

**COVID-19 Tribal Leadership Session Minutes
June 2, 2021**

Angie Gorn, NSHC	Reba Lean, NSHC	Mark Peterson, MD, Medical Director, NSHC
	Megan MacKiernan, NSHC	Allison Knox, ANTHC

*Over 30 participants attended today's meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS	DISCUSSION/RECOMMENDATION
Introduction to Meeting – Angie Gorn, NSHC CEO	<p>Today's Reminder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please keep phone muted unless speaking or asking a question. - If you receive a phone call, please do not put us on hold (it creates a beep for the whole teleconference). Please end the call and call into the conference again. <p>Note- Any questions may be sent to Public Relations at pr@nshcorp.org anytime or text to 907-434-1927 and they will be answered during the 11:00 am call.</p>
Updates	<p>Angie gave the following update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An ANTHC representative will be on the call to be able to discuss patient lodging for Anchorage patient travel. - 9 active cases in the region, majority in Nome
Blessing/Invocation	Jason Harrell gave the blessing for the call
Medical Staff Briefing – Dr. Mark Peterson, Medical Director – Megan Mackiernan, PA-C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The State of Alaska had fairly low across the state for the last 5 days. Each day has been 30 cases or lower. Yesterday there were 20 cases identified. We can attribute that directly to the vaccine. - NSHC: We had a cluster of 8 cases over 2 days, 7 cases were identified on Saturday May 29, and 1 case identified May 30th. There are 9 active cases in the region. People make ask “If cases are coming down, why do we have a jump to 7 cases?” Anywhere across the country where there’s pockets of unprotected people, we’re going to continue to see an influx of cases if people aren’t vaccinated. We had a cluster, however it is under control. We need to continue to urge the public to get vaccinated if they haven’t yet. - We haven’t heard if any more of the P1 variant have been identified in our region. We’re waiting to hear back from the State Virology Lab. - We did 93 vaccinations last week, so another 1% of the total population has been vaccinated.
Question and Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Toby: I have a question regarding the percentages. Is the percent of unvaccinated population who get COVID people high? Is that the same percentage as when there was new vaccine? MP: The people at most-risk of getting COVID is those that are unvaccinated. There is a very small number of people who are vaccinated that get COVID. Toby: How many percent of the unvaccinated are still getting COVID? MP: Dr. Peterson will research this and collaborate with the data team to get this number.
ANTHC – Allison Knox, 11:24am.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our guest for this call is the Vice President of Patient experience at ANTHC. This includes the Information Desk, Travel Management Office, ANMC Patient Shuttle, Patient Lodging. - Allison explained that due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, there is a severe housing shortage. Prior to the pandemic, there were normally 258 rooms on campus (Patient Lodging & Quyanna House). Some of the rooms, such as the two wings of Quyanna house, have been transformed to an

alternate care site for COVID. 15 rooms on the lower level have been transformed into COIVD 19 infusion clinic. Those rooms should be converted back to patient housing in 4-6 weeks. Several rooms were also turned into quarantine housing rooms as necessary. The limited housing on ANTHC campus was also exacerbated due to the increase of Anchorage tourism, and limited Medicaid rooms available.

- Back in February, more of ANTHC's services started to increase on campus and more patients started to become comfortable with traveling again. In Quarter 1 of 2021, there were 144 patients coming in. Quarter 2 of 2021 has drastically increased up to 850 patients off campus have been utilized. Increase in Anchorage tourism, so less Medicaid rooms available. Several hotel closures and purchases for homeless accommodations & for quarantine lodging have led to only 3 properties that were available in May for Medicaid lodging. The hotels that offer the Medicaid rate have also decreased. They expect up to 435-445 rooms needed in June for patient volumes. More rooms have been secured across additional properties for the upcoming patients for upcoming medical travel/lodging. It's going to be a challenge for Medicaid rooms. Our patient housing and travel management office will be working diligently with Medicaid patients to confirm lodging prior to arrival in Anchorage.

Please ensure you have confirmed lodging in Anchorage as a Medicaid patient, prior to coming to town. When the TMO calls to reconfirm your travel, please respond to that phone call.

