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Hospital for Special Care Announces Plans for Autism ‘Health Neighborhood’

Medical home model first step towards integrated care for Autism in Connecticut

NEW BRITAIN, Conn. (Nov. 19, 2012) – At a Nov. 1st luncheon hosted by First Lady Cathy Malloy on behalf of the [Autism Center](#) at [Hospital for Special Care](#) (HSC), hospital officials convened supporters, autism advocacy leaders and healthcare providers to underscore the need, raise awareness and outline plans for Connecticut’s first health neighborhood for Autism.

Joined by his wife Amy and father, former UConn Men’s Basketball Coach Jim Calhoun, Jeff Calhoun shared his family’s experience with Autism underscoring the need for coordination of services.

Since the Autism Center at HSC opened last February, the hospital has assisted Connecticut families with a triage of comprehensive services in collaboration with The Center for Autism and Behavioral Studies at The University of Saint Joseph. The center now has a growing waiting list of patients waiting to be seen further underscoring the need for expanded and coordinated services.

“HSC and its partners are working towards developing a medical home and ultimately a health neighborhood for individuals and families affected by Autism,” said [Lynn Ricci](#), senior vice president, chief operating officer, Hospital for Special Care. “The goal of a medical home/health neighborhood is to coordinate care and improve communication between families and providers. As a first step, HSC has formed an Autism Advisors group that will map needed services and align regional resources on behalf of our patients and their families,” she said.

The American Academy of Pediatrics describes a ‘medical home’ as a model of delivery of care that is accessible, continuous, comprehensive, family-centered and culturally effective. This model not only considers medical issues but addresses social, educational, transitional and housing concerns.

“Because of our history in successfully treating patients with complex needs, we are uniquely positioned to begin this effort. However, we need help in taking the next steps to ensure a continuum of care for people with Autism,” Ricci added. “Unfortunately, there is a lack of resources in Connecticut including disparities in access to services, and our state needs a hub of coordination. I know this professionally and personally because my son has Autism.”

Children with Autism use healthcare at a higher rate with higher costs but have very limited access to the coordinated care provided by a medical home. What’s more, as a child with Autism gets older, fewer services are available for the transition from school-based services to adulthood. However, the proposed Health Neighborhood can be the next step towards integrated and accountable care in Connecticut.

The Autism Center at HSC offers an array of psychological and academic evaluations as well as a wide range of assessment and therapy options in the areas of occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech and language therapy. Behavioral and educational planning also will be provided with the objective of including all caregivers, teachers and others involved in the life of the child to present a consistent and structured environment where the child can thrive.

For more information about the Autism Center, please call 860.827.4797, or visit www.hfsc.org.

About Hospital for Special Care

Hospital for Special Care (HSC) is one of the 10 largest, free-standing long-term acute care hospitals in the United States and the nation’s only long-term acute-care hospital serving adults and children. HSC is recognized for advanced care and rehabilitation in pulmonary care, acquired brain injury, medically-complex pediatrics, neuromuscular disorders (including ALS research), spinal cord injury, comprehensive heart failure as well as diagnostic, assessment and consulting services for children and adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Located in New Britain and Hartford, CT, HSC operates inpatient and outpatient facilities serving Southern New England on a not-for-profit basis. For the latest news and information, please visit www.hfsc.org, and follow us on Twitter [@HospSpecialCare](https://twitter.com/HospSpecialCare).

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