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**SAINT FRANCES CENTER FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH AWARDED GRANT TO
CREATE ORAL HEALTH SCREENING PROGRAM FOR PREGNANT WOMEN**

(HARTFORD, Conn.) - Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center has been awarded an \$85,000 grant from the Connecticut Health Foundation to develop an oral health program for expectant mothers seeking pre-natal care at the Hospital's *Center for Women's Health*.

Through the oral health initiative, mothers-to-be will receive dental screening as part of their first pre-natal visit at the Asylum Avenue clinic. They will also be educated on the importance of oral healthcare during pregnancy, and referred to oral health providers for evaluation and treatment of dental disease. The clinic will coordinate oral care with dentists at *Burgdorf/Bank of America Health Center* on Coventry Street and *Community Health Services (CHS)* on Albany Avenue, where low-income women can access dental care through expedited appointments. Burgdorf and CHS will set aside a minimum of 10 appointments (each) per week for pregnant patients.

"The prenatal period is an opportune time to enhance the health and education of the pregnant mother," states Walter (Chip) Trymbulak, M.D., PhD, Director of the *Center for Women's Health*. "The goal of this new initiative is to immediately improve the oral health of the mother-to-be and the health of the newborn. It is anticipated that mothers who commit to the importance of oral health during pregnancy will continue to seek regular preventive dental care for themselves after delivery, and for their children."

"The Connecticut Health Foundation (CT Health) is pleased to make this grant as it represents a direct response to our goal to develop systems to improve the oral health of low-income pregnant women. It incorporates an educational approach to help future health care professionals get better prepared to promote the oral health of pregnant women. In addition, it incorporates the development of a system of care that meet the oral health needs of pregnant women," states Lina Paredes, Connecticut Health Foundation, Vice President of Program.

“This a valuable investment for CT Health to make as it sets policy and protocol in the state’s leading public medical school regarding the training of future OB/GYNs on the oral health of low-income pregnant women as well as its implementation within a significant hospital system,” she adds.

The *Center for Women’s Health* provides clinical, social, case management, and care coordination services to approximately 600 pregnant women each year who give birth at the Hospital. This initiative will add dental screening and oral healthcare to an already robust prenatal care system.

The *Center for Women’s Health* provides medical services to all women and their families regardless of their ability to pay. Programs include Childbirth Preparation & Refresher Classes, "Bringing Up Baby" for new mothers, Sibling Class for 3-to-8-year-olds, "Safesitter" Babysitting Instruction, CPR for Infants, gynecologic services and obstetric services.

About Saint Francis

Saint Francis *Care* is an integrated healthcare delivery system established by Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, an anchor institution in north central Connecticut since 1897. Licensed for 617 beds and 65 bassinets, it is a major teaching hospital and the largest Catholic hospital in New England. Other major entities of Saint Francis *Care* include The Mount Sinai Rehabilitation Hospital, the Connecticut Joint Replacement Institute, the Hoffman Heart and Vascular Institute of Connecticut, the Saint Francis/Mount Sinai Regional Cancer Center, and the Joyce D. and Andrew J. Mandell Center for Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis Care and Neuroscience Research. Its services are supported by a network of five major Access Centers and eight additional medical office centers sited throughout the region. For more information, visit www.stfranciscare.com

About the Connecticut Health Foundation

The Connecticut Health Foundation (CT Health) is the state’s largest independent health philanthropy dedicated to improving lives by changing health systems. Since it was established in July 1999, the foundation has supported innovative grant-making, public health policy research, technical assistance and convening to achieve its mission – to improve the health of the people of Connecticut.

Over the past 12 years, CT Health has awarded grants totaling more than \$47.5 million in 45 cities and towns throughout the state in three priority areas:

- Improving access to children’s mental health services
- Reducing racial and ethnic health disparities
- Expanding access to and use of children’s oral health services

For more information about the foundation, visit www.cthealth.org

