorage, Kodiak, Wasilla, and Seward. The Providence Alaska Medical Center (PAMC) in Anchorage is the largest hospital in Alaska, offering several physical activity related programs to both patients and non-patients.

For adults, Providence Heart Center provides diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of cardiovascular conditions through its Healthy Hearts Rehabilitation Program. It also runs a 12-week Weight Management Program designed to help patients integrate healthy food and exercise habits into their daily routine.

For children, the Providence Hospital Center for Child Development (a non-profit Early Childhood Education Program) provides a summer camp program called Camp Providence. This camp is open to children in the Providence System, children of Providence employees, or any child grade K-12. Through Camp Providence, the Children's Aquatic Program helps children be active, learn swimming skills, and develop positive attitudes about the water. Camp Providence campers are in the water for 40 minutes two times a week.

PAMC currently has one large exercise room that contains the necessary treadmills, recumbent bikes, elliptical stair machines, etc. to conduct all of the Healthy Hearts programs. The seventeen Healthy Hearts staff members hope that plans to relocate to a separate Health Promotion Center come true in the near future. That will give them the extra space and equipment they need to handle the increasing numbers of Healthy Hearts Program participants.

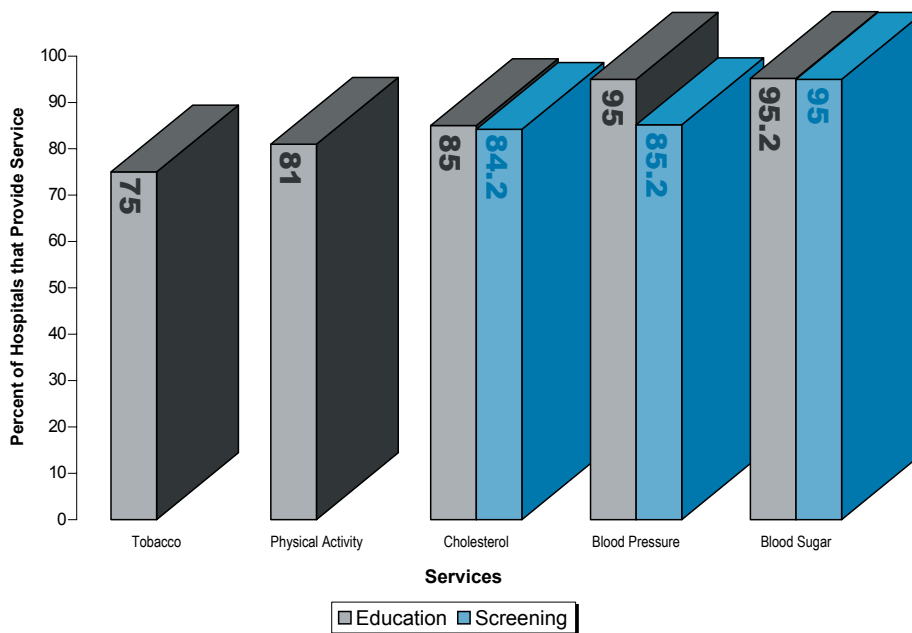


General Healthcare - Hospitals

Question # 1 – In the past year did your hospital conduct education programs for the public or non-patients relating to: 1) Physical activity? 2) High blood pressure? 3) Diabetes? 4) Cholesterol? 5) Tobacco cessation?

Results: In the past year, hospitals participating in this survey have conducted education programs for the public or non-patients in the following areas: physical activity (17 hospitals), high blood pressure (19 hospitals), diabetes (20 hospitals), cholesterol (17 hospitals), and tobacco cessation (15 hospitals).

Figure 15. Percent of Alaska Hospitals that Provide Education and/or Screening to the Public



Question #2 – In the past year, has your hospital conducted public or non-patient screenings for: 1) High blood pressure? 2) Cholesterol? 3) High blood sugar?

Results: Of the twenty-two hospitals surveyed, many have conducted public or non-patient screenings for high blood pressure (18 hospitals), cholesterol (16 hospitals), and high blood sugar (19 hospitals).



