



WINTER '09 NEWSLETTER



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our mission

Community Health Center, Inc. is a private, non-profit agency providing primary health care and social services. Its quality health care services are available to all, and particularly to those who cannot gain access to such services elsewhere. The Community Health Center, Inc. takes leadership in promoting interagency cooperation. It is based on consumer control and is committed to ensuring human rights and respecting human dignity; as such, it strives to be a voice and vehicle for social change.

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The Next Generation: The Patient Portal

Although it sounds like something out of Star Trek, the **Patient Portal** is not just science fiction. It's one of the ways that Community Health Center will be using 21st century technology to provide better health care for their patients.

Since 2006, the Health Center has been converting paper files to an Electronic Health Record system. CHC patients have grown accustomed to having their providers tap their information onto a laptop instead of flipping through papers. Prescriptions are zapped instantly to their preferred pharmacy, and reminders of important tests and immunizations are automatically noted. Community Health Center was ahead of the curve as the one of the first practices in the nation to fully embrace electronic health records for our medical and behavioral health patients. Now, with support from President Obama's new administration and the State of Connecticut, we will be able to expand to electronic health records for our dental patients as well.

Electronic health records improve quality, reduce errors, and eliminate wasteful duplication. But there are also exciting benefits when the computerized system is used for more than just internal storage of information. The next step is to make the record easily available to patients themselves, to put them in the driver's seat on improving their own wellness. Also, it's possible to teach CHC's electronic records to "talk" to hospital computers throughout the region, which has enormous potential for improving outcomes when our patients need emergency room care.

The Patient Portal is the name of CHC's planned secure access system for patients. Using any computer, they will be able to look at their records and review recent test results and any recommendations from their provider. Think of the benefit this

would have, for example, for patients with chronic care conditions like diabetes, where constant monitoring of results has been demonstrated to improve health. Use of the Patient Portal is expected to lead to more frequent communication between providers and patients, with a corresponding improvement in wellness.

The HIE (Health Information Exchange) is an innovative system that will harness the accuracy of our electronic health records when our patients visit any hospital emergency room in Connecticut. By ensuring that our records are accessible on the computer systems of all emergency room providers, our patients will have an unprecedented level of protection against errors, unnecessary delays or contra-indicated prescriptions, and will also allow our providers to monitor that care from any location. When a patient is directed to follow up with their CHC provider, the emergency room can immediately enter CHC's scheduling system and book an appointment for the next working day.

Community Health Center has an outstanding electronic health record partner/vendor in eCW, which is consistently chosen as one of the top electronic health records in the United States. CHC's project management team has developed the software and hardware specifications, timeline and training program for the implementation of these expanded services, including mechanisms to absolutely protect patient privacy. To develop the new Health Information Exchange, CHC is coordinating with the information technology directors and chief information officers at regional hospitals.



*To boldly go
where no patient
has gone before!*

CHC, Inc.— A statewide network committed to clinical excellence in primary care.

Children came up all smiles for one week this winter, thanks to the hard work of all Community Health Center in a strong partnership with private, local dentists. CHC partnered with cities and private providers across the state. During the week of February 2 for "Give Kids a Smile," this team provided free dental care to uninsured and underserved children. In places from Norwalk to Meriden to New Britain to Middletown, children saw dentists, in some cases for the first time in their young lives. In one case, a child had 11 cavities.

Research has shown that good dental care early in a child's life can save missed days in school, can prevent worse problems later on, and can save the family and insurance reimbursements a lot of money down the road. In one study, 52 million hours of school were missed per year because of oral pain in kids.

In Meriden, Esteban Jimenez Sr. watched as his 7-year-old son received care. Why were they doing this? "For the health of my son," Jimenez said in Spanish. "I don't want his teeth to get damaged when he is older."

In New Britain, which received strong support from private dentists, Mayor Timothy Stewart read a proclamation welcoming Give Kids a Smile Day, and Mark Masselli, president/CEO of CHC, stressed the close relationship between the agency and the city.

NORWALK SMILES ON GIVE KIDS A SMILE DAY

Dr. Nicole Kent pauses in her treatment of a boy during Give Kids A Smile day at Norwalk Smiles in Norwalk. Dr. Kent was one of many private dentists across the state who teamed up with CHC for free dental screenings for children.



