



Seattle Indian Health Board

A Multi-Service Community Health Center for Medical Dental, Mental Health,
Substance Abuse, and Community Education.



RCHN Community Health Foundation, Inc.
1633 Broadway, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10019
Phone. 212 246 1122 ext 712
Fax 212 246 1022

Press Release

January 31, 2012

MEDIA CONTACTS: □

Maile Robidoux, (206) 324-9360, ext. 1105

Feygele Jacobs, RCHN CHF, (212) 246-1122, ext. 712

Stuart Schear, Stuart Schear Communications, (212) 877-1967

Seattle Indian Health Board (\$148,749) to Recruit, Train, and Retain Entry-Level Workers with Support of Major Grant

Local Health Center Serving American Indian and Alaska Native Patients in Seattle Will Expand Training and Job Opportunities

Seattle, WA – The Seattle Indian Health Board was awarded a \$148,749 grant as part of a major national initiative to recruit, train, and retain the entry-level employees required by community health centers to deliver high-quality health care. The grant was announced today by the center and the RCHN Community Health Foundation (RCHN CHF), the only national foundation dedicated solely to supporting community health centers. The foundation's Health Center Entry-Level Workforce Recruitment and Retention Initiative is designed to help the nation's 1,200 community health centers prepare for substantial growth in the next few years. Under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, health centers will play an expanded role in delivering care, and more than thirty million additional Americans, many of whom are expected to seek services at community health centers, will obtain health insurance coverage.

With the foundation's support, the Seattle Indian Health Board, which cares for thousands of American Indian and Alaska Native patients in the greater Seattle/King County region, will create a comprehensive recruitment, development, and retention program for entry-level staff focused on meeting the unique needs of American Indian and Alaska Native patients. The center will recruit interns and future employees through local colleges and vocational training programs, with a focus on outreach to American Indian and Alaska Native students. The center will also enhance the skills of current staff in working with computers and electronic health records, using medical terminology, and providing culturally sensitive customer service. To accomplish this, the center will build on its existing relationships with community colleges and develop computer-training modules. To retain staff, the center will create clear career paths, with financial incentives for employees who make professional progress.

“Caring for patients is growing more challenging in Seattle. At the same time that we are seeing more patients with increasingly complex health problems, members of our staff are working more frequently with new technologies, including electronic health records and practice management systems, and dealing with the complexities of major changes in insurance coverage,” said Ralph Forquera, Executive Director of the Seattle Indian Health Board. “We are committed to training our staff to excel in this complex and changing environment and deliver high-quality care.”

In addition to its grant to the Seattle Indian Health Board, the New York-based RCHN CHF made grants to community health centers located in four other states: Hawaii, Maine, Mississippi, and New York. Working with local partners, including vocational programs, community colleges, and veterans' groups, each of the centers will develop, implement, and test community-level approaches for ensuring that health centers have enough highly qualified entry-level staff to meet increasing demand. The foundation and the participating health centers will share their findings with health centers across the country, most of which face similar challenges in recruiting and retaining entry-level workers. These staff members, including patient service

representatives and medical assistants, work with clinical teams to deliver high-quality, coordinated care focused on the needs of patients, creating comprehensive “medical homes.” Key challenges for community health centers include training entry-level workers to use new electronic management and health record systems, implement new work flows, and appropriately code and bill for services while serving more patients, including an increasing number with complex health problems.

“We believe that the Seattle Indian Health Board will lead the way for other health centers across the country by developing and testing programs to attract and retain a strong workforce,” said Julio Bellber, President and CEO of the RCHN CHF. “This center, which cares for thousands of American Indian and Alaska Native patients, also plays a crucial role in providing good jobs for entry-level workers, creating economic growth in Seattle.”

“Community health centers are ready to build on their very strong foundations to expand the delivery of comprehensive, high-quality, community-based health care as the new health care law goes into effect,” said Thomas Van Coverden, president and CEO of the National Association of Community Health Centers. “We welcome this initiative and look forward to learning from these local efforts and sharing effective strategies with our health center colleagues from coast to coast.”

About the Seattle Indian Health Board

The Seattle Indian Health Board (SIHB) is a non-profit, multi-service community health center chartered in 1970 to serve the health care needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives living in the greater Seattle/King County area.

The mission of the SIHB is to assist American Indians and Alaska Natives in achieving the highest possible physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being through the provision of culturally appropriate services, and to advocate for the needs of all Indian people, especially the most vulnerable members of our community.

Celebrating over forty years of excellence in health care, SIHB offers clinical, community, chemical dependency, and traditional Indian Medicine services. For more information about the SIHB, visit www.sihb.org.

About the RCHN Community Health Foundation

The RCHN Community Health Foundation, founded in October 2005, is a not-for-profit operating foundation whose mission is to support community health centers through strategic investment, outreach, education, and cutting-edge health policy research. The only foundation in the country dedicated solely to community health centers, RCHN CHF builds on health centers' forty-year commitment to the provision of accessible, high-quality, community-based health care services for underserved and medically vulnerable populations. For more information on RCHN CHF, visit www.rchnfoundation.org.