- One of the main issues that Angie has mentioned and that we have experienced as well is when a patient's appointments are extended. We'll be sending those issues to our supervisors and examine those issues with our Housing Manager and General Manager.
- Allison announced that the cafeteria within Patient Housing has been reopened for the first time since COVID restrictions, as of yesterday June 1st. The cafeteria hours are 7am-7pm, with it closed with a prep time at 10-11, and another time in the afternoon to prep for dinner.
- If someone is flying in **without** a direct ANMC referral, you may be required to pay for a room out of pocket.
- It's going to take a lot of communication on our parts and we're getting contingency options in place that we'll communicate when we know more. If people are staying at family and friends, we are working on a formal procedure/policy for a \$25 stipend and covering food/housing.
- We're still operating under COIVD 19 protocols, so limited people in the hospital, clinical buildings, masks still required, and visitation and in patient support and visitation is still being managed. We're trying to limit escorts, children, extra people as well.

Questions:

- John Waghiyi from Savoonga shared some observations based on his own personal experience. "As a patient of several years/ Many people have miserable experiences with housing. My wife and I started traveling in 2017 for health issues. There needs to be a better process for when you land in Anchorage. When you land, you have to go to ANTHC and wait in line and go back and

forth. It's difficult that Quyanna House is a first come – first serve basis. There should be special reservation for elders in Quyanna House for elders who are more likely to be frequent patients and may have chronic issues.

- Allison: We currently prioritize elders, oncology, and those with mobility issues. We try to accommodate them as much as possible at Patient Housing and Quyanna House on the ANTHC campus. We're looking at double the occupancy available at Patient Housing. We're trying to utilize other closer properties as much possible for those with mobility issues. There's a need for patient housing.
- John: "There also seems to be issues with Medicaid rates and discrimination based on low income. If Medicaid rates aren't being accepted, THOs should pay the difference of rate to market rate and allow patients to stay in the hotel."
- Allison: Thanks for sharing and your suggestion.
- Annie from Shishmaref, shared: "Not every patient has the funds to pay out of pocket. If you're sent on a medevac, you may not have your basic needs/supplies. Please know that June, July, & August are big tourism times, and ANTHC should prepare ahead in advance so that patients aren't struggling. If you've every stayed in one of these places, they aren't sanitary or have lice or bed bugs.
- Allison: We've had our staff go to every Medicaid property talking about amenities, food on-sight, etc. There were some houses on the Medicaid list. We've received some concerns about the Guest House, and its location. Our staff went to the Guest House and talked with the managers that are there. There have been instances where there has been bedbugs and other issues. We have terminated contracts with places with known issues because we don't want our patients staying there.
- Cora from Teller shared "It's also really hard to move hotels. I went to my hotel, the day of my hotel. I couldn't find another Medicaid hotel. I had to pay out of pocket. I'm scared to escort my grandson, because I don't know if we're going to have to pay out of pocket for hotels for limited housing available. (50). It wasn't even a late checkout. It had been confirmed and they told me I had to move out a day early."
- Allison answered, "We're going to work with our clinical management team and scheduling. Our Medicaid properties have certain obligations, and if you have a confirmed reservation you shouldn't be kicked out. We will report these issues to the State regarding Medicaid."
- Debra from Wales, opened up the conversation and asked if John had any further comments.
- John: I think NSHC, and the BOD have a lot of power. We have people with chronic issues, elders, or people like Cora. We need a program developed where patients have someone from NSHC working on their behalf. The patient advocate need to be promoted aggressively. We need NSHC to supplement, develop, and/or enhance the patient lodging, etc.
- John: It's not just about where we're staying. If we go and travel. There needs to be adequate manpower for people available on campus at ANMC. That way we can look at what options are.
- Allison: We have Jackie Crisci, as an AMNC patient liaison. We have an NSHC travel concierge

team. We have a dedicated travel coordinator, Medicaid prior authorization coordinator. That team works directly on patients from the NSHC region. I'll meet with them, our TMO and general manager. That team is there in addition to the patient advocate from NSHC. We'll send Cora's complaint to that team to address it. We want to utilize them and make them aware of these hardships.

- **Jason Harrell: I am the Anchorage based Patient Advocate. 434-2844. I have been working directly with Jackie Crisci on patient housing/lodging needs.**
- *Jackie Crisci:* Office next to patient travel (Wally & Dominic). I'm here to help with people who need to travel to Anchorage for referrals. *I can assist with travel, lodging, appointments. My number is 443-3351.*
- Mary David from Nome, shared her experience: "I stayed in the new patient wing, and it is a wonderful facility. When I went down for medical, however, I don't know who drafted the letters. I don't know who types the letter for appointments. When I showed up to Radiology, they listed the wrong appointment time, and I missed it. Even so, the radiologist was not even in the office that day, that I was listed for my appointment. In the end it worked out, however whatever information is being provided to patients need to be accurate."
- Allison asked Mary for the specifics of her complaint regarding the wrong dates being listed. She will be in contact with Allison to help make sure this issue doesn't happen to other people and can be a learning experience for the Travel Management Office.
- Blanche Garnie from Teller asked the following question. "Do you know who makes the Medicaid rates for cabs and hotels? Do you know the price difference?"
- Allison: The Medicaid rates come from the State of Alaska. There's summer rate and winter rates. There are only a couple places that are accepting it. When you're carrying a voucher, there's 5 cabs that'll turn you down. I don't know if its less pay or paperwork. Even staying at hotels, there's been interactions with the hotels, and they treat you like a burden.
- Allison: Anytime we get a complaint about a cab company, we let the state of Alaska know about that. We're looking at adding Uber/Lyft for additional options for healthcare/patients/guests.
- Debra from Wales commented: "I know of one person that was in a Yellow Cab. That cab driver stopped and just threw her luggage onto the sidewalk and left her there. She didn't have a phone. When you get a call form ANMC to confirm your travel, by the time you get to patient housing, they said there wasn't room available even after we confirmed again."
- Allison: I apologize for that as well. When we changed our system 3 years ago, we now confirm their housing needs so that hopefully people can confirm. I'll take this feedback as well and pass it on. Please report any issues with yellow cab or cabs so that we can report these issues to the state.
- **Allison Knox: My email is aknox@anthc.org and my office phone is 907-729-1939. If you want to report these directly to me or concerns.**
- When you have patients flying down to Anchorage and departing, I wonder if the number of patients available in Anchorage .

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allison: We have our supervisors look at your situation. At 6 am we get a report of expected confirmed arrivals, actual arrivals. 63 expected confirmed arrivals, but we had 98 arrivals. We had 54 confirmed and 44 walk ins, and 38 extensions, and 17 confirmed no shows (1:13). We look at this statistic and information, and look at the walk-ins. Were they referred to us? Did they fly in themselves? We look at these and track it. For example, tonight we're anticipated 63 new arrivals, 50 confirmed arrivals into location, and 50 departures. We only have 79% confirmation rate. We need to hear back from patients. We work with Jackie for patient contact information. We can tell exactly where we had rooms booked off campus as well as over the next couple of days. We also have a no-show rates by region. - Angie shared more information about our NSHC Patient Advocate based in Anchorage, especially regarding Jason Harrell. We're going to make sure Jason, our patient advocate, is made known to patients especially regarding housing needs and other issues. We'll also take these comments in and see how NSHC can help as well. - Allison: Thanks for letting us be informed and her patient experiences. We can see what's going well and what can be better. The collaboration as well is really important. - Preston, NSHC Board Chairman: Angie will keep me in the loop regarding housing as well as patients as well. I appreciate the call and all your concerns. - Blanche: IS there an update on the construction project of new patient housing? - Allison: It went to our board for consideration for a plan and addition to the budget. At the time, there was more work to be considered. I think they went back to look what the best option would be, such as purchasing more of Springhill (51% ownership already) or purchasing other lodging opportunities for the cost. It's still be looked at for what the best option would be. The board is aware of the need for more options. - Angie shared how a couple of years ago, NSHC released a patient travel booklet. We'll follow up with advocates and getting that updated and looked at it and released it.
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Call adjourned at 12:31pm.