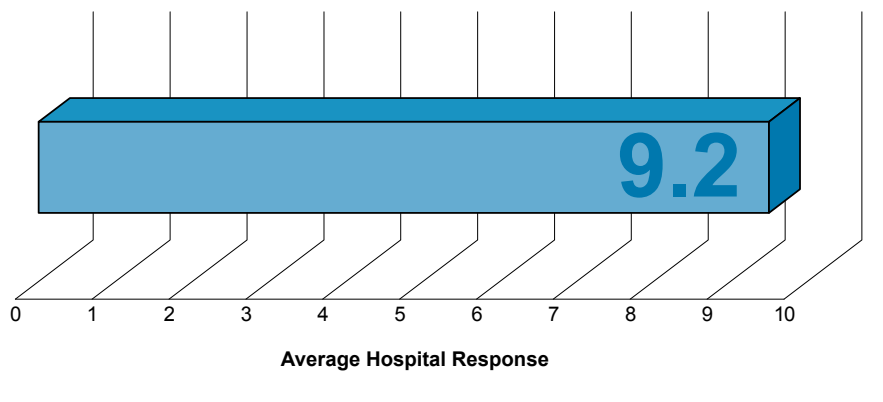
Question #3 – Does your hospital have staff with dedicated responsibilities for: 1) Physical activity? 2) Health promotion?

Results: Hospitals surveyed report the presence of dedicated staff with responsibilities for physical activity (10 hospitals) and health promotion (16 hospitals).

Question #4 – Given your hospital’s various priorities, on a scale of 1 to 10, how interested would you be in discussing ways to improve the overall health status of your community?

Results: When asked to rate their interest (on a scale of 1 to 10) in discussing ways to improve the overall health status of their community, all hospitals indicated a level 5 or higher. Eleven hospitals indicated an interest level of 10.

Figure 16.



General Healthcare - Community Health Centers

Question #1 – For individual patients that have been identified for high risk factors, do you routinely provide lifestyle counseling services for: 1) Tobacco use? 2) Overweight/obesity? 3) Physical inactivity?

Results: Nearly all of the ten community health centers participating in our survey indicated that they provide individual lifestyle counseling for patients that have been identified for tobacco use (9), overweight/obesity (10), and physical inactivity (9).



Question #2 – In the past year, have you provided lifestyle education/counseling for groups of patients in the following areas: 1) Physical activity? 2) High blood pressure? 3) High cholesterol levels? 4) Diabetes? 5) Tobacco cessation? 6) Weight management?

Results: In the past year, community health centers provided lifestyle education/counseling for patients in the following areas: physical activity (4 centers), high blood pressure (3 centers), high cholesterol (4 centers), diabetes (5 centers), tobacco cessation (5 centers), and weight management (5 centers).

Question #3 – In the past year, has your agency conducted education programs for the public or non-patients relating to: 1) Physical activity? 2) High blood pressure? 3) Cholesterol? 4) Tobacco cessation?

Results: In the past year, community health centers conducted education programs for the public or non-patients relating to: physical activity (5 centers), high blood pressure (5 centers), diabetes (6 centers), cholesterol (5 centers), and tobacco cessation (7 centers).

Question #4 – In the past year, has your agency conducted screenings for the following: 1) High blood pressure? 2) Cholesterol? 3) High blood sugar?

Results: In the past year, community health centers conducted screening for the following: high blood pressure (8 centers), cholesterol (8 centers), and high blood sugar (8 centers).

Question #5 – Does your agency have staff with dedicated responsibilities for: 1) Physical activity? 2) Health promotion?

