

Business

Community Health Center Recognized For Quality

National group praises organization for health care partnerships

By **Dirk Langeveld** | [Email the author](#) | April 28, 2011



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It's been a banner couple of weeks for the **Community Health Center**, as the non-profit organization has received national recognition for quality assurance and is on the agenda for a possible state bond commitment.

Eleven of 12 Community Health Centers in the state were awarded the highest level of recognition by the National Committee for Quality Assurance for Physician Practice Connections Patient-Centered Medical Home Program. The recognition notes that the Community Health Center has accepted the patient-centered medical home model in its centers; the last center was not included because it provides solely dental service. In addition, Governor Dannel Malloy announced that the Bond Commission's agenda will include a **proposed \$1 million bond** for renovations at the New London site.

Dr. J. Nwando Olayiwola, chief medical officer of the Community Health Center, said the recognition was the result of "a lot of hard work and innovation." She said the center had to demonstrate a partnership between patients and physicians through nine standards. She said that primary care has become complex to the point where it is less effective for the patient.

"The patient has kind of become lost in the middle of this whole health care process, so this is an effort to put the patient back at the center," said Olayiwola.

Olayiwola said the patient-centered model looks to guarantee that there is effective communication between physicians and patients as well as their families, and that a system of care is developed with no duplication of services. Alejandro Melendez-Cooper, director of the New London site, said the center also coordinates with senior centers to integrate primary health, dental, and behavioral health services. Olayiwola said these services are particularly difficult for the uninsured, one of the populations the Community Health Center addresses.

Melendez-Cooper said the centers have worked to put technology at the forefront of operations. Patients' records have gone electronic to assure legibility and easy access, and medications can be electronically prescribed. Phones are connected to an interpreter service.

Olayiwola said the recognition encourages the Community Health Center to maintain the same level of care.

"You have to actually perform, and that benefits the patients," she said.

The funding before the Bond Commission would go toward the renovation of about 5,000 square feet of space at the New London facility. Last year, the facility upgraded 3,000 square feet at the site for clinical space, and Melendez-Cooper said the work was done with a federal grant after a state bond failed to materialize. He said if approved, the bond would bring the rest of the facility up to date. He said the Community Health Center in New London sees about 17,000 patients.

"The facility at some point is not enough," he said.

Rebecca Giantonia, media specialist with the Community Health Center, said they will know by Friday whether the bond is approved.

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9:20am on Thursday, April 28, 2011

State bonding for New London's Community Health Center can be expected to arouse the usual conservative opposition to medical services directed at those most encumbered by what to them are prohibitive costs in seeking professional medical attention. Yet year after year, month after month, day after day, this modest, under-sized New London clinic in an office park created by public urban redevelopment tends to those who otherwise would be largely left out in the cold of medically uninsured pain and suffering. The dedication of its staff and the patience and forbearance of its Middletown-based command center remain among our state's most stalwart demonstrations of commitment to service for those most in need of what their economic status denies them. The time is long past due for our region's hospitals to acknowledge this clinic's contribution to reduced, last-resort ER visits by those who otherwise would have only the ER for access to competent, professional, certified care.

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