STANDING STRONG:
We are all the Solution

NORTON SOUND HEALTH CORPORATION
FISCAL YEAR 2020 ANNUAL REPORT
Mission: PROVIDING QUALITY HEALTH WITHIN OUR PEOPLE

Vision
By 2021, we will excel in tribally governed health care delivery systems globally.
• We will ensure that all patients receive quality and respectful health care.
• We will educate our patients and communities to be proactive in caring for themselves and promoting wellness.
• We will listen to, honor, and respect our elders, preserve their right to speak, and ensure they receive the best care in gratitude for their leadership.
• We will increase wellness efforts to reduce addictive behaviors and to raise the quality of life among our people and communities.
• We will advocate that our environment (air, land and water) will be clean, and our water and waste disposal systems are safe and affordable, in order to ensure our subsistence way of life.
• We will assert and implement tribal self-governance to achieve our vision through effective leadership.
• We will hire and support our tribal members to deliver and manage our services.
• We will develop state of the art and efficient health care facilities throughout the region.
• We will be financially strong through aggressive, effective and efficient financial management.
• We will support and develop our youth to pursue higher education and health care careers to ensure there is future tribal leadership.

Values
Integrity • Compassion • Teamwork • Pride • Cultural Sensitivity and Respect for Traditional Values • Always Learning and Improving
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In Fiscal Year 2020, NSHC’s staff stepped up in unprecedented ways to meet the challenges of COVID-19. On April 14, 2020, NSHC identified the first positive COVID-19 case in the region, and Administration and the Board would be remiss not to acknowledge and recognize the NSHC workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our staff remained committed to keeping the region safe, and as a result, there were good outcomes, low hospitalization rates, and no deaths. The region was blessed with the opportunity to facilitate in-person student learning in schools for nearly the entire school year due to the region’s prevention efforts.

NSHC partnered with the region’s leaders to protect our most vulnerable population. A daily tribal leader call was initiated in March 2020, and through strong, transparent communication, ever-changing information was shared, and solutions were developed together to keep the region safe. By listening to feedback, NSHC pioneered new ideas such as online appointment scheduling for testing, a test results texting system, and the hiring and placement of an Anchorage-based airport attendant to facilitate pre-registration for airport testing upon arrival to Nome. By listening to the needs of the region, NSHC was able to distribute supplies and acquire resources to minimize the risk of COVID-19. A patient quarantine department was established at NSHC to provide support and resources for patients in medical travel quarantine and/or isolation.

In FY20, the workforce grew to over 700 employees with a 62% Tribal hire rate. The organization remained fiscally strong and was not faced with difficult employment decisions; all employees remained employed during the pandemic and there was no reduction in force. Although in-person health care delivery was restricted during some of FY20, an estimated 3,000 telemedicine visits were facilitated to meet the needs of the region. NSHC’s primary care system has continued to excel, and in FY20, NSHC was recognized as a top-performing primary health care center in the nation, earning the gold-tier status for primary care health delivery, from Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA). This is a noteworthy achievement that only 10% of the primary health care centers in the nation are eligible for.

NSHC’s compliance and patient advocacy programs have remained busy, serving as important contacts for our customer-owners and patients during a very stressful time.

The Public Relations department did not miss a beat and communicated every new case with enough information to keep residents informed. A special COVID-19 safety and prevention newsletter was issued in April 2020. The NSHC public relations department partnered with Laureli Ivanoff to curate 37 radio broadcasts to ensure our people in the region were hearing important health education and prevention messages.

Amidst the pandemic, several capital projects were completed. The Nome Operations Building was completed and provided the space needed to perform asymptomatic testing for the region, in addition to housing the village facilities staff and capital projects team, the office of environmental health and new drinking lab, the sanitation and engineering team, and the housing department. More space became available for supply storage. The Diomede Clinic was also completed and opened its doors in October 2020. Other capital projects such as the Shishmaref Clinic, St. Michael Clinic, and Wellness and Training Center remained under construction.

Quyanna to our staff and to the region’s leaders for your selfless commitment and dedication during FY20.
FY2020 Board of Directors

Executive Committee
Chair: Preston Rookok
2nd Vice Chair: Matilda Hardy
Treasurer: Tony Haugen
Exec. Member #1: Elizabeth Johnson
Exec. Member #3: Vacant
Vice Chair: Heather Payenna
Secretary: Berda Willson
Asst. Sec./Treas.: Mary D. Charles
Exec. Member #2: Frederick Murray

2020 Board Member of the Year:
Stan Andersen

Not pictured:
Frieda Southall
Native Village of Brevig Mission
Mary Charles
Native Village of White Mountain
NSHC serves entire the Norton Sound/Bering Strait region. Based in Nome with the Norton Sound Regional Hospital, NSHC has local clinics in each of the 15 outlying villages. NSHC’s Board of Directors is comprised of a Tribal representative from each of the region’s 20 Tribes along with a representative from NSHC’s sister organization Kawerak, Inc. and the City of Nome.

The NSHC Board of Directors met with the Kawerak Board of Directors for a biennial Joint Board meeting in March 2020. The sister organization boards heard presentations on topics of joint interest, including water and sewer; sexual assault resources and challenges; law enforcement; environmental health; and much more. The two-day meeting ended with a recognition ceremony for the region’s “Unsung Heroes,” who were community members nominated by their peers for their outstanding volunteer service.
## Standing Strong: We Are All the Solution
### A Timeline of COVID-19 Events in FY2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- State of Alaska announced it was closely watching the evolving 2019 novel coronavirus, which was declared a national public emergency on Jan. 31.</td>
<td>- NSHC restricted visitation at the Norton Sound Regional Hospital, Quyanna Care Center, and village clinics.</td>
<td>- The region’s first positive case of COVID-19 was identified on April 14.</td>
<td>- NSHC implemented mandatory regular COVID-19 testing for all staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- DHSS began sharing resources and education regarding COVID-19.</td>
<td>- NSHC activated its incident command structure to have processes in place in case of positive COVID-19 cases.</td>
<td>- NSHC received a rapid COVID-19 testing analyzer and first shipments of rapid testing materials.</td>
<td>- COVID-19 testing became available at the Nome airport for incoming travelers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- DHSS and NSHC began sharing guidance and public safety information via media outlets.</td>
<td>- NSHC advocated for regionwide travel restrictions to require incoming passengers to quarantine.</td>
<td>- NSHC began offering voluntary testing to its staff.</td>
<td>- Outpatient services mostly reopened to the public.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- NSHC providers around the region were briefed on COVID-19 protocols.</td>
<td>- NSHC began its Tribal Leader Calls, which started out as an 11 a.m. teleconference Monday-Friday.</td>
<td>- NSHC began offering drive-up testing at a tent in front of the Norton Sound Regional Hospital.</td>
<td>- NSHC implemented a COVID-19 testing incentive program in the form of a survey drawing with daily prizes and a grand prize airline mileage ticket.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- NSHC received its first shipment of COVID-19 tests, which had to be sent back to the state laboratory for results.</td>
<td></td>
<td>- NSHC reported two COVID-19 cases in May 2020.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Outpatient services mostly closed to the public.</td>
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Standing Strong: We are all the Solution

