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Healthcare Reform Paper: The Case for Publicly Funded Medical Call Centers

PHOENIX, AZ: Barton Schmitt, MD, FAAP, Medical Director of the After-Hours Call Center, The Children's Hospital of Denver and Andrew Hertz, MD, FAAP, Medical Director of the Rainbow Call Center and current Chairperson of the Section on Telehealth Care for the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), have recently completed a position paper regarding the role of medical call centers in health care reform. "The impetus for the paper," explains Schmitt, "was largely because I have not heard anyone in government mention telephone care as part of their solution." Medical call centers are used in many other countries and have been found to be cost-effective, yet in the U.S., only New Mexico (so far) has implemented a publicly funded call center for all of their state's uninsured.

The position paper, titled **The Case for Publicly Funded Medical Call Centers**, offers as a premise that, "every citizen should have the right to reach a telephone care nurse at any hour day or night for assistance with illnesses, injuries or other acute medical problems." Its content describes the primary functions of today's medical call centers, an overview of their outcomes, evidence of their ability to reduce healthcare costs and recommendations for making these centers a critical part of universal access to health care.

For a copy of the three-page document with references, go to Schmitt-Thompson Clinical Content website www.stcc-triage.com/research.htm or contact sue@stcc-triage.com.