

AETNA FOUNDATION AWARDS CONNECTICUT CHILDREN'S GRANT TO IMPLEMENT "PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK" IN SERVICES BENEFITING CHILDREN AT RISK

HARTFORD, Conn. –Since 1996, Connecticut Children's Medical Center has played a leading role in enhancing child health services and addressing system gaps to optimize children's healthy development in the Greater Hartford region and beyond.

Now, thanks to a \$99,850 grant from the Aetna Foundation, the Connecticut Children's Office for Community Child Health will go one step further. Building upon past work and expanding the use of an approach called the "Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework," the Office will design, implement and evaluate interventions that will benefit vulnerable children across the country.

"There is a growing recognition that the foundations of a healthy, productive life are built in early childhood," said Paul Dworkin, MD, executive vice president for Community Child Health at Connecticut Children's Medical Center. "Research has also shown a correlation between five protective factors and positive outcomes for children and families."

The five protective factors – parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and social and emotional competence of children – equip families to meet their children's needs, reduce the burden of adversity and foster healthy development in the process.

"The Protective Factors Framework, championed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), focuses on building resilience in families to modify the impact of adverse childhood experiences and support family environments that promote healthy development," Dr. Dworkin explained.

Implementing Protective Factors

According to Dr. Dworkin, ensuring children's optimal healthy development requires a comprehensive system that engages parents and an array of community partners. "With

support from the Aetna Foundation, we will be able to operationalize the 'Protective Factors Framework' throughout the *Help Me Grow*[®] national affiliate network," Dr. Dworkin said.

Help Me Grow[®] is a statewide program of the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood that helps families with children at risk for developmental or behavioral problems find local support and services through a central call center. With support from the *HMG* National Center located at Connecticut Children's, more than 25 states and territories are replicating the program.

In collaboration with CSSP, the Office for Community Child Health will develop and customize tools, such as surveys and databases, to apply the Protective Factors Framework in program design and evaluation, and will provide training and targeted technical assistance to the *HMG* affiliates, among other activities.

Aetna Foundation funding will fuel development of an interactive data tool that maps affiliates' progress in addressing and strengthening protective factors, while providing real-time data analytics to help affiliates continually improve quality as they move forward.

"Children's health has the best chance to flourish when all of the community's resources – whether it's family involvement or medical care – are coming together at the right time and in the right ways," said Garth Graham, MD, MPH, president of the Aetna Foundation. "This innovative program offers a structure for aligning these resources in ways that amplify their impact, and it can be used across the country to

help improve health for children who face significant social and economic hurdles.”

“We are grateful to the Aetna Foundation for supporting this initiative,” Dr. Dworkin said. “Their support will help strengthen childhood development services at HMG affiliates across the country and, in doing so, will provide positive outcomes for thousands of vulnerable children and their families.”

For more information about Help Me Grow® services in Connecticut – or to refer a child – families, health care providers and other community-based providers may call the Child Development Infoline, a specialized unit of United Way of Connecticut, at 1-800-505-7000.

About Connecticut Children’s Medical Center

Connecticut Children's Medical Center is a nationally recognized, 187-bed not-for-profit children's hospital serving as the primary teaching hospital for the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. Named among the best in the nation in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* "Best Children's Hospitals" rankings, Connecticut Children's is the only free-standing children's hospital in Connecticut that offers comprehensive, world-class health care to children. Our pediatric services are available at Connecticut Children's Medical Center in Hartford and at Saint Mary's Hospital in Waterbury,

with neonatal intensive care units at Hartford Hospital and the University of Connecticut Health Center, along with a state-of-the-art ambulatory surgery center, five specialty care centers and 11 other locations across the state. Connecticut Children's has a medical staff of nearly 1,100 practicing in more than 30 specialties.

For more information, visit WWW.CONNECTICUTCHILDRENS.ORG.

About Connecticut Children’s Office for Community Child Health

Connecticut Children’s Office for Community Child Health serves as a coordinating entity for the Medical Center’s community-oriented programs and as an incubator for innovative models that strengthen the community child health system and enhance children’s optimal healthy development. The Office currently oversees thirteen community-oriented programs, including the Help Me Grow® (HMG) National Center and Easy Breathing©. Both HMG, which promotes early detection and connection to services for children at risk for developmental and behavioral problems through a centralized telephone access point, and Easy Breathing©, a community-based asthma management program, were piloted in Hartford before being scaled up and adopted in many states. The Office for Community Child Health extends the impact of such innovative programs regionally and nationally through the creation of replicable, evidence-informed models of care. For more information on all of the Office for Community Child Health’s programs and services, visit www.connecticutchildrens.org/community-child-health.

About the Aetna Foundation

The Aetna Foundation is the independent charitable and philanthropic arm of Aetna (NYSE: AET). Since 1980, Aetna and the Aetna Foundation have contributed more than \$465 million in grants and sponsorships. As a national health foundation, we promote wellness, health, and access to high-quality health care for everyone. This work is enhanced by the time and commitment of Aetna employees, who have volunteered 3.8 million hours since 2003. For more information, visit www.aetnafoundation.org.