1. **COVID-19 events in FY2020**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>September</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- NSHC sent communities packages of wipes for hand hygiene.</td>
<td>- NSHC began offering COVID-19 test results via text.</td>
<td>- Dental visits resumed with a negative COVID-19 test result requirement</td>
<td>- NSHC hired a staff member to be stationed at the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport to provide education and pre-register incoming Nome passengers for their COVID-19 tests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- NSHC sent communities home cleaning supplies.</td>
<td>- The region experienced its first small village outbreak, and NSHC provided the community food so local residents could better self-quarantine.</td>
<td>- NSHC reported 29 COVID-19 cases in August 2020.</td>
<td>- The region experienced its second village outbreak. NSHC provided food to the community, so local residents could better self-quarantine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- NSHC’s mandatory regular testing for all staff became weekly for direct-patient-care providers.</td>
<td>- NSHC distributed buckets with spigots to communities with no running water and sewer for use as handwashing stations.</td>
<td>- NSHC reported 10 COVID-19 cases in July 2020.</td>
<td>- NSHC reported 33 COVID-19 cases in September 2020.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- NSHC identified seven COVID-19 cases in June 2020.</td>
<td>- NSHC reported 29 COVID-19 cases in July 2020.</td>
<td></td>
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Medical Staff

NSHC Medical Staff consists of physicians and mid-level providers, including physician assistants and nurse practitioners. Medical Staff provides high quality medical services for the region in a compassionate and sensitive manner.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Medical Staff maintained full staffing. NSHC’s incident command consisted of Medical Staff members, which helped develop one of the most comprehensive COVID-19 prevention programs in the nation. As a result, the region had one of the lowest COVID-19 infection rates, with no deaths and very few hospitalizations.

Telemedicine became a much bigger part of NSHC care delivery in 2020 and allowed NSHC to maintain high volumes of care through the entire pandemic.

CARES Act funding allowed NSHC to hire additional medical staff, who formed the COVID-19 Response Team. Members of this team kept track of active cases, close contacts, and village community response. This allowed other medical staff members to continue their focus on regular patient care.

Dental

Dental services at NSHC range from preventive and emergency care to crowns, bridges, root canals, oral surgery, orthodontics, and dental implants. Dental care services are provided in Nome and villages and are supplemented by full-time Dental Health Aide Therapists in Unalakleet and Savoonga.

Dentists regularly travel to all villages on an annual basis, with roughly half of patient encounters occurring in the villages and half in Nome. In FY20, the pandemic interrupted dental care in Nome for about two months, and village dental care was delayed for about three months.

FY20 Highlights:

- From March 18-May 8, only patients with dental emergencies were treated in Nome.
- Village dental trips resumed in the summer, with several more delays from certain communities experiencing outbreaks.
- NSHC Dental bid farewell to Dr. Landon Momberg in September, and Dr. Kathryn McTigue announced her departure for December.
- Dental welcomed Dr. Lauren Rosene in August.
Primary Care

NSHC Primary Care provides multifaceted outpatient care on a team-based model for the Bering Strait region. FY2020 brought new challenges for protecting the community and employees from COVID-19, and yet, PCC continued a high level of care to the community. For a portion of the year, Pediatrics services were seen in an alternate location. Additionally, PCC utilized web-based video teleconferencing service and telephonic services to allow patients to communicate care needs without being in the hospital. This was an expansion of the existing Telemed service that provides health services to our remote villages for both routine and emergency care. PCC initiated a Cough and Cold Clinic to provide access to a provider and point of care testing for patients with respiratory complaints separately from our clinic. Temperature screening was done on all patients, visitors and employees who entered the hospital to screen for possible fever. A separate team was formed for regular COVID-19 testing of all employees along with travelers arriving in Nome, and members of the community.

Specialty clinics were closed for a portion of the spring and summer, with services restored in the fall. This impacted the total services for the year, but many services are doubling up in the next year.

Emergency Department

The NSHC Emergency Department is a Level IV Trauma Center, providing the region with urgent care resources. The ED physicians and specially trained nurses are available for face-to-face care at NSHC 24 hours a day, every day. This team supports the surrounding villages when a higher level of care is required, whether giving advice or activating a flight team for patient transport. The Emergency Department also manages and supports the Nurse Call Line, which provides urgent advice or initiates emergency responses when clinics are closed.

2020 was a trying year with the emergence of COVID-19, but the department responded by growing stronger than ever. The Emergency Department has enhanced screening, improved protocols for protective equipment, and increased options to ensure staff and patient safety, while providing the best possible care to anyone in need.
The Employee Health and Infection Prevention program is responsible for infection surveillance in Quyanna Care Center and Acute Care, employee immunizations and tuberculosis surveillance, as well as being a core member of the Antimicrobial Stewardship Program and the Safety Committee.

Infection Prevention FY2020 Focus:
- COVID-19 Infection Prevention development of Personal Protection Protocols and training staff
- PPE supply conservation
- Supporting the COVID response team by monitoring any staff that were identified as close contacts

Employee Health FY2020 Focus:
- Annual Tb screening was changed from blood testing to the questionnaire, aligning NSHC with CDC guidelines
- Mandatory flu vaccine was implemented for 2020-21 flu season
- 81% of staff received the flu vaccine

The inpatient unit at Norton Sound Regional Hospital can accommodate 18 patients. The nursing staff is trained and equipped to look after a variety of patients. Skilled nursing staff provides top quality care to all, from newborns to the elderly. Respect for traditional values is the culture in Acute Care. With visitation restrictions during the pandemic, the multidisciplinary team used technological innovations to connect families with their loved ones during their hospital stay. The NSHC Acute Care team uses a holistic care approach and takes pride in delivering safety, quality and compassion.

The Labor and Delivery team works in collaboration with Primary Care and WIC to provide excellent care to expectant mothers and their newborns. Acute Care has introduced new methods in pain relief for mothers in labor with great success. The Labor and Delivery team continues to look at ways to improve care during the delivery experience. Education for family is also improving with a dedicated in-house television channel for home care information and natural breastfeeding for both new and experienced mothers. With expansion of services provided in Nome, the number of deliveries is on the rise.

An 18-bed, long-term care center, QCC has been home to many of the region’s respected elders. NSHC believes as patients age, staying connected to their culture is as important as receiving first-class health care and living assistance. With that in mind, the staff of QCC strives to maintain residents’ quality of life in a safe, home-like environment and incorporates traditional ways of living into different aspects of the residents’ care.

An infection control survey in 2020 found no deficiencies and no citations, but the COVID-19 pandemic challenged QCC in new ways. QCC closed to visitors early in the pandemic, which required creativity to allow residents to access needed family time. Family members paid visits to residents through the facility’s arctic entry doors and via video conferencing on smart tablets.

QCC staff members were among the first at NSHC to implement COVID-19 protocols, including regular COVID-19 testing, wearing face masks and social distancing.
Pharmacy

Pharmacists play an important role on the healthcare team through their knowledge of medication and the information they can provide. They are responsible for dispensing medication, monitoring the patient’s health, and optimizing the response of drug therapies.

As a member of the care team, a pharmacist is available to provide full-time services for drug-related questions, to make recommendations, and to provide patient counseling at the time of a primary care appointment.

COVID-19 brought many healthcare-related challenges to the Pharmacy in FY20. Pharmacy was able to rise to the occasion and help provide better patient care throughout the region.

FY20 Highlights:

• With a fun new T-shirt design and flu campaign, 4,619 flu vaccines were given throughout the region.
• The delivery service was made available to all patients in Nome and most of the outlying villages. This reduced foot traffic in the clinics, allowing for better social distancing.
• Pharmacists participated in COVID-19 village responses to assist in testing.

The Laboratory team was instrumental in the success of NSHC’s COVID-19 testing. The team handled all test reading and send-outs in the first several months until more staff was trained. Above: Alex Bahnke runs one of NSHC’s first rapid tests on the Abbott ID Now analyzer.

