



## **ChildrensHospitalLosAngeles**

*International Leader in Pediatrics*

**Walter W. Noce, Jr.**  
**President and CEO**

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Dear Friend:

At Childrens Hospital Los Angeles, we recognize that children need strong, healthy families and communities to thrive. For more than a century, the hospital has been actively involved in community outreach to improve the well-being of children, youth, and families outside our walls. As the hospital's influence has grown, so has our definition of community. We view all young people who could benefit from our services as part of a *global* community. While our outreach programs focus on Los Angeles, they also impact children across the state, nation, and in countries as far away as China and Jordan. In this, our third white paper, I would like to focus on the remarkable impact that the hospital is making through a wide range of outreach programs.

Childrens Hospital Los Angeles was founded in response to the needs of our community, and as a result, outreach has always been a central part of our mission. We work with caregivers, health care providers, educators, government representatives, and civic leaders to identify the primary issues that impact the well-being of children and youth. Our efforts are guided by three overarching goals: improving children's access to health care, promoting positive child development, and reducing risk factors that impair children's health. Among the many issues that we address are health insurance enrollment, services for homeless youth, education for children with special needs, child abuse, injury prevention, access to dental services, and critical care for the underserved. We partner with hundreds of different public, private, and nonprofit organizations to provide these services, which influence the lives of tens of thousands of young people each year.

Despite concerted efforts to increase health care coverage for children who are below or near the poverty line, there are still approximately 300,000 children in Los Angeles County, 1 million children in California, and 8 million children nationwide without health insurance. Many families are unaware that they are eligible for benefits, have difficulty completing the necessary paperwork, or do not understand how to access benefits once they are enrolled. To ensure that young people have access to medical care, Childrens Hospital Los Angeles provides insurance information and assistance to families through local health fairs coordinated by Ellen Zaman, L.C.S.W., in our Office of Community Affairs. Last year, we reached more than 3,000 families at these fairs. Further, staff at our three school-based clinics educate

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families about public benefits and help them enroll in Medi-Cal and Healthy Families. These clinics predominantly serve low-income students and their families. Childrens Hospital is also a member of the National Association of Children's Hospitals, which advocates at the state and federal level to strengthen health insurance programs such as Medicaid.

There are an estimated 10,000 homeless and runaway youth in Los Angeles who are living in emergency shelters or on the streets. These young people are unlikely to receive regular medical services and are seldom covered by insurance. As a result, they are among the most difficult groups for health care professionals to reach. Since 1982, the High Risk Youth Program within the hospital's Division of Adolescent Medicine has been providing comprehensive medical and psychosocial care to homeless and high-risk youth. In addition to illness and injury, these young people are at-risk for substance abuse, pregnancy, physical and emotional abuse, and HIV infection. Under the leadership of Curren Warf, M.D., High Risk Youth Program Medical Director, a team of physicians, social workers, nurses, and psychiatrists offer free medical services, counseling, crisis intervention, health education, and case management. We provide services through partnerships with the Los Angeles Free Clinic, Covenant House California, homeless shelters, and drop-in centers. The High Risk Youth Program plays a critical role in connecting youth to outside services such as substance abuse counseling, public benefits, and temporary shelter. Last year, the program served approximately 2,000 adolescents, many of whom had no other access to care.

Given the amazing advances in the diagnosis and treatment of pediatric cancer during the past few decades, almost 80% of children with cancer will survive. Yet, the treatment that saves a child's life may also result in a certain degree of academic, social, or physical impairment. Childrens Hospital Los Angeles addresses the special academic challenges that pediatric cancer survivors face through the School Transition and Reintegration (STAR) program within the Childrens Center for Cancer and Blood Diseases. The program's founder and Director of the Behavioral Sciences Section, Ernest Katz, Ph.D., and his staff work closely with families to ensure that each child has the support necessary to succeed in school. Services include creating individual evaluation plans; assisting parents in accessing education services; giving classroom presentations; and training educators, families, and health care providers to advocate for children in school settings. When it was established in 1978, STAR was the first program of its kind in the country. Now, it reaches more than 250 children each year in Los Angeles, San Diego, and Ventura counties, and has been used by the American Cancer Society as a statewide and national model.

