

## Doctors Volunteer to Keep Nursery Children Healthy

During a child's stay at the Nursery, if he or she requires medical attention or a routine medical evaluation, one of 16 doctors with Partners In Pediatrics, a Hennepin County based pediatrics clinical practice, visits the Nursery as part of his or her hospital rounds to conduct a medical evaluation, diagnose a health problem and prescribe and deliver treatment, all at no cost. Physicians come to the Nursery twice a week on average to see children requiring medical attention for common colds, pink eye, ear infections, asthma, and other conditions.

During the intake process, the staff explains the Nursery's relationship with Partners in Pediatrics and then parents can consent to have their children seen by doctors if it becomes necessary during their stay.

The Nursery's Pediatric Assessment and Medical Management program is one of only 10 such programs at residential crisis nurseries nationwide.

Partners in Pediatrics Medical Director Lisa Irvin, M.D., says, "Our goal is to evaluate simple illnesses and get the child started on proper treatment. Then we write a letter to the parents to educate them about their child's medical situation and advise them how to follow up with their regular doctor. Our involvement with the Nursery helps minimize the number of children who are too sick to be at the Nursery or who may be contagious."

Dr. Irvin says, "I love going to the Nursery. The kids are sweet and wonderful. They are frequently a little scared, but the exam room is cozy and cute." Once a diagnosis is made, a child who has an ear infection can be started on an antibiotic or a child with asthma can start using a nebulizer, she explained.

In addition to the Nursery physician visits, Dr. Irvin meets monthly with Children Services Manager Carla Ellis to review the medication administration records; monitor how frequently the physicians are needed; and troubleshoot various medical cases. "I'm so impressed by how thorough the Nursery staff is in keeping the records and how few mistakes are made," says Dr. Irvin.

Support staff with Partners in Pediatrics perform the important function of providing daily triage for the Nursery and giving verbal orders over the phone so the Nursery staff has authority to administer simple medications for diaper rash, eczema, fevers, etc. They work with Nursery staff to determine if a doctor needs to come out for a visit or if a situation can be handled over the phone. Nursery staff can also count on physicians to help with phone consultations on a regular basis.

Partners in Pediatrics' doctors find their work at the Nursery rewarding, Dr. Irvin says, because they are helping children who really need to be treated, and at the same time, they are helping families get started on the right medical treatment plan.