Laboratory

The NSHC Laboratory is accredited by the Joint Commission. The laboratory holds dear NSHC’s value of always learning and improving. It has a well established career ladder to employ entry-level employees who can achieve certifications at four levels, post-high school graduation. It also accepts students from the University of Alaska system for clinical rotations and internships within the laboratory. Management strives for excellence with a progressive laboratory to remain competitive with the best possible test menu and makes updated equipment available for the region. The NSHC laboratory continues to support local businesses and corporations by providing drug screening services.
Eye Care

NSHC’s Eye Care department provides comprehensive services to all patients, beginning at age 6 months, in Nome and at least once annually to each village in the region.

During the COVID-19 outpatient services shutdown, Eye Care developed its telemedicine protocols. Employees also worked in the labor pool to fill in needed areas outside the outpatient realm. Two village trips were canceled in March and April, and village travel resumed in May. Due to travel restrictions, Eye Care providers traveled to villages without an assistant, which resulted in a decrease of the number of patients seen.

Patient Encounters
FY19: 3,393
FY20: 2,526

Agnie Pagel of Nome is seen for a routine eye checkup.

Respiratory Therapy

Respiratory Therapy specializes in the promotion of cardiopulmonary function, health and wellness. The respiratory therapist identifies, treats and prevents acute or chronic dysfunction of the cardiopulmonary system.

Patient Encounters
FY19: 1,537
FY20: 1,116

Audiology

NSHC audiologists provide comprehensive audiological services to patients in Nome and surrounding communities both in-person and through the use of telemedicine.

Patient Encounters
FY19: 3,157
FY20: 2,866

FY20 Highlights
- Samantha Robler, AuD, former director of Audiology, transitioned into a new role in the Population Health department. Geoffrey Waite, AuD, transitioned into the director of Audiology role.
- The department has three full-time audiologists and one student. The student has been instrumental in the development of the “Aural Rehab” program. The program will bring the focus of improving communication of hearing aids and cochlear implant users throughout the region.
- Due to travel restrictions and emergency mandates beginning in March, services were reduced. Despite the challenges, NSHC managed about 10 cochlear implant patients, including two new ones, which is about 25% of the state’s cochlear implant population.
- Audiology witnessed an increase in telehealth services, including both real-time video teleconference appointments and store-and-forward telemed cases.
- The Hearing Norton Sound research project completed its data collection phase. Data analysis will show the impact of preventive telemedicine on children’s hearing and academic lives.

Patient Encounters
FY19: 3,393
FY20: 2,866

Rehabilitation and Therapy Services

The Rehabilitation and Therapy Services department offers physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy services. The department team works together to evaluate and treat a broad range of conditions for patients of all ages. They work with individuals who may be experiencing difficulty walking, balance impairments, weakness and pain.

During the outpatient services shutdown due to COVID in FY20, the department continued to offer video teleconferences with patients. The department staff resumed village travel in May 2020.
Radiology

NSHC offers a variety of radiology services across the region, including X-ray, CT scans, ultrasound, DEXA (bone mineral density exams) scans, mammography, and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

In FY20, outreach programs to the villages were suspended due to COVID-19. Screening mammograms were reduced as a result of the

Population Health

Population Health is a relatively new department at NSHC. This department works within the electronic health record to spot health trends and discrepancies and to keep track of quality goals. It is used to provide preventive health care through early screening and improve care coordination.

For population health to be successful, it must first identify the population. Population numbers must be accurate with the electronic health record and the vaccine record. Population Health staff worked with each village clinic to clean up communities’ populations within the different databases.

Population Health tracked NSHC’s regional population at 10,944 in FY2020.

Nutrition Services

The Nutrition Services department provides daily meals for Acute Care patients and Quyanna Care Center residents, as well as on-site catering services. All staff members are certified food handlers or food protection managers. The public is welcome to enjoy meals at the Norton Sound Regional Hospital Fireweed Cafe, which is open 8-10:30 a.m., 11-4 p.m., and 5-7 p.m.

NSHC was saddened by the death of Judith Dorman in June 2020. A cashier in Nutrition Services, Judith’s welcoming demeanor left its mark on the hospital and its staff.

Emergency Medical Services

The EMS department provides safe and rapid transport of critical patients to a higher level of care. An EMS trainer provides training for 10-11 months of the year. The EMS department is instrumental in providing Basic Life Support, Advanced Cardiac Life Support, and Pediatric Advanced Life Support training for the entire region.

Population health tracked NSHC’s regional population at 10,944 in FY2020.

EMS Educator Amy McNulty earned the Alaska Council on Emergency Medical Services Governor’s EMS Educator of the Year Award for 2020.

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The Patient Support Services department operates multiple programs that provide social support to NSHC patients, including the Medical Social Work program, the In-Home programs, the Patient Hostel and Pre-Maternal Home, language translators, volunteer chaplains, and most recently the Patient Housing program. These programs assist patients and their families in understanding and coping with their health conditions, and in connecting to resources and support in the community that can assist with their emotional, financial and social needs.

**FY20 Highlights**

**Social Services:**
- The program was staffed with a second Medical Social Worker for the first time in a full fiscal year, which resulted in a significant increase in the number of patients who were assisted with services.
- NSHC began a Bereavement Assistance program to assist those regional beneficiary families whose loved one requires the services of a funeral home in Anchorage.

**Patient Hostel/Pre-Maternal Home:**
- The Pre-Maternal Home was moved from the Patient Hostel's east wing to an off-site apartment. The temporary move, which was permitted by the State of Alaska, allowed the east wing to provide COVID-19 isolation lodging.
- The Patient Hostel's west wing provided COVID-19 quarantine lodging, as well as patient medical travel lodging.

**In-Home Support Program:**
- The program expanded the services that NSHC is able to offer when it was certified by the State of Alaska to offer Personal Care Attendant Services beginning in March 2020. It has been offering consumer-directed PCA services since then, with enrolled patients choosing their own PCA worker. The program plans to expand additional PCA services once the program hires a full-time registered nurse. The program is working with the University of Alaska system to offer PCA training classes locally.

**Patient Housing Program, also known as the Quarantine Resource Team:**
- The Quarantine Resource Team was started by Amy Hollis, RN, in March 2020. The team coordinated the efforts of many NSHC employees who took on additional and/or changed job duties in order to provide the NSHC response to COVID-19. The team worked with NSHC managers, local governments and non-profit agencies in order to provide a centralized and consistent message about how patients could protect themselves, travel safely, etc. The team publicized information about travel bans, etc. The team coordinated the efforts of NSHC departments in order to provide patient lodging for isolation and quarantine, and contracted with local tribal organizations, such as Sitnasuk, to provide COVID-19-related lodging in a number of apartments in Nome. NSHC provided quarantine lodging to all families who requested it in FY20, including quarantining for medical travel. The team also coordinated efforts to provide food resources to patients who were in isolation or quarantine due to COVID-19 and medical travel quarantine, including providing food to the entire village of Teller.

A team of NSHC employees stepped outside their normal roles to help package food for the community of Teller during a COVID-19 outbreak.
Village Health Services operates NSHC’s 15 village clinics and its administrative office in Nome. The majority of employees within VHS are Community Health Aides, who are local residents who have been trained at NSHC’s Health Aide Training Center. VHS is also comprised of Clinic Travel Specialists, who are in charge of scheduling appointments for CHAs and traveling providers, arranging travel for patients, and other office duties. VHS serves as a critical link between Medical Staff in Nome and patients in the villages, therefore minimizing the need for patient travel.

