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Saint Francis Hospital's Breastfeeding Program Receives Grant from Cigna Foundation

Grant funding will further program's goals of increasing breastfeeding among low-income mothers

HARTFORD, Conn. (December 19, 2018) - Saint Francis Hospital, a member of Trinity Health Of New England, has received a Cigna Foundation grant of more than \$70,000 to further enhance the hospital's existing breastfeeding program.

"The Saint Francis Foundation is honored to work with such amazing partners, such as the Cigna Foundation," said Lynn Rossini, vice president and chief development officer, Saint Francis Foundation. "They truly recognize the impact their contributions will have on the children and families of our local and regional communities."

The grant, totaling \$72,644, will support Breastfeeding: Heritage and Pride (BHP), a program run collaboratively by Saint Francis and the Hispanic Health Council. BHP is a successful peer counseling program which operates out of the Comprehensive Women's Health Center at Saint Francis.

"We're pleased to support a program that will help to increase breastfeeding, which gives babies a healthy start in life with benefits that continue throughout their lives," said Mary Engvall, executive director of the Cigna Foundation.

The grant funding will allow the BHP program to hire an additional peer counselor who will work directly with women in the greater Hartford community who are either obstetrics patients of the Comprehensive Women's Health Center or those who gave birth at Saint Francis.

"We are incredibly grateful to the Cigna Foundation for recognizing the success of this program and enabling us to continue to care for the most vulnerable in our community," said John Rodis, M.D., M.B.A, president, Saint Francis Hospital.

The Hispanic Health Council's BHP program is an evidence-based program that seeks to increase breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity rates among low-income mothers in the city.

“I am thrilled with the continued support of the program,” said project director Walter Trymbulak, M.D., Ph.D, vice chairman of the Saint Francis Women and Infants Service Line. “Breast milk is the very best first food an infant can get. Breastfeeding has significant health benefits for both our babies and their mothers. More importantly, these health benefits last for a lifetime.”

José Ortiz, executive director of the Hispanic Health Council shared the sentiment.

“I am delighted that our Breastfeeding: Heritage and Pride (BHP) program will have increased impact, as it is proven to increase breastfeeding rates among populations that experience the greatest barriers to successful breastfeeding,” Ortiz said.

Created by the Hispanic Health Council nearly 20 years ago, BHP is the only program in the country that recruits peer counselors from the low-income community who have successfully breastfed their own infants. The peer counselors are trained on how to work with women who have committed to breastfeeding, but may be in need of education and support to initiate and continue breastfeeding for six to twelve months. Over the past five years, new mothers in Hartford who have utilized BHP have achieved rates of breastfeeding that are similar to rates achieved in higher income suburbs.

About Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center

Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center has been an anchor institution in north central Connecticut since 1897. In 2015, Saint Francis became part of Trinity Health Of New England, a member of Trinity Health, one of the largest multi-institutional Catholic health care delivery systems in the nation. Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center is licensed for 617 beds, is a major teaching hospital and the largest Catholic hospital in New England. Other Saint Francis entities include the Comprehensive Women’s Health Center, the Connecticut Joint Replacement Institute, the Curtis D. Robinson Center for Health Equity, the Hoffman Heart and Vascular Institute of Connecticut, the Smilow Cancer Hospital Yale-New Haven at Saint Francis, and Trinity Health Of New England Medical Group. Follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @SaintFrancisCT

About the Hispanic Health Council

The Hispanic Health Council (HHC) is a nationally recognized community-based organization that