

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:  
Eliza Cole  
Community Health Center, Inc.  
(860) 262-2546 or eliza@chc1.com



## COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER PROVIDER APPOINTED TO SERVE ON PANEL FOR PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL KIDNEY DISEASE EDUCATION PROGRAM

**MIDDLETOWN, CT (December 10, 2012):** Community Health Center, Inc. (CHC) is pleased to announce that Chief Nursing Officer, Bernadette Thomas, APRN, DNP, MPH, has been named to the Coordinating Panel of the National Kidney Disease Education Program (NKDEP) of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK).

The National Kidney Disease Education Program's goal is to improve the understanding, detection, and management of kidney disease. "As a member of the Coordinating Panel of the National Kidney Disease Education Program, Dr. Bernadette Thomas, Family Nurse Practitioner with the Community Health Center, Inc., will share her clinical expertise in improving detection and treatment of kidney and provide feedback on the program's strategy, activities and materials development," says Dr. Andrew Narva, NKDEP director.

Thomas was selected to join a work group of more than 35 health care professionals from across the country that are actively engaged in improving chronic kidney disease detection and treatment within their own organizations and health care settings. Coordinating panel members meet annually to provide input into the strategic direction of the program, review messaging and materials, and assist with the dissemination and promotion of NKDEP materials and resources. Thomas will participate in her first annual meeting this month.

The group's work is aimed at improving outcomes for people suffering with the disease – particularly in communities and settings that are most impacted. CHC has a large population of patients who suffer from this condition. Approximately 1,000 patients are currently receiving care for chronic kidney disease.

Bernadette has been leading quality improvement efforts to innovate the meaningful use of electronic health records to better manage chronic disease at Community Health Center. With support from NIDDK her program to improve blood pressure goal attainment among adults with CKD and Type-2 Diabetes Mellitus is building a model for wider application in efforts to improve and assess chronic disease management, and reduce health disparities among the patients served by CHC.

Thomas explains that chronic kidney disease is a growing problem in our nation. "More than 20 million Americans may have kidney disease, and many more are at risk," she says. "Anyone can develop the disease, regardless of age or race. The main risk factors associated with developing kidney disease are diabetes and high blood pressure, both on the rise in the US; these conditions can slowly damage the kidneys over time."

Established in 2000, NKDEP's chief objective is to reduce the morbidity and mortality caused by CKD and its complications. The program aims to improve detection of chronic kidney disease, facilitate identification of patients at greatest risk for progression to kidney failure, promote evidence-based interventions to slow progression, and support the coordination of Federal responses to kidney disease.

**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 uninsured and underserved populations. CHC is focused on improving health outcomes for its more than 130,000 patients as well as building healthy communities. Recognized as both a Level 3 Patient-Centered Medical Home by the National Committee for Quality Assurance and a Primary Care Medical Home by The Joint Commission, CHC delivers service in more than 200 locations statewide, offering primary care in medical, dental and behavioral health services. For more information, visit [www.chc1.com](http://www.chc1.com).

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