FY 20 Highlights:

• Mark Hayward, PA, and Kim Matthews, NP, joined the VHS team as Clinical Field Instructors. Their focus is on post-session learning needs and field training requirements for CHAs after sessions. Both mid-level providers are former Health Aide Trainers. In their new role, they will be village-based and help support CHAs through training, teaching advanced skills in the clinic setting, and providing quality control over patient visits through quarterly reviews of documentation.

• In 2020, VHS’s itinerant mid-level provider pool grew by 50%, and nine of the 15 villages had a full-time mid-level provider assigned to the clinic. The goal is to have a mid-level provider located in every village, but lack of housing is an issue. The new mid-level locum pool has provided much needed coverage, raised the number of mid-level provider visits, and helped relieve some of the on-call burden in short-staffed villages.

• COVID-19 changed village clinic operations. Beginning in March, clinic doors were locked in order to manage foot traffic in and out of the clinic. CHAs were required to screen incoming patients for the protection of staff and other patients.

• Several villages experienced community outbreaks of COVID-19, and local staff helped in the response. Many staff members put in long hours doing the contact tracing, testing, and patient education involved in the response plans.

### Total Village Clinic Visits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Visits</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY19</td>
<td>35,504</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY20</td>
<td>37,683</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Patient Visits by Clinic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>FY 2020</th>
<th>FY 2019</th>
<th>FY 2018</th>
<th>FY 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Brevig Mission</td>
<td>1234</td>
<td>1345</td>
<td>1456</td>
<td>1567</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elim</td>
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<td>Saint Michael</td>
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<td>Savoonga</td>
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<td>2092</td>
<td>2193</td>
<td>2294</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shaktolik</td>
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<td>2193</td>
<td>2294</td>
<td>2395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shishmarel</td>
<td>2193</td>
<td>2294</td>
<td>2395</td>
<td>2496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stebbins</td>
<td>2294</td>
<td>2395</td>
<td>2496</td>
<td>2597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teller</td>
<td>2395</td>
<td>2496</td>
<td>2597</td>
<td>2698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unalakleet</td>
<td>2496</td>
<td>2597</td>
<td>2698</td>
<td>2799</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>2597</td>
<td>2698</td>
<td>2799</td>
<td>2899</td>
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<tr>
<td>White Mountain</td>
<td>2698</td>
<td>2799</td>
<td>2899</td>
<td>2999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Health Aide Training

Health Aide Training consists of a training center, located in Nome, and offers classroom and hands-on training to village Community Health Aides, giving priority to NSHC students. The center is one of four in the state of Alaska. Trainers help ensure quality patient care through basic training sessions, clinical preceptorships, evaluation of re-entering health aides, continuing education workshops and recommendations for standing orders.

As with other NSHC programs, FY2020 at Health Aide Training was greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. No training occurred from April-July 2020. Once the local extent of the pandemic was more clear, and control measures were well established, training resumed in August.

Shishmaref health aides Irene Olanna and Helen Kakoona have fun learning about IV fluids during their Session 1 training in August 2020.

New Health Aide Skills Per Session

**CHA I**  
ETT Grad, BLS, IV fluids, suturing, basic wound care, blood draw, injections, telermedicine, and hemoglobin, blood glucose and rapid strep labs

**CHA II**  
Prenatal exam, mental illness exams, plaster splinting, crutch fitting, postural drainage/clapping, PPD skin tests, urine labs, stool tests, HIV pretest counseling

**CHA III**  
Routine prenatal care, immediate postpartum, newborn care, breast exams, well child exams, pap smears, immunizations, Sexually Transmitted Infection Care

**CHA IV**  
Chronic care, including diabetes and tuberculosis

‘After completing Session IV and accompanying field work, health aides may be credentialed as Community Health Practitioners.’

After 30 years with HAT, Donna Adams retired from her Administrative Specialist position in June 2020. She was described as an “anchor” of the program, and her contributions are still dearly appreciated.

| Basic Training Attendees | FY19: 42 | FY20: 21 |
| Preceptorships Completed | FY19: 8 | FY20: 3 |
| Continuing Education Workshop Attendees | FY19: 12 | FY20: 24 |
| Re-entry Evaluations | FY19: 6 | FY20: 2 |

Marina Koonooka of Gambell and Jolene Okleasik of Teller, new community health practitioners, graduated from the University of Alaska system in 2020 with certificates in Community Health.
Behavioral Health Services

Behavioral Health Services, a Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities accredited program, provides integrated services for people with mental health and/or substance use concerns. Dedicated to offering person-centered care where the clients direct their treatment, BHS providers facilitate interventions and counseling with individuals, couples and families in a confidential and healing environment. Through this collaborative approach, people involved in services develop healthier behaviors, relationships, and expression of emotion.

Through half of FY2020, everyone was impacted by COVID-19. While processes had to be put in place to keep everyone safe, it was imperative that BHS was able to continue to serve those in need through a variety of means. With the emergency regulation allowing in-person and telehealth service delivery through the use of video, phone, email, and text, BHS was able to safely serve those who needed support. When BHS discovered that several people did not have phones or suitable plans/data to engage in services, BHS secured a grant to purchase phones with 30-day unlimited plans and distributed them to those in need. Throughout the entire pandemic, BHS never closed or stopped delivering services.

FY20 initiatives:

1. NSHC Day Shelter: Due to the pandemic, the shelter had to relocate to the Nome Recreation Center for two months (April and May) and move once again to the Mini Convention Center. Medical Staff provided routine testing to keep all safe, and coaches continued services for over 325 people.

2. Anvil Mountain Correctional Center/Re-entry Program: BHS partners with AMCC to provide re-entry services for inmates who have an imminent release date. These services help those being released identify and access resources to help them stay healthy and well in their communities. A full-time BHS clinician works out of the jail to provide substance use and mental health services, and a full-time Re-entry Coordinator works with the re-entrants upon release.

3. Psychiatry: To compliment BHS services and meet the needs of the region, psychiatric services were enhanced to include seven days per week, on-site care in Nome and daily telehealth services to the villages. The number of people benefiting from psychiatric services since starting in 2018 doubled in FY20.

4. Wellness and Training Center: The Wellness and Training Center was under significant construction in FY20, which was not hindered by the pandemic. BHS is able to offer higher levels of care as of May 2021.

### Additional Client Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>FY19</th>
<th>FY20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BHS Patient Encounters</td>
<td>6,248</td>
<td>7,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Client Services</td>
<td>1,580</td>
<td>2,109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telehealth Encounters</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMCC Encounters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY20 Mental Health</td>
<td>853</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY20 SUD</td>
<td>572</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatric Encounters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY20 Outpatient</td>
<td>1,716</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY20 Inpatient</td>
<td>1,426</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Construction on the Wellness and Training Center, which now houses BHS and other programs, continued throughout FY2020.
# CAMP

The Chronic Care, Active, Management and Prevention (CAMP) program empowers people and communities to promote healthy lifestyles and improve quality of life for people with chronic illnesses. The CAMP program is funded by the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) community-directed, and the State of Alaska Tobacco Prevention and Control Grant.

