

**Proposed Amendments to the
Indian Health Care Improvement Act
HR 2440/S.556
Sept. 2004**

Sec. 121. COMMUNITY HEALTH AIDE PROGRAM FOR ALASKA

- (a) **GENERAL PURPOSES OF PROGRAM** – Under the authority of the Act of November 2, 1921 (25 U.S.C. 13; popularly known as the Snyder Act), the Secretary, acting through the Service, shall develop and operate a Community Health Aide Program in Alaska under which the Service –
- (1) provides for the training of Alaska Natives as health aides or community health practitioners;
 - (2) uses such aides or practitioners in the provision of health care, health promotion, and disease prevention services to Alaska Natives living in villages in rural Alaska; and
 - (3) provides for the establishment of teleconferencing capacity in health clinics located in or near such villages for use by community health aides or community health practitioners.
- (b) **SPECIFIC PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS** – The Secretary, acting through the Community Health Aide Program of the Service, shall –
- (1) using trainers accredited by the Program, provide a high standard of training to community health aides and community health practitioners to ensure that such aides and practitioners provide quality health care, health promotion, and disease prevention services to the villages served by the Program;
 - (2) in order to provide such training, develop a curriculum that –
 - (A) combines education in the theory of health care with supervised practical experience in the provision of health care;
 - (B) provides instruction and practical experience in the provision of acute care, emergency care, health promotion, disease prevention, and the efficient and effective management of clinic pharmacies, supplies, equipment, and facilities; and
 - (C) promotes the achievement of the health status objectives specified in section 3(2);
 - (3) establish and maintain a Community Health Aide Certification Board to certify as community health aides or community health practitioners individuals who have successfully completed the training described in paragraph (1) or can demonstrate equivalent experience;
 - (4) develop and maintain a system which identifies the needs of community health aides and community health practitioners for continuing education in the provision of health care, including the areas

described in paragraph (2)(B), and develop programs that meet the needs of such continuing education;

- (5) develop and maintain a system that provides close supervision of community health aides and community health practitioners;
- (6) develop a system under which the work of community health aides and community health practitioners is reviewed and evaluated to assure the provision of quality health care, health promotion, and disease prevention services
- (7) **develop a dental health aide program that does not include irreversible dental procedures.**

- (b) **NATIONAL COMMUNITY HEALTH AIDE PROGRAM --** The Secretary, acting through the Service, shall develop and operate a national Community Health Aide Program consistent with the requirements of this section without reducing funds for the Community Health Aide Program in Alaska.

Report Language

Dental health aides are an important extension of the community health aide program because they will provide oral health care professionals who will work and live in the villages helping to establish prevention and education programs that can break the dental disease cycle affecting many Alaska Natives. In addition, dental health aides could perform procedures that would greatly expand the productivity of dentists, helping to ameliorate the fact that there are presently too few dentists available to serve the Alaska Native population. However, procedures that could result in irreversible damage, such as extractions, tooth and cavity preparation, and polpotomies, should be restricted to dentists to ensure patient safety.