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## HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Chairman: Tim Mitchell

### Purpose

Access to high quality health care is a cornerstone of any great community. Hurricane Katrina had a dramatic impact on our health care system, and demonstrated a need for improvements that will protect our health care system from interruption in future storms. The purpose of this committee is to make recommendations for improved hurricane preparedness and for expansion and future growth of health care services available to residents of Biloxi and the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

### Recommendations

#### Hurricane Preparedness

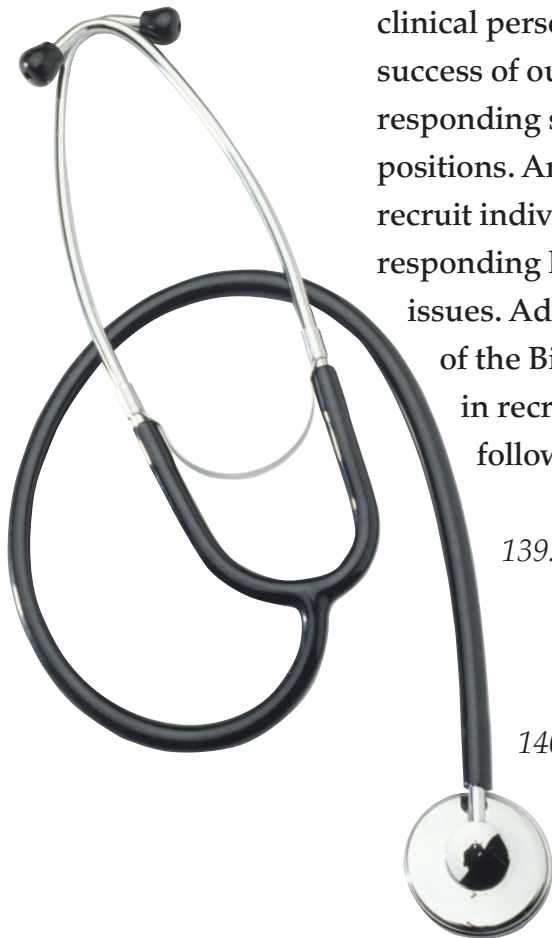
Based on our research of the local health care providers, 69 percent of those responding said that they have changed their emergency plans since the storm. While many of these changes are specific to the individual organizations, several recommendations address mechanisms to help health care providers care for our citizens.

135. *To better facilitate communication, a designated City representative should be appointed to serve as the primary liaison between Biloxi health care facilities and the Mayor's office, two-way communication available between the health care facilities and this person once storms enter the Gulf.*
  
136. *Develop a plan to address the needs of "Special Needs" patients, including shelter designation, medical staffing of the clinic, and supplies/medical equipment that will be needed by these patients. A schedule of who will be working in these shelters (doctors, nurses, etc.) will need to be developed and the staging of medical supplies and replenishing of those supplies will need to be addressed.*

137. *Designate medical personnel as first responders following a disaster to help support their mission of taking care of the medical needs of the community.*
138. *Develop a health care clearinghouse locally, as well as a satellite center outside of the disaster affected area, for contact information for all health care providers to assist patients in finding their physician and medical information after the storm.*

### **Recruitment & Retention**

The health care system is only as good as those individuals working tirelessly to provide care. The ability to retain physicians, clinical personnel, and non-clinical personnel is vital to the future success of our city. In our survey results, over one-third of those responding stated that they were using temporary help to fill their positions. An additional 31% said that outside interests are trying to recruit individuals to leave the Coast. Thirty-eight percent of those responding listed affordable housing as one of the contributing issues. Adequate child care and transportation issues with the loss of the Biloxi-Ocean Springs Bridge were also listed as issues in recruiting and retaining staff. To address these issues, the following recommendations are being made:



139. *Work with the local Universities and with available federal grant money to increase the size of Clinical Programs, (i.e., Nursing, Respiratory, Radiology, etc.,) on the Coast.*
140. *Implement recommendations made in this report from the affordable housing committee.*
141. *Replacement of the Biloxi/Ocean Springs Bridge is imperative for the long-term stability of the health care providers on the Coast.*
142. *Work collaboratively with the public and private health care systems on the Coast to establish a Medical School and Residency Program for physicians.*



### Future Growth

As Biloxi rebuilds, health care providers will need to keep up the pace to meet the demands of our expanding service area. Prior to the storm, significant growth had been seen in the Biloxi annexed area. The development of additional casinos and tourist destinations, and the increase in the number of condominiums on the Coast, will help fuel increased demand for health care services. With this in mind, we make the following recommendations:

143. *Continued growth in the annexed areas of Biloxi will increase the demand for health care services on the Coast. Additional resources will be needed to meet this demand.*
  
144. *It is imperative that support be given to the rebuilding efforts of Keesler Medical Center. Keesler has been a major contributor to the past growth of Biloxi. A strong Keesler Medical Center will continue to support our local economy for many years to come.*