### Accomplishments:
- In December of 2019, NSHC became a recognized Baby Friendly USA Hospital.
- Establishing and maintaining a comprehensive diabetes interdisciplinary team. Hired a Diabetes Nurse Educator to lead diabetes management interventions.
- Maintaining health promotion in the region through an award-winning Summercise program, monthly wellness challenges, physical fitness activities, health screenings and more.
- Hired a Tobacco Prevention and Control Coordinator to take the lead of the State of Alaska Tobacco Prevention and Control Program. The Tobacco Program Coordinator is also certified in urban poling and offers walking sticks and classes to residents in Nome and the surrounding region.
- Developing and promoting injury prevention efforts, which includes offering low-priced safety supplies to everyone in the region and traveling and offering community education at schools and events.
- Created and implemented TLC: The Lactation Club, a virtual support group for pregnant and breastfeeding women in the region. Topics change monthly and stories are shared from women in the region.
- Implemented a CAMP Produce Market. CAMP provides low-cost produce to diversify offerings in the communities. To help promote the produce market, CAMP implemented a Veggie Bucks program for village and Nome residents to earn money towards CAMP-sponsored produce markets by participating in wellness activities.

### COVID-19 Impact:
CAMP staff dedicated many hours and supplies during the pandemic. Some of the activities included working the Nurse Call Line each week, shipping out supplies for mask making, being patient driver, assisting with meals in the cafeteria, quarantine shopping, temperature checks, and sending safety kits and hand sanitizer to villages in the region.

### Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>FY19</th>
<th>FY20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Nutrition Appointments</td>
<td>1,178</td>
<td>533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes Appointments</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Screenings</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco Cessation Appts</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Fair Attendees</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Registered for Summercise</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lactation Support</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce Market Participants</td>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CAMP staff members traveled to several villages to host sewing circle events as part of its tobacco cessation and prevention grant. Pictured in Golovin is Roselyn, Denae and Paige working together on a project.
Women, Infants and Children

WIC serves families including women, infants, and children by providing nutrition education and supplemental food benefits. NSHC WIC strives to promote maternal and child health in the region by educating about the benefits of subsistence foods, encouraging families to drink more water and decrease sugary beverages, recommending play time and physical activity daily, and promoting breastfeeding as the gold standard nutrition for infants. Staff members receive ongoing training to provide early childhood nutrition education, nutrition education for pregnancy and postpartum, and breastfeeding support and counseling. WIC staff continues to work diligently to process incoming applications and provide clients with WIC food benefits, nutrition education, and breastfeeding support.

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced unique challenges and opportunities for the NSHC WIC program. Beginning in late March 2020, USDA issued waivers that allowed WIC services to be provided remotely, without a physical presence at a WIC appointment or the clinic. While this has temporarily changed the way WIC provides services, these flexibilities allowed participants the autonomy to apply electronically on their own, improving access to services.

Accomplishments:
- Provided remote services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Engaged in and planned World Breastfeeding activities for the community
- Traveled to six villages (White Mountain, Koyuk, Shaktoolik, Gambell, Brevig Mission, and Elim) despite travel interruptions due to COVID-19
- In collaboration with CAMP, initiated the virtual pregnancy and lactation support group, The Lactation Club (TLC) on Zoom
- Promoted WIChealth.org to provide online nutrition lessons for families
- Collaborated with the Norton Sound Early Childhood Coalition, OB department, and Pediatric team to promote WIC services
- Provided group nutrition education in collaboration with NSHC OB department, social services, and CAMP for pregnant patients

Tribal Healing

NSHC established the Tribal Healing program in 1997 at the request of the people of the Norton Sound region and approved by the Board of Directors. Tribal Healing has been a traditional practice used by the Native people before Western medicine was available. Tribal Healers massage sore muscles and joints and manipulate some internal organs to provide traditional hands-on treatment remedies.

The Tribal Healer program provides traditional and culturally based alternative therapies at the patient’s request. Appointments are located in the Primary Care Clinic, where it is easy for medical staff to refer patients. Tribal Healers also travel to the villages to provide services at local clinics.

In FY20, the Tribal Healing office was closed for a couple, due to the pandemic. Tribal Healers did not make any village trips during most of the year. However, at the end of August, Tribal Healing Manager Maria Dexter moved to Golovin to become a village-based healer, serving the communities of White Mountain, Golovin, Elim, and Koyuk. It was her hope to be able to serve more village patients in this capacity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>FY19</th>
<th>FY20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obesity Rate (Children 2-5)</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breastfeeding Initiation Rate</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
<td>86.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breastfeeding Duration Rates at 6 Months</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breastfeeding Duration Rates at 12 Months</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Average Participation</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Average Enrollment</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed Lessons at WIChealth.org</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Treatments</th>
<th>FY19</th>
<th>FY20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY19</td>
<td>1,070</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY20</td>
<td></td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Infant Learning Program

The Infant Learning Program provides services for infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities and their families. During the infant and toddler years, children grow quickly and have so much to learn. Some children and their families face special challenges and need extra help. Services are provided in the child’s natural environment setting, e.g. primarily home when possible, child care setting, or other community settings. Evaluation services include physical, emotional, and intellectual development. Other services might include linking families to other resources, e.g. behavioral health services, pediatric speech-language services, pediatric occupational therapy, and/or pediatric physical therapy.

During FY20, ILP was faced with unprecedented challenges presented by COVID-19. In March, ILP suspended face-to-face services, along with many other health services. ILP implemented telehealth services for all families that gave verbal permission for this type of service. Smart tablets were purchased to offer to families that needed a way to stay virtually connected. Virtual early intervention technology checklists and informed consent were completed by phone, text message and/or email.

Office of Environmental Health

One of the most important determinants of human health is the environment that they live, work and play in. Environmental public health focuses on how the built and natural environments can impact health, both positively and negatively. OEH works with the people and organizations of the Bering Strait region to identify, evaluate, control, and ultimately prevent environmental health issues.

Reorganization of the department led to the creation of the Sanitation department, housed in the Engineering and Facilities division. OEH moved under the umbrella of Community Health Services. This reorganization allows for focused attention to both the unmet sanitation and environmental health needs in the region.

FY20 Highlights:

- In support of the region’s Tribal Environmental Programs, OEH partnered with the University of Alaska-Fairbanks to hold the Water Quality Testing Re-certification class virtually.
- OEH was a host site for the National Environmental Health Association – CDC Internship Program. At no cost to NSHC, OEH hosted a high-quality (virtual) summer intern from an accredited environmental health academic program.
- Continued supporting the 35 certified Lay Vaccinators (LVs) throughout the region with no-cost rabies vaccine and vaccination supplies. Local LVs were essential in continuing rabies vaccinations to dogs and cats when the COVID-19 pandemic prevented OEH or veterinarians from traveling.
- Coordinated with the Serum Run Trail Expedition teams that traveled via dog team and snow machine from Nenana to Nome to provide rabies vaccinations in Unalakleet, Shaktoolik, Koyuk, Elim, and White Mountain.
- Contracted with Houdini’s Bed Bug Service, LLC to provide whole house heat treatment services to Tribal homeowners in the region. By the end of 2020 Houdini’s had completed one full round of services in 13 of the regional villages.
- OEH was involved with various aspects of NSHC’s COVID-19 planning and response efforts. It helped identify suitable community quarantine/isolation facilities and get them ready for emergency use, created and/or distributed educational materials for utility workers and the general public, completed community surveys for household cleaning product distribution, and assisted with packaging/shipping out supplies.
The Engineering and Facilities department encompasses all capital projects, maintenance, environmental services, and security at NSHC. In FY20, the Facilities and Real Estate and Sanitation departments were added under the Engineering and Facilities umbrella.

Fiscal Year 2020 was a year of investing in the future with multiple building projects occurring at once. Most projects were able to stick to their construction timeline, despite COVID-19 complications.

