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COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER, INC. RECEIVES GRANT FUNDING TO INCREASE ACCESS TO CARE FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Middletown, CT (November 30, 2011) – Community Health Center, Inc. (CHC) is pleased to announce the receipt of a \$50,000 grant from Vertex Pharmaceuticals Inc. in support of the Hep-C Circle of Care program, a pilot competitive grants program designed to foster innovative approaches to patient care and to support people living with chronic hepatitis C.

According to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, nearly 4 million Americans have chronic hepatitis C and an estimated 75 percent of them are unaware of their infection. Through the Hep-C Circle of Care initiative, Vertex seeks to fund innovative, sustainable and transferable programs that have the potential to improve care for people with the disease.

This year, CHC began participating in Project ECHO, an evidence based program developed by the University of New Mexico that provides specialty support and care coordination via weekly video conferencing to primary care providers at health centers across the country. This cutting-edge program links specialist teams at the University of New Mexico with health center providers to offer ongoing support, consultation and guidance to address challenging cases of Hepatitis C and increase access to care for this patient population. Results show that primary care providers were able to effectively treat patients with Hepatitis C, achieving results as good as or better than those seen in specialty care settings.

With the grant funding provided, Community Health Center, Inc. plans to replicate Project ECHO across its statewide, multi-site primary care system. CHC currently provides care to over 130,000 patients and has sites in 13 cities throughout Connecticut. Once implemented, this program will provide access to treatment for its estimated 1,200 patients that are infected with the hepatitis C virus.

One of the largest impediments to treating patients with Hepatitis C is limited access to specialty care, particularly for underserved populations. Patients with public insurance and those without insurance struggle to find specialists willing to see them.

CHC places emphasis on cultural and linguistic competencies, and sees all patients regardless of insurance status. Project ECHO will increase allow CHC primary care providers to care for patients with hepatitis C limiting – or possibly eliminating – the need for referrals to specialists. Patients will be able to access the coordinated care that they need during a routine visit with their primary care provider.

Community Health Center, Inc. is recognized by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) as a Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH), which is a team-based model of care led by a personal physician who provides continuous and coordinated care throughout a patient's lifetime to maximize health outcomes. PCMH's are held to a set of standards that require them to be innovative and constantly working to improve care for their patients. CHC is committed to transforming the way health care is delivered. This new project will allow the organization to do just that.

“Our mission is not just to provide health care, but to ensure that the care we provide is the best it can be and is what best meets the needs of our communities and patients,” explained Dr. Daren Anderson, Vice President and Chief Quality Officer at Community Health Center, Inc. “Our health care system and communities are constantly evolving and presenting us with new challenges. To be a world class primary care organization, we are constantly transforming ourselves to reflect these changing needs. We thank Vertex for supporting us in our endeavors.”

About Community Health Center, Inc.

Since 1972, Community Health Center, Inc. has been one of the leading healthcare providers in the state of Connecticut, building a world-class primary health care system committed to caring for underserved and uninsured populations. CHC is focused on improving health outcomes for its more than 130,000 patients as well as building healthy communities. Currently, CHC delivers service in 218 locations statewide, offering primary care in medical, dental and behavioral health services.

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