**NEWS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release  
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# SEARHC Announces Suspensions of Non-Emergent Services

**SITKA, March 19, 2020** – SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) has suspended certain non-emergent services in response to the latest coronavirus (COVID-19) developments. In an announcement made by the SEARHC Incident Command System (ICS), restrictions have been applied to dental, optometry, patient travel, and elective surgery effective immediately, allowing staff to focus on core healthcare services and prepare for increased volumes due to potential outbreak.

Routine optometry and dental services have been suspended, with the exception of emergency procedures. Patient travel has been suspended unless urgent or emergent conditions are present. Elective surgeries have been suspended. The Swedish Health Network specialty clinics will be postponed for 90 days.

“With the Tuesday announcement of Southeast’s first confirmed case of COVID-19, the ICS team found it imperative to suspend services deemed non-emergent,” said SEARHC Vice President and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Elliot Bruhl. “As the healthcare provider of choice, making these services available to all residents is an important part of SEARHC’s holistic approach to community health. Given the situation, our leadership has made the difficult decision to suspend these non-emergent services to ensure social distancing, and reduce inessential traffic and contact in the clinical environment.”

Suspension of non-emergent services would allow SEARHC the opportunity to redeploy staff to other roles within the organization. The pandemic may create an increased need for additional staffing to provide screenings, patient registration, environmental services, and more.

Primary care, acute care, swing bed care, and emergency services remain available for all patients, as do support services including radiology, laboratory, and therapy services.

For the latest information on the coronavirus, including contact information for care in all communities, visit covid19.searhc.org.

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