



TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS
FROM: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL
STATUS: ADOPTED

DATE: 4/22/2010

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board of Directors of The Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce adopt the following position statement as policy.

STATEMENT: The Chamber supports the need for a "Best in Class" Comprehensive Children's Hospital in San Antonio to ensure that specialized health care needs of injured or ill children in San Antonio and the South Texas Region are met. Such a facility(ies) will help San Antonio physicians to address a wide range of children's health issues. Further, The Chamber urges the CEOs of local private and public health systems to collaborate on a solution that guarantees the best possible care for children in the region and one that enhances San Antonio's reputation as a national Center of Excellence for pediatric services.

BACKGROUND: **Support for a "Best in Class" Children's Hospital**

San Antonio hospitals, including two Children's Hospitals, provide a high quality of care to pediatric patients today. However, "the best available care today may not meet tomorrow's highest standards. Pediatric health care is in a state of constant transformation as children's hospitals routinely question, probe and improve the way they deliver care."¹ The community's challenge is to assure and sustain the highest quality of care for sick and injured children in the coming decades, given a climate of future population growth and demographic and other changes in our community, anticipated changes to the health care delivery system and health care coverage and intense and increasing competition for pediatric subspecialists.

Pediatric services, as a whole in San Antonio, are fragmented within and across our local health systems. There is duplication of services, yet no one hospital offers a full array of services for complex pediatric medical problems. This is inefficient and does not position our community in the best light to retain our current base of pediatric specialists or attract the best and brightest of the next generation of pediatric providers. Pediatric specialists have a choice of where to practice and competition is growing increasingly intense with

¹ *All Children Need Children's Hospitals*, July 25, 2007, National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions, p. 10. The National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions (NACHRI) is a not-for-profit membership association of hospitals and institutions whose programs are primarily clinical. NACHRI members include not-for-profit children's hospitals, pediatric units of not-for-profit medical institutions and not-for-profit medical institutions with pediatric graduate education programs affiliated with medical schools. NACHRI has 218 members in the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, Italy, China, Mexico and Puerto Rico ([NACHRI excludes for-profit Children's Hospitals as voting members](#)). NACHRI promotes the health and well-being of all children and their families through support of children's hospitals and health systems that are committed to excellence in providing health care to children.

other major Texas cities, including Houston, Dallas, Austin, Corpus Christi, Lubbock, and El Paso, having or developing comprehensive children's hospitals.

While the number of San Antonio families with sick and injured children seeking care in other cities is approximately 1 percent, there is much concern about how soon those numbers will begin to grow as we currently experience physician shortages in key pediatric specialties, and we may lose some of these valuable individuals as they retire or are lured away to comprehensive children's hospitals in other communities.

The Chamber seeks a positive outcome to health care provider collaborative discussions that will help to enhance San Antonio's ability to protect and grow the base of children's health care services and in so doing gain a competitive advantage by creating a "Best in Class" Comprehensive Children's Hospital to serve South Texas. A Comprehensive Children's Hospital would likely lead to more external funding from grants and research projects. It would also attract top-quality pediatricians and pediatric specialists to the area and would aid in retention of these health care providers. A Comprehensive Children's Hospital would also be another tool for economic development and attracting businesses to the region.

While acknowledging the excellent care currently provided to children from all over South Texas, the overall goal of this initiative is to continually improve on that care and act in the best interest of the community as a whole.

Finally, while a recommendation is made for collaboration among Health Care Systems to develop a "Best in Class" Comprehensive Children's Hospital in San Antonio, this does not mean The Chamber is recommending the elimination of competition through consolidation.

REASONS FOR SUPPORT: Characteristics of a "Best in Class" Comprehensive Children's Hospital –

Major children's hospitals are associated with medical schools and attract clinical trials and externally-funded research.² As such, independent children's teaching hospitals and pediatric departments of major teaching hospitals in the United States train the large majority of the nation's pediatricians and nearly all pediatric subspecialists, including pediatric surgeons and researchers.³ Children's hospitals also train nurses, occupational therapists, social workers, and other health care professionals dedicated to providing health care to children.⁴ "[A]s centers of cutting-edge research in children's health, these unique

² *All Children Need Children's Hospitals*, July 25, 2007, National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions, pp. 2, 13-15.

³ *All Children Need Children's Hospitals*, July 25, 2007, National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions, p. 20.

⁴ *All Children Need Children's Hospitals*, July 25, 2007, National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions, pp. 2, 20.

hospitals are responsible for lifesaving discoveries such as vaccines, gene therapies and specialized surgical techniques that not only benefit children, but adults as well."⁵

Characteristics of a "Best in Class" Comprehensive Children's Hospital include:

- **Constant Specialty Physician Coverage** - Major children's hospitals are related to or part of academic centers and have sufficient patient volumes to employ hospital-based physicians and residents whose sole focus is the pediatric patients.
- **Depth & Breadth of Medical Specialties** - Major children's hospitals have pediatric specialists in house every day, around the clock. There are multiple specialists rather than one expert, who also may also have a private practice. This depth of experts promotes a clinical environment where the organization of care focuses around disease entities and Centers of Excellence or Institutes. For example, instead of having one cancer specialist, major children's hospitals will support a Bone & Blood Institute where clinical care is provided by multidisciplinary teams that collaborate and conduct groundbreaking research to develop and promote best practices.
- **Support & Wrap Around Services** - Everyone in a major children's hospital is there to serve one mission: the care of sick and injured children. The clinical environment is supported by a full array of educational, social, child life, nutritional and palliative care staff and resources.
- **Clinical Quality & Advantages to the Clinical Practice** - Scale and critical mass are closely tied to a hospital's ability to offer "the highest quality of care" for children with complex medical and surgical conditions. There are significant improvements in information exchange and flow of evidence-based practices, thus enhancing quality and continuity of care. As an example, collaborative patient care would both encourage and greatly benefit from the development of a single system of electronic medical records.
- **Role of Research** - Almost all children's hospitals participate in pediatric research or clinical trials. For the best Children's Hospitals in the United States, quality is tied closely to research and research dollars. Pediatric research has brought about landmark discoveries, including cancer treatment and prevention of common childhood diseases, such as polio.⁶ Today's clinical trials and sponsored research require team-supported organizational structures, business systems and institutional review boards to assure ethical and clinical integrity.

⁵ *All Children Need Children's Hospitals*, July 25, 2007, National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions, p. 2.

⁶ *All Children Need Children's Hospitals*, July 25, 2007, National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions, pp. 14-15.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS OR DRAWBACKS:

- There could be significant and/or duplicative capital investment for the participating organizations.
- Existing health systems have considerable capital and operating investments in pediatric services and facilities.
- The decision on where to locate the children's hospital may be difficult as the resulting economic impact (based on the location) might be desired by each region of the City and Bexar County.
- The impact on costs and availability of care would need to be carefully considered as the details of the project are worked out.
- The relationship between academic and private practice physicians in the community will require consideration and processes for collaboration.

IMPLEMENTATION: The Chamber will communicate its recommendation for a comprehensive children's hospital through a number of media and channels, including Chamber membership, the Chamber's newsletter, and other media outlets and forms of communication, as well as to local health care institutions, physician organizations, the City of San Antonio, Bexar County, and to the Mayor and City Council.