Building Accomplishments:
- Wellness and Training Center: COVID-19 restrictions put some delays on this project
- NSHC Operations Building: Finishing touches happened at end of September. The building is 15,000 square feet, and it has four vehicle bays for fleet maintenance, medevac ambulance parking, and snow removal equipment warm storage.
- Diomede Clinic: construction continued throughout pandemic, even with strict travel restrictions in place. The clinic opened in November 2020.
- Shishmaref Clinic: construction began with pilings and foundation beams. By the end of the fiscal year, the clinic was dried in.
- St. Michael Clinic: sitework began with pilings in place.
- Village Morgues: Tumet competed morgues in Wales, Gambell, Savoonga and Brevig Mission.

Village Facilities Management

Village Facilities Management is comprised of maintenance technicians in each NSHC village and a Nome-based team that travels around the region to assist with preventive and responsive maintenance. The department was developed in 2015 when NSHC recognized the need to be more proactive in caring for the facilities where health care programs were operating.

FY20 Highlights:
- Purchased 500-gallon storage tanks for each village
- Replaced backup generators in six village clinics
- Helped renovate housing in Nome for COVID-19 quarantine housing
- Helped with Camp Nuuk cleanup
- Replaced the Wales clinic water line
- Renovated PA housing in Brevig Mission

The new clinic replaced the old armory building in the heart of Diomede. A new portion of boardwalk and stairs was included in the build.
Sanitation and Engineering

The NSHC Sanitation and Engineering department was created in fiscal year 2020 as it separated from the Office of Environmental Health in order for the department to focus on the unmet needs of sanitation in the region. NSHC hired Sean Lee, an experienced civil engineer with a background in water and sewer systems across the state as a project manager with Village Safe Water. Sean worked with the communities of Teller and Unalakleet in this position, and the experience carried over well to his new position.

Some highlights for the year included:

• Working with project managers at ANTHC and VSW to update the Sanitation Deficiency System and developing a reporting tool for NSHC’s use of the data for project prioritization and funding approaches.

• A new system for cataloging components of utility systems, Upkeep, is being built out for better preventative maintenance in communities to prevent water and sewer emergencies.

• Assisting communities spend CARES Act funds to improve water and wastewater access in communities through capital projects, including in Unalakleet, Shaktoolik and Teller.

• Non-capital project CARES Act assistance was provided to Stebbins with a simple handwashing basin plan, also used in other communities. The system has since been adapted to fit in-home sinks, so homes with faucets can have pump-activated water for hand washing purposes.

• Sanitation has also provided logistics for a large amount of sanitation supplies to the villages, including soap, hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies, buckets, and other sanitation necessities.

Corporate Housing

Mandy Ellanna was named manager of NSHC Real Estate and Village Facilities in 2020. NSHC Real Estate includes all corporate housing, where incoming employees stay when they arrive to the region. A 2020 accomplishment was the consolidation of housing leases held by NSHC and more efficient management of those resources.

FY20 Highlights:

• 23 housing leases were released for a total of 56 leases now held by NSHC

• An analysis was conducted to ensure what NSHC employees were paying accurately reflected the base rent, utilities, and other costs of NSHC housing

• NSHC’s student program was reviewed and parameters were established to decrease the volume of out-of-state students rotating through NSHC

• Utilization patterns were reviewed. Brief overnight stays will be accommodated through local hotels when possible

Most Engineering and Facilities staff members, including housing and Sanitation, moved into the new Nome Operations Building upon its completion in Fall 2020. It is located at 705 K Street, which is across Greg Kruschek Avenue from the Norton Sound Regional Hospital. One of the garage bays was converted into NSHC’s COVID-19 Testing Center to accommodate the space that local demand of testing required.
NSHC maintains a 24-hour Security department at the Norton Sound Regional Hospital. Its mission is to assist, protect and serve patients, staff and guests. The department operates a desk on the first floor of the hospital in order to direct visitors. Many of the full-time uniformed officers and all supervisors are certified through the International Association for Healthcare Security and Safety.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Security staff helped monitor entrances to the hospital and make sure employees, patients and visitors were screened and masked upon entry.

### Security

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, Security staff helped monitor entrances to the hospital and make sure employees, patients and visitors were screened and masked upon entry.

### Environmental Services/Laundry

The Environmental Services/Laundry department is on the front lines of infection control within NSHC, consisting of dedicated employees who undergo extensive training to provide services in housekeeping and laundry to patients. Over half the EVS staff have become Certified Healthcare Environmental Services Technicians (CHEST). EVS/Laundry is proud of the services it provides to NSHC to keep patients, visitors, and staff safe and comfortable.

The COVID-19 pandemic threw a spotlight on the EVS/Laundry teams, and they rose to every challenge. This included cleaning quarantine housing, readying beds for a medical surge, and laundering reusable gowns.

The Environmental Services team now encompasses all village-based environmental services workers, who are also to be commended for their jobs of taking care of their clinics.

### Pounds of Laundry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Pounds of Laundry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY19</td>
<td>248,396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY20</td>
<td>257,744</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nome EVS staff readies a surplus hospital bed that was one of 10 gifted to NSHC through Samaritan’s Purse, to be used in case of a COVID-19 hospital surge.

Mikey Wongittilin greets employees and patients arriving at the hospital in Spring of 2020. He offered face masks to those without one and directed them to the temperature check station on the first floor.

Plant Operations

Plant Operations works with all NSHC departments to provide quality maintenance and repair services, including managing utilities such as light, heat, air handling, oxygen, and power. The department works rigorously to care for facilities, striving to maintain a pleasant and comfortable physical environment for patients, visitors and staff.

Engineering and Facilities
Accounting
Payroll, Accounts Payable, Grants Accounting, Budgeting and Financial Statements are all managed by the Accounting department.

Patient Financial Services
The Patient Financial Services department handles admissions, billing, and collections for NSHC medical services, as well as cashiering services for all divisions of the corporation. The department performs outreach to eligible patients to enroll them in benefit programs such as Medicaid.

Health Information Management
Health Information Management maintains NSHC medical records and manages the corporation’s daily needs for health care information. All records are maintained in accordance with strict policies and procedures, as well as applicable laws, including HIPAA. Staff provides medical record services and supports patients, providers and departments.

Materials Management
Materials Management purchases all material, supplies and equipment for NSHC and manages inventory and Central Supply. The department ensures purchases meet both quality and cost requirements. Materials Management oversees the Patient Driver, which operates 8 a.m.-7 p.m. on weekdays.

This team was an integral piece of procuring and distributing needed supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic, as many needed personal protective equipment supplies experienced shortages worldwide.

Patient Travel
NSHC Patient Travel books medical travel, including airfare and lodging, for IHS beneficiary patients. If patients are insured by Medicaid, the State Travel Office will book their airfare and lodging, but NSHC’s travel office will help ensure they get their itinerary and all arrangements. NSHC has an Anchorage-based Patient Advocate who can help traveling patients and can be reached at (907) 434-2844.

Materials Management’s Craig Teesateskie and John Joe unload a shipment of medical supplies from Samaritan’s Purse.

FY 2020
Source of Operating Revenue ($Millions)

- $78.0, 38%
- $13.5, 7%
- $83.5, 41%
- $28.8, 14%

I.H.S  Patient Services  Grants  Other
Human Resources

The Human Resources department plays a critical role in the management of NSHC’s workforce. HR enforces policies and procedures, manages the employee compensation and benefits programs, as well as the scholarship, internship, and other educational programs in support of Alaska Native and local hire development, recruitment, and retention strategies.