CHC and Local Dental Providers Give Kids A Smile

At Give Kids a Smile Day in Meriden on Feb. 7, a good time was had by all. From balloon-filling to dental screenings, children in Meriden received free dental care at the Community Health Center. Thanks to a strong partnership with local private providers who volunteered, the day was a big success. [See story and photo on back cover.](#)



Johana Salgado, dental assistant, and Mari Vinkas, interim Meriden site director, fill balloons.



Dr. Alice Yang and Salgado treat a young patient with sunglasses.



Five providers pose together: Dr. Amit Desai, Michele Lacrovia, CDA, Teri Stample, CDA, Dr. David Hegrott, Jennifer Minney, RDH, and Dr. Yang.



Dr. Desai treats a patient.



Teri Stample and Dr. Hegrott team up. Dr. Hegrott is the volunteer chairman of the event for the sixth year in a row.

CHC of New Britain is growing—in a BIG way!



Construction has begun on a two-story, 20,000-square-foot addition to the property at 1 Washington Square. The addition will allow CHC to expand its medical services there and, in the future, add to its dental capacity, according to Yvette Highsmith-Francis, site director at New Britain.

The expansion will add 16 additional medical exam rooms and renovate the existing 17,000-square-foot building. When completed, the addition will more than double the size of the building. The total cost of the addition is \$4.4 million, including \$2.5 million in state money, thanks to Sen. Donald BeFronzo, Rep. John Geragostan and the entire New Britain delegation.

"We're looking to build a facility that lines up with our philosophy of delivery of integrated, planned care for the uninsured and the underserved," said Highsmith-Francis. "We're bringing our building to the standards of a world-class organization—a more modern, more family-oriented feel than what we have currently."

The new space will bring many pluses to the site—most of all increased access for patients, Highsmith-Francis said. The new medical exam rooms will allow the addition of two new medical teams, with five members each: two providers such as a physician or nurse practitioner, two medical assistants and a nurse.

The expansion will also physically integrate behavioral health and medical services—behavioral health services will move to the first floor, joining medical staff there.

"We've been here in New Britain for 12 years and we've established our center as part of the community—not just the health care community but the community at large," said Highsmith-Francis. "This new facility is in line with our community commitment to improving New Britain. This is a partnership with city officials and the mayor, and we're trying to make a positive impact on the neighborhood."



A 20,000-square-foot expansion begins to take shape at the New Britain site of the Community Health Center. The two-story expansion will add 16 additional medical exam rooms to the facility on Washington Street.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

CHC School-Based Behavioral Health Services Expanding to Cover All Meriden Schools

The City of Meriden had a specific need and request of the Community Health Center, Inc. In that central Connecticut city, education officials didn't see the need for full comprehensive school-based health centers. What they really needed and wanted was behavioral health services, right on the school site to avoid delays and gaps—so that children could be seen without having to miss school time and without delay.

So two years ago, CHC started offering those services in Meriden's eight elementary schools. The program was built on close monitoring, lots of coordination and communication. The city was very impressed with the impact on the schools' teachers and kids.

Now the school-based behavioral health services are growing to include both middle schools and both high schools in Meriden—covering every single public school in the city.

The expansion is a watershed for CHC; for the first time we have the opportunity to offer such coverage to all the public schools in one city. In Meriden's case, that means 12 schools.

"Each school has a clinical social worker working alongside the school staff, seeing the students every day in their home building," said R. Timothy Kearney, director of behavioral health for CHC. "They are providing the same individual, group, or family treatment as in our clinics." [Editor's note: And, you won't be surprised, they are using electronic health records.] Kearney said that psychiatric backup services, such as medications, are available at the main CHC site in Meriden.

The expansion would not be possible without School Superintendent Mary Corright and her staff, and the Meriden Board of Education.

The reason for the expansion is simple, according to Jane Hylan, director of school health services for CHC. "We have seen pretty full caseloads across the elementary schools," she said. "This allows continuum of care into the higher grades for students who would go without the clinical need. And it prevents bigger issues later on. We can now provide ongoing clinical needs through a kid's school career. Children and their families who have been well served by our elementary school program and who still need continued care can now have seamless care provided as they move up in age through the Meriden public education system."

"We hope to introduce similar services in other communities around the state," said Hylan. "Conversations have begun with them."

The program in the Meriden schools is staffed by master's of social work and licensed clinical social workers, who are backed up by psychiatric nurse practitioners and psychiatrists at CHC of Meriden. They are also several bilingual clinicians.

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JANE HYLAN
CHC, Director of School Health Services