Despite a decrease in the number of child abuse cases over the last five years, there were still more than 146,000 such cases in Los Angeles County in 1999. Through the Audrey Hepburn CARES Team, Childrens Hospital provides comprehensive services to young victims of abuse and their families. Guided by Karen Kay Imagawa, M.D., Director, program staff identify cases of abuse, provide medical care, connect children and families with support services, offer mental health services, and present evidence in court cases. Working in partnership with multiple law enforcement agencies, the Department of Child and Family Services, and child advocacy organizations, the Audrey Hepburn CARES Team is a resource for some of the most challenging cases in Los Angeles. We have the only non-county child abuse team in Los Angeles with dual expertise in child abuse and developmental/behavioral pediatrics. This enables our

hospital to provide more comprehensive assessments, particularly for children with developmental disabilities who are at higher risk for abuse. Each year, Childrens Hospital Los Angeles treats approximately 600 cases of abuse, one of the largest caseloads of any California hospital.

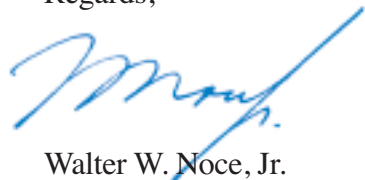
Another issue that we face as a community is the staggering number of children who are injured, disabled, or killed as a result of traumatic accidents each year. Approximately 65% of the injuries that we treat result from motor vehicle collisions. Most fatalities involve cases where children were hit by a driver who did not see them, young passengers who were not wearing a seat belt, or children who were not secured in a car seat. The hospital's interdisciplinary Healthy Children Committee and Trauma Center staff work to prevent these unnecessary deaths and injuries through education, legislation, and community outreach. Last year, Committee Chair Pamela Griffith, R.N.C., M.B.A, and the Office of Community Affairs provided free child passenger safety seats to more than 150 families, distributed approximately 8,000 "See a Child, Save a Child" reflector sticker packets, and educated over 4,000 families about car seat use and motor vehicle safety. Trauma staff also developed a book entitled *It Only Takes a Second: Preventing Childhood Traumatic Injuries*, which was published last year with a foreword by actress Jamie Lee Curtis.

Through the Laura P. and Leland K. Whittier Virtual Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (VPICU), Childrens Hospital Los Angeles can reach out to children across the country and around the world. There are approximately 70 million children in the United States, but only 725 pediatric critical care specialists. These specialists are concentrated in a small number of large urban hospitals. To ensure that children in outlying areas have access to critical care services, to enable physicians to record and share data on patient outcomes, and to disseminate knowledge about best practices in order to enhance quality of care, Childrens Hospital began developing a "virtual" pediatric intensive care unit in 1998. We have already linked more than 300 critical care units to one another via the VPICU network, and pediatric specialists at Childrens Hospital will soon provide telemedicine consultation for critical care patients at five California hospitals. Under the leadership of Randall Wetzel, M.B., F.C.C.M., F.A.A.P., head of Anesthesiology and Critical Care Medicine, this visionary project will be operational this summer.

In addition to numerous hospital programs, many of our physicians work with international organizations to provide services to children in countries around the world. Richard MacKenzie, M.D., head of the Division of Adolescent Medicine, is an active member of the Mentor Group, a nonprofit organization in Switzerland that seeks to prevent drug abuse among youth in developing countries. The Mentor Group also partners with the prestigious World Health Organization to identify areas of need, conduct research, and promote programs that decrease abuse. Shockingly, the average age that children in developing countries begin using illicit drugs is only *nine years old*. John Meara, M.D., D.M.D., Assistant Professor of Surgery, Division of Plastic Surgery, travels to countries as far away as China, Honduras, and Jordan to address conditions such as cleft palate with the nonprofit organization Operation Smile. This organization brings teams of anesthesiologists, surgeons, and dentists to perform reconstructive procedures for young patients in underserved areas. These are just a few of the many ways that physicians at our hospital reach out to our global community.

By addressing basic issues such as good health, safety, and education, Childrens Hospital Los Angeles is improving the future of children, families, and our entire community. In partnership with organizations that share our mission, the hospital's outreach programs are able to affect children and youth locally, nationally, and internationally. I have enjoyed receiving your comments in response to our first two white papers, and I look forward to your feedback regarding the hospital's community outreach programs.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "W. Noce, Jr.", with a long, sweeping flourish extending upwards and to the right.

Walter W. Noce, Jr.

President and Chief Executive Officer