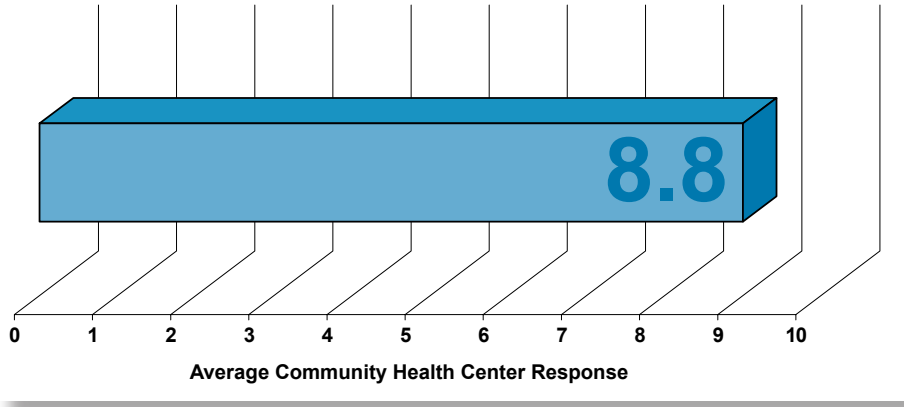
Results: Of the ten community health centers surveyed, four report the presence of staff with dedicated responsibilities for physical activity and seven with staff for health promotion.



Question #6 - Given your health center's various priorities, on a scale of 1 to 10, how interested would you be in discussing ways to improve the overall health status of your community?

Results: Each community health center participating in this survey indicated an interest level of at least 7 for increasing the overall health of its community. Four said that their interest level is 10.

Figure 17.



Native Health

The Alaskan Native healthcare system is comprised of twenty-two regional health corporations. These health corporations provide medical services to Alaska Natives in each region of the state. Many of these corporations are now looking at preventing chronic disease through physical activity related programs.

To find out more about these prevention efforts, we conducted key informant interviews with representatives from 15 of the 22 (68.2%) corporations. The following grid summarizes the activities of corporations that have significant physical activity related programs underway. Programs that have been highly successful are highlighted in the "model practices" segments.



Health Corporation	Physical Activity Efforts
Aleutian/Pribiloff Islands Association	10K Steps, Summercise, Yogafit, fitness training classes.
Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation	Walk to be Fit, Jump 4 Health, Sponsor Youth Sport, Treadmill Program, Aerobics Program.
Chugachmiut	10K Steps, exercise room, exercise equipment.
Copper River Native Association	Treadmills, stairmasters, weights, fitness videos.
Eastern Aleutian Tribes	“Iditarod” walking program, exercise bikes.
Kodiak Area Native Association	10K steps program, Mini-grants, diabetes education program with physical activities, KANA Wellness Center with 14 pieces of exercise equipment.
Maniilaq Health Center	Cross country skiing, ice skating, a local basketball team, and 10K steps programs.
Metlakatla Indian Community	Wellness Center, Olympic - sized swimming pool, Water Aerobics, Walking Program, low-impact aerobics.
Native Village of Eklutna	Kids individual fitness program, exercise field trips.
Ninilchik	“Ninilchik Walkers” walking club, Summer Youth Development Camp, exercise videos for use in group exercise classes.
Norton Sound Health Corporation	Summercise, Diabetes Prevention/Healthy Living Grant, Step by Step, Water Aerobics.
Seldovia Village Tribe	Walking program, exercise swimming program, teen walks.
Southcentral Foundation	Yoga classes, a stretching/strength class, elders exercise class, individual exercise program prescriptions, exercise room that contains treadmills and recumbent bicycles, three exercise physiologists and two exercise technicians.
Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium.	WISEWOMAN, Traditions of the Heart, 10,000 Steps, Ravens vs. Eagles intertribal physical activity contest, 100 Mile Club, Canoeing, D.E.F.Y summer day camp, Indoor winter walking (Sitka), Pool/gym passes & physical activity classes.
Tanana Chiefs Conference	1049 Mile Fitness Walking Program, Physical Activities Grant Program.
Yukon/Kuskokwim Health Corp.	“Get Moving” walking program, summer swimming & safety program, bicycle rodeo.



***Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation
Community Aerobics Program
Dillingham, Alaska***

The Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation (BBAHC) serves thirty-three communities in the 46,000 square mile area near Dillingham. Many of the communities in this region lack the programs and facilities necessary to be physically active year round. In response to this need, the BBAHC Diabetes Program created an indoor aerobics program that provided activity classes to over 1,300 participants last year alone!

To staff these classes, the Diabetes Program continually recruits individuals in the Bristol Bay area to become certified aerobic instructors and teach aerobic/exercise classes in their community. The diabetes program supports the cost of certification, travel for instructors and participants, and lodging for interested individuals to attend the aerobic certification training.

The diabetes program has also supported the cost of maintaining the certification required for teaching aerobic classes, as well as the cost of stereo equipment, exercise videos, music, exercise mats, hand weights, body bars, and step platforms. In addition, seventeen of the thirty-three communities in the service area received a treadmill so that residents can maintain their walking programs during snow, bear, and bug seasons.

As a result of some creative thinking, communication, and effort, a total of thirty-three certified aerobic instructors in eight Bristol Bay area communities are now available to teach classes like aerobics, yoga, low-impact aerobics, kickboxing, and step classes. Who says there is nothing fun to do in rural Alaska?



Norton Sound Health Corporation

- Summercise -

Nome, Alaska

In response to the lack of healthy activities available to children in Nome during the summer months, Angie Gorn, Director of Nutrition Services at Norton Sound Health Corporation created a nutrition and physical activity day camp for kids age 8 to 15 called "Summercise".

This summer (2003) will mark the fourth year of operation for the Summercise program. Last summer 159 children (up from 50 in year one) participated in a variety of healthy activities like a healthy cooking class, food pyramid relay races, karate, rope climbing, softball, greens picking on the tundra, hiking up Anvil Mountain, and swimming!

Incorporating fun activities with healthy educational messages has proven to be a formula for success. Parents report that their children are more active after attending Summercise, and testing shows that most camp participants improve their fitness levels as well as their knowledge of healthy eating and nutrition.

Word is quickly spreading across the state about this low-cost, fun, and healthy program. Recently, Gorn and her Summercise crew won the 2002 Municipal League community award of excellence in the human services category. Now, other communities in the region are inquiring about how to get a Summercise program of their own. Communities like Elim, Unalakleet, and Dillingham are all starting similar programs, with many others sure to follow.



Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC)

- Ravens vs. Eagles -

Juneau, Alaska

The Ravens vs. Eagles Walk is an intertribal physical activity contest between members of the Raven and Eagle clans of Southeast Alaska. Program participants record the amount of time they spend engaging in physical activity during a designated six-week period. For every 30 minutes of physical activity, participants earn one point. The team with the most points at the end is declared the winner, and the losing clan hosts a potlatch for the winning clan.

Walking is the highlighted activity because it is easy, affordable, and requires no special equipment. However, one of the highlights of this program is that it aims to teach people that physical activity doesn't have to be strenuous exercise. Activities like yoga, berry picking, and canoeing also count toward team point totals.

Originally developed in Klukwan, a small village near Haines, the program is now run in several southeast communities. It is open to the public, and participants can join as teams of up to five. That gives families a chance to participate together – yet another benefit of the program.



Recommendations for Healthcare

The results from the telephone surveys and key informant interviews show that both hospitals and community health centers are focusing on increasing their prevention and education efforts. Alaska Native Health Corporations are also working to prevent chronic diseases through physical activity and nutrition education programs. Recommendations for our healthcare settings are to:

- ▶ Maintain or increase the number of facilities offering education/counseling for physical activity and nutrition to patients and non-patients (hospital question #1; health center #2, 3);
- ▶ Maintain or increase the number of facilities offering screening and education for high blood pressure, high blood sugar, high cholesterol, diabetes, and tobacco cessation to patients and non-patients (hospital question #2; health center #4);
- ▶ Increase the number of staff with dedicated responsibilities for physical activity and nutrition education/promotion (hospital #3; health center #5).