

**Annual Primary Care Healthcare Conference Region II**  
**Atlantic City**  
**June 2, 2010**

**Acknowledgements**

Thank you Kathy, you are an outstanding leader for NJ's community health centers and the medically underserved in our state.

It is a pleasure to be here among health care providers and leaders from Region II.

On behalf of Governor Chris Christie, I would like to welcome all of you and thank you for taking care of our most vulnerable populations.

Today is an excellent opportunity to talk about the outstanding care community health centers provide, important partnerships with our FQHCs and how we can build upon our efforts going forward to provide a health care safety net for our residents.

**Community Health Centers**

As a physician who worked in a community health center, I know that these centers are a critical safety net for the most vulnerable and one of the greatest strengths in New Jersey's health system. They deliver primary and preventive care in the most effective setting. They relieve the burden on hospital ERs and help reduce overall costs to the system.

Much of the current health care debate is about reinventing primary care so patients have access to a medical home. This is something that community health centers having been doing for years. Health centers provide comprehensive and preventive medical care—including vaccinations, health screenings, dental care, behavioral health care and social services—all tailored to community needs. Health centers provide so many services they truly serve as community centers.

**Community Health Centers Supporting the Department's Mission**

Our community health centers are great partners with the state and the Department. In every aspect of our Department's mission, our community health centers are there supporting us.

When we work to enhance the emergency response infrastructure, FQHCs are our partners. During the outbreak of H1N1 last year, FQHCs were on the frontline treating those who were ill and educating patients about how to prevent the spread of the flu. Once the vaccine was available, our community health centers worked tirelessly to put together clinics to ensure our residents were vaccinated.

We collaborate hand and hand to promote and protect the public health. Our health centers ensure patients get vaccinations. They provide screenings, education and outreach that can prevent our residents from getting ill. The Department and FQHCs have worked together to help residents manage chronic illness through our asthma, diabetes and obesity collaboratives. Together, we are giving our residents the tools to prevent and manage illness. And I think we can all attest to the value and importance of preventive medicine.

When we speak about preventing and managing illness, we can't overlook the importance of addressing chronic disease in our senior population. Almost 75 percent of the elderly have at least one chronic illness and 50 percent have at least two chronic illnesses. Chronic conditions can lead to severe and immediate disabilities, such as hip fractures and stroke, as well as progressive disability that slowly erodes the ability of elderly people to care for themselves. At the Department, one of our paramount concerns is supporting seniors so they are able to live healthy lives with independence and dignity. Our health centers help us carry out this mission by screening and treating seniors and educating them on how to manage chronic diseases like asthma, high blood pressure and heart disease. Working together we can help prevent or delay disability in our seniors so they can live a full, healthy life.

Another piece of the Department's mission is improving the quality of health care in our state. Our FQHCs are also leaders in this vein as well. FQHCs used the Care Model and the Improvement Model as a framework for quality improvement efforts during the asthma, diabetes and obesity collaboratives and currently, health centers continue to employ these models to improve delivery of health care to their patients. They have also maintained a network for sharing "Best Practices" and support one another in their quality improvement work.

Additionally, health centers continue to champion the medical home model. The Department and health centers are forging important partnerships with hospitals and healthcare providers to transform how healthcare is delivered.

Much of this work started in Camden where--under the leadership of Dr. Jeffrey Brenner--hospitals, healthcare providers and the FQHC CAMcare formed a coalition to ensure patients receive personalized, patient-centered care and that providers have the technology they need to coordinate care. And they are seeing results. They have reduced hospital visits by more than 40% among the patients cared for using the coalition's case management approach.

In Newark, the Greater Newark Healthcare Coalition, which includes the Department, FQHCs, hospitals, and local health providers, are working together to facilitate comprehensive, high-quality, cost efficient medical care throughout the continuum of care in the greater Newark area with an emphasis on HIT, ER diversion and the Chronic Care Model. We have taken the same approach in Trenton and are working with Henry J. Austin Community Health Center, hospital CEOs and the Trenton City health department to ensure residents are utilizing the appropriate settings for care.

Beyond just strengthening the healthcare system, community health centers help fulfill the Department's mission to increase access to care. Health centers are always looking to expand their reach—whether through new satellites or mobile vans. The state has been supporting these critical expansions, investing \$30 million since 2004 in expansion funding. Working together, we have increased access for thousands of people to comprehensive primary and preventive care as well as reimbursement for uninsured visits.

Closing

As a result of our unique public-private partnership between the Department and health centers, we have made primary health care more accessible. We should all be very proud of what we have accomplished.

But our job is not done. I hope we can accomplish much more together. I hope the success we have achieved is a starting point for continued success. I hope after leaving the conference you return to your centers refreshed with new ideas and new goals to improve the care that you provide to the patients who turn to you for care and treatment.

Thank you.