

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 24, 2008

CONTACT INFORMATION

Heather Tindall (203) 573-6717

Matt Burgard (203) 573-6718

MEDIA ADVISORY

WATERBURY HOSPITAL FIRST IN STATE TO OFFER FREE HIV TESTING DURING AN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISIT

Oral Fluid Swab Test is Fast and Effective Way to Determine Patients' Positive or Negative HIV Status

WHO: Waterbury Hospital, Congressman Chris Murphy (tentative), Mayor Michael Jarjura, Rep. Selim Noujaim and Rep. Kevin DelGobbo.

WHAT: Press Conference to announce the launch of free, rapid HIV testing for Waterbury Hospital Emergency Department patients. The hospital is the first in Connecticut to offer this service to Emergency Department patients.

WHERE: Lobby of Waterbury Hospital, 64 Robbins St., Waterbury, Connecticut.

WHEN: 10 a.m.-10:30 a.m., Monday, December 1 – World AIDS Day.
(Note: Media will be invited to the Emergency Department immediately after the press conference to tape footage of a patient undergoing rapid HIV testing.)

WHY: In an effort to identify and treat people who have been infected with HIV, Waterbury Hospital will launch the first program in Connecticut in which Emergency Department patients will be offered free HIV testing while waiting to be evaluated or treated for other symptoms.

The program is expected to serve as a model for other health care institutions across the state. Patients who wish to be tested will be administered an oral fluid swab in a private part of the Emergency Department. Their test result will be available in 20 minutes.

--more--

If the result is negative, patients will be notified and then educated on what they can do to stay negative. If the result is positive, patients will be told that this is only a preliminary finding and a confirmatory blood test will be done to verify the initial test. Pre- and post-test counseling will also be provided for patients.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are over one million Americans infected with HIV, and more than 25 percent of them are unaware of their status. According to the Connecticut Department of Public Health, there have been 18,950 cases of HIV/AIDS reported in Connecticut since 1982, with 43 percent of those patients having died. Despite advances in therapy and ongoing educational efforts, a significant number of new cases of HIV/AIDS are being identified every year, both nationally and locally. Waterbury Hospital's program is being offered as a way of identifying the undiagnosed portion of Connecticut's population in order to get such people into care and prevent the transmission of the virus to others.

With approximately 2,100 employees, Waterbury Hospital is one of the largest private employers in the Greater Waterbury region, and serves a vital role in the economic vitality of Western Connecticut. It is a private, non-profit acute care teaching hospital licensed for 367 beds and affiliated with the Yale School of Medicine, the University of Connecticut School of Medicine and Connecticut Children's Medical Center. Founded in 1890 as Waterbury's first and Connecticut's fourth hospital, Waterbury Hospital is a full-service community health-care institution with centers of excellence in primary care, behavioral health and orthopaedics.

###