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Connecticut-Based Telehealth Program Expands Pain Management Expertise to Delaware Health Centers

MIDDLETOWN, Conn; September 10, 2013: Community Health Center, Inc. (CHC), a state-wide primary care system based in Middletown, CT, announces the expansion of its successful telehealth program to Delaware. Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) is an innovative program that uses video-conferencing and case-based learning to expand access to specialty care for underserved patients. The project joins specialists and primary care providers for a weekly video conference session during which they discuss cases and explore treatment options for patients with complex illnesses such as Hepatitis C. The program helps primary care teams expertly manage cases that would otherwise be referred to specialists.

Primary care providers from Westside Family Healthcare – a network of community health centers in Delaware – are now participating in CHC’s weekly Project ECHO Pain Management program. Their participation is fully supported by Delaware Health and Social Services’ (DHSS) Division of Public Health (DPH), Delaware Prescription Drug Action Committee (PDAC), and Delaware Telehealth Coalition. The new ECHO partners in Delaware have recognized the challenge of providing effective pain management care for underserved patients and the need to offer expert support to primary care providers who do not routinely receive training in pain management during training.

“The goal of Project ECHO is to increase the competency of Delaware health providers to manage complex pain conditions,” said Dr. Gerard Galluci, DHSS Medical Director. “Pain management is an important area of focus for the health care community and the project also helps build our capacity to utilize innovative technology for new treatment options.”

Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) Director and PDAC Co-Chair Dr. Karyl T. Rattay added “Accidental drug poisoning deaths now kill more Delawareans than car crashes. Eighty percent of Delaware’s drug overdoses involve one or more prescription drugs. Project ECHO provides viable pain solutions as we wrestle with this epidemic.”

As CHC continues to grow the program and have success in treating patients with complex conditions, other states and health care systems are taking notice. CHC first became involved in Project ECHO in 2011 when it joined a Hepatitis-C (HCV) program led by expert faculty at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine. In 2012 CHC replicated the program by creating its own ECHO program for hepatitis C for use among its 13 health centers. CHC’s ECHO offerings quickly expanded to include HIV care, opioid addiction management, chronic pain management and quality improvement coaching. CHCs ECHO

program included involving specialists from beyond Connecticut, including the Integrated Pain Center of Arizona, and the Sheffield Teaching Hospitals in Sheffield.

“We are thrilled to see Project ECHO breaking geographical boundaries with the use of telehealth technology to address a serious health issue that is prevalent in both states,” stated Dr. Daren Anderson, VP and Chief Quality Officer of CHC. “There is no single approach to managing chronic pain. This format will bring together experts in pharmacology, behavioral health, primary care and alternative therapies, offering myriad solutions to this complex issue, based on the needs of each individual patient – and the broad range of expertise from multiple clinicians.”

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 150,000 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.

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