FY20 Highlights

• HR Director Charlie Cross was hired at the tail end of FY19, and FY20 was his first full year at NSHC
• HR Manager Michelle Krier hired on in July 2020
• Human Resources took charge of the Personnel Power Pool once NSHC initiated its Incident Command Structure, and took stock of employees whose work could be repurposed toward needed efforts daily
• Several ladder programs were implemented to encourage employee growth and retention, including the Nurse Ladder Program, the Village Travel Tech/Maintenance Worker Ladder Program, and the Security Officer Ladder Program
• Human Resources helped draft a policy for managing employee payment and benefits during unexpected or extraordinary circumstances during the pandemic

Human Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Employees</th>
<th>FY19: 743</th>
<th>FY20: 702</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native Hire Rate</td>
<td>FY19: 64%</td>
<td>FY20: 61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Scholarships</td>
<td>FY19: $217,500</td>
<td>FY20: $446,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Beneficiary</td>
<td>FY19: $129,000</td>
<td>Scholarships Awarded FY20: $360,450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Human Resources

HR Director Charlie Cross leads a workshop on financial planning during NSHC’s Indigenous Peoples Day wellness and learning day for employees in 2019.

Information Services

The Information Services department maintains the Electronic Health Record and Cerner connection, ensuring patient health records are kept accessible and secure. It also maintains computers and other equipment, keeps data secured, and makes sure phone lines remain open. The department, which consists of about nine employees at any given time, keeps track of needed repairs, problems and issues and is available to help around the clock.

In 2020 alone, IS handled over 4,500 work orders. During the pandemic, IS facilitated a move to working remotely by supporting employees with extra computers, video conferencing equipment, and mobile devices to assist in the communication needs of both employees and patients. IS also supported the technical needs of the COVID testing centers at various locations including the Nome airport and ensured they were kept running and secure. The IS department also works to keep the surrounding villages connected and up-to-date, installing new servers, wifi systems, and getting new clinics up and running, such as in Little Diomede.
Administration

Administration works collaboratively with the Board of Directors to ensure health care operations are carried out in a compliant manner to meet the needs of our people. First and foremost, Administration leads with heart to ensure customer-owners and patients receive quality and respectful health care. The team provides oversight, leadership, and management of NSHC’s workforce, which has grown to 650 employees. Administration must stay abreast of all regulatory and compliance standards for NSHC’s health care delivery system. Some of those agencies include Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS), Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA), the Joint Commission, the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). In addition, NSHC participates in an annual audit of its financial performance and internal controls and reports quality data to several agencies, which compares NSHC to other organizations in the nation.

Not only does Administration strive to keep NSHC in compliance, the team works to communicate the strategic plan to meet goals and to carry out the mission and vision of the organization throughout the contributions of its workforce.

On March 23, 2020, the NSHC administrative team activated the incident command system and prioritized efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19. The following accomplishments were achieved:

1. Initiated a Daily Tribal Leader Call. Over 130 teleconferences were held with an estimated 50-100 participants per call.
2. Secured Lysol sanitizing wipes for every household in the region. Each household would receive two packages per month for one year.
3. Secured the Nome Youth Facility as a COVID-19 alternative care site.
4. Established a quarantine and isolation program and hotline. Provided housing, medication assistance, and food for patients in quarantine and isolation as needed.
5. Partnered with local leaders in all communities to create housing for quarantine and isolation.
6. Maintained an incident command team that partnered with local leaders to ensure positive cases were communicated promptly and that mitigation plans were made to keep communities safe.

In addition to managing an active incident command team amidst the pandemic, Administration also accomplished the following:

- 62% Tribal Hire Rate among the workforce of 700.
- Awarded 240 scholarships to students pursuing degrees and/or training in healthcare fields.
- Implemented a mandatory flu shot policy.
- Approved a longevity leave policy, which supports employees with 12 paid weeks off after 10, 20, and 30 years of continuous service.
- Supported the recruitment and retention of more mid-level providers to staff the village clinics to offer health aides relief and patients more access to care.
- Facilitated the highest cash collection on record at $84M, due to increased patient volumes.
- Facilitated the approval from the State of Alaska to administer the Personal Care Attendant program.
- Supported the construction of the new Nome Operations Building, Diomede Clinic, Wales morgue, Savoonga morgue, Gambell morgue, and the renovation of Camp Nuuk.
- Initiated the site work for a new clinic in St. Michael, the design for a new clinic and housing unit in Wales, and continued progress on the construction of the Wellness and Training Center and new Shishmaref Clinic.

Admin was on hand at the opening of the testing tent.
Compliance

The NSHC Compliance department was established to provide a systematic process aimed at ensuring that NSHC, its employees, contractors, vendors, and agents comply with applicable laws, regulations, and standards.

In FY19, the Compliance department’s top priorities were to focus on enhancing the monitoring and planning of NSHC systems for improvement in the quality of care with customers, staff, and service unit.

Patient privacy is of the utmost importance to NSHC, and the Compliance department, along with the Privacy Officer, provided training and education to employees regarding Patient and Resident Privacy. Privacy concerns can be reported to the Compliance Officer or NSHC anonymous hotline EthicsPoint at www.nortonsoundhealth.ethicspoint.com or toll-free at 1-855-541-4193.

The Compliance department is the point of contact for all human subject research-related activities for the Norton Sound Service Area.

Public Relations

The Public Relations department shares the message of NSHC Administration and its programs and services. The PR team uses different avenues to make sure to reach all residents of the region. Additionally, PR helps organize special events and supports partnerships with other organizations.

In FY20, PR played a lead role in informing the public about COVID-19 guidance and response.

FY20 highlights:
• Welcomed a new PR Specialist to fill an existing position and hired a third team member, a COVID relief-funded PR Specialist position
• Shared over 60 press releases and PSAs in relation to COVID-19. Each positive COVID-19 case was announced in a press release
• Produced a special COVID-19 edition of the Kaniqsirugut Newsletter
• Facilitated biweekly radio program produced by Laureli Ivanoff
• Ran a COVID-19 Testing Drawing to encourage regional residents to get tested in Spring 2020
• Created and sent educational materials regionwide
• Attended every Tribal Leader Call to answer questions and take suggestions from regional residents
• Helped implement new programs and services through advertising and signage

The generosity of the region shone in the donations of things like coffees for staff members from Bering Tea & Coffee, face masks for staff and the public, and items for those in quarantine. PR helped coordinate the donations and their distribution.

Patient Advocate

The Patient Advocate is a point of contact for all customer-owners and patients at NSHC. In FY20, an Anchorage-based Patient Advocate was added to the team to help NSHC patients navigate the system there.

In Nome, Jeannie Kost fills this supportive role. She can also help connect people in need with the Make a Patient Smile Fund. The fund provides monetary support to those who encounter unexpected medical expenses. Jeannie can be reached at (907) 443-4567 or padvocate@nshcorp.org

In Anchorage, Jason Harrell was hired in November 2019. He is stationed within Alaska Native Medical Center and is able to help traveling patients. He can be reached at (907) 434-2844.
Quality Improvement and Risk Management

NSHC strives to provide the best quality of care to all patients. FY20 saw staff adapt quickly and effectively to maintain high quality across the units of the facility. Quyanna Care Center achieved five stars in Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services ranking for nursing home quality indicators for the first time in several years. Primary Care, Acute Care, and the Emergency Dept. focused on the quality goal of “increased access to care,” providing more appointments at different times, sites, and novel ways to meet the needs of patients.

The 2020 Quality Focus Goals targeted depression screening, breast cancer screening, immunizations, heart disease, diabetes, and increased access to care. The outpatient units were recognized as HRSA Health Center Quality Leaders, NSHC’s third year receiving this national HRSA recognition.

NSHC has three quality improvement committees, which were all busy in FY20, although adapting to the new COVID-19 environment.

The Aquutaq Committee focused on outpatient services in both Nome and the villages. This committee supports the annual focus goals across departments with an overall goal of high quality patient-centered care. The Quyanna Care Center Performance Improvement Committee meets regularly to ensure that residents receive the highest quality of care. Finally, the Health Services Performance Improvement Committee reviews the policies and procedures of NSHC to make sure they are compliant with all regulations and further evaluates risk points like patient falls, restraints, etc. to make sure NSHC is providing the highest quality care to patients.

The Quality Improvement and Risk Management department received several grants including funding from the State of Alaska and HRSA for ongoing training, education, and quality improvement efforts. During COVID, the QI team assisted in processing grant applications and relief funding from federal, state, and private sources for use at NSHC and around the region. The QI team also coordinated procurement of supplies from state, federal and private sources during the pandemic-caused shortages.

Events in FY20 hosted/led by the QI team including the 2019 Pumpkin Walk, 2019 Stocking Contest, and Heart Month 2020. The department also worked with CAMP and VHS to help keep activities going even during the pandemic with healthy activities in spring and summer 2020.

Self-Governance

NSHC partners with Kawerak to advance the federal priorities of regional tribes. In her role as Self-Governance Liaison for NSHC, Megan Alvanna-Stimpfle helps facilitate strategic partnerships across NSHC and Kawerak teams to improve sanitation and governance services to communities.

The Water and Sewer Committee of the Board of Directors led to the creation of new programs and services at NSHC, including the in-region operator training and a sanitation department. Megan helps technical teams understand culturally relevant communication to empower tribes and communities in community infrastructure planning. On behalf of NSHC, she also coordinates the efforts of the region’s engineers to improve partnership and collaboration of those managing water, sewer, and roads. She works to ensure engineers improve the identification of deficiencies and projects are competitive for funding.

For NSHC she serves as the Technical Representative to the Sanitation Facilities Advisory Committee of the ANTHC Board of Directors and participates on the Water and Sewer Committee of the Alaska Native Health Board, as well as tribal compact negotiations with the Indian Health Service. She participates in the NSHC COVID-19 Tribal Leader Calls and helps tribal leadership prepare for visits with state and federal officials.
In the late 1960s, the Statewide Rural Community Action Board wrote a letter to the federal government, asking about the availability of health dollars for Alaska. The Office of Economic Opportunity stepped in with funding for a couple of demonstration projects in the rural parts of the state. In addition to the Bethel region, the Alaska Federation of Natives chose Norton Sound for the development of a model for community-based health care services as an alternative to regional, hospital-based care.

With the goal of giving Alaska Natives greater power in health care decisions, Norton Sound Health Corporation was founded on November 27, 1970. It became a model for tribally owned and operated health care organizations across the state.

NSHC’s earliest goals were to train community health aides, who had long been under-utilized and under-paid, and to construct village-based clinics. These goals were realized early in the corporation’s history, with the development of a community health aide curriculum and the village-built clinic program, which constructed eight village clinics, all within the first five years.

Today, those goals remain part of NSHC’s vision, which has expanded to include increasing wellness efforts, advocating for the environment, remaining financially strong, and supporting and developing the region’s youth for future tribal leadership, among other things.

NSHC is now the region’s largest employer with over 700 permanent hires, of whom 61% are tribal members. There is a clinic in every village, a sub-regional clinic in Unalakleet, and the Norton Sound Regional Hospital and Wellness and Training Center in Nome. NSHC owes a debt of gratitude to the visionary leaders of the past and present for the healthcare success of the region.
NSHC representatives were on hand to celebrate the grand opening to the Ikayuqt Elder Assisted Living Facility in Unalakleet in February 2020. The NSHC Board of Directors contributed $1 million toward the facility's construction. The living facility is the first of its kind in the region.

Jackie Crisci said goodbye to her role as NSHC VHS Clinic Travel Clerk Supervisor to step into the new role of Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium’s Regional Liaison for NSHC. She works out of the Nome hospital to help connect people with ANTHC services.

Over two dozen vendors filled the halls of the Norton Sound Regional Hospital on December 13, 2019 for the annual Christmas Bazaar. 

Roya Tobuk, granddaughter of Respiratory Therapy manager Marsha Tobuk, wowed the crowd with her fancy parka during the 2019 Indigenous Peoples Day Fashion Show/Baby Pageant. NSHC organized the event in celebration of Indigenous Peoples Day. Village residents took part virtually, while Nome participants walked the catwalk for judges and spectators.

NSHC representatives were on hand to celebrate the grand opening to the Ikayuqt Elder Assisted Living Facility in Unalakleet in February 2020. The NSHC Board of Directors contributed $1 million toward the facility's construction. The living facility is the first of its kind in the region.
NSHC celebrated Christmas with an employee party, including cookie decorating and festive outfits.

Quyanna Care Center staff members Deanne Komonaseak, Angela Koehler, RN, and Melissa O’Connor stand out in their Halloween get-ups. NSHC hosted a Pumpkin Walk on Halloween, where members of the public could Trick or Treat at different departments throughout the hospital.

At the Joint Board meeting of Kawerak and NSHC, directors honored Unsung Heroes for their volunteerism in the region. Family members of the late Ronald Ongtowasruk and Laverne Ashenfelter accepted awards on their loved ones’ behalves.

In November 2019, Beda Prentice, a village-based counselor in Koyuk, earned the Shining Star Award from the Annual BHA Forum.

In a show of gratitude, aircraft from the U.S. Air Force and Air National Guard units in Alaska made a flyover in Nome to honor COVID-19 responders and essential workers in May 2020.
2020 Employee Awards

January Employee of the Month - Mary Ruud, RN, Emergency Dept.
February Employee of the Month - Sarah Sampson, CHA SKK
April Employee of the Month - Charlie Peterson, VFM Technician
May Employee of the Month - Tierra Austin, In-Home Care Coord. Prog. Mgr

June Employee of the Month - Nina Hanebuth, Sr. Exec Admin Specialist
July Employee of the Month - Cammie Hayward, RN PCC
August Employee of the Month - Devin Drummond, Pharmacy
September Employee of the Month - Becka Miller, WIC

October Employee of the Month - Brendon Tran, VFM Technician
November Employee of the Month - Mark Hayward, PA VHS
December Employee of the Month - Cody Martin, CHP UNK
December Employee of the Month - Elizabeth Herzner, Finance

Employee of the Year (Nome) - Ivis Hobel, HR
Employee of the Year (Village) - Beda Prentice, VBC KKA
Manager of the Year - Dr. Mark Peterson, Medical Director
Outside Recognition in Fiscal Year 2020

November 2019: NSHC recognized by the Alaska Primary Care Association for a Quality Improvement Award Honorable Mention

November 2019: Cameron Piscoya, Compliance Officer, was honored with the Alaska Primary Care Association Coho Award

November 2019: Beda Prentice received the “Shining Star” Award for excellence in serving her community from the Annual Behavioral Health Aides Forum

December 2019: Amy McNulty was named the Governor’s EMS Educator of the Year by the Alaska Council on Emergency Medical Services

August 2020: NSHC recognized as one of the nation’s top clinically performing community health centers, with a “gold tier” Health Center Quality Leader status from the Health Resources and Services Administration
Share Your Feedback

NSHC Ethicspoint Hotline: Call 855-541-4193 or visit www.nortonsoundhealth.org and click on the “File a Concern” link

Contact the Patient Advocate: Call 907-443-4567 or email padvocate@nshcorp.org

Call: (907) 443-3311
(888) 559-3311
Fax: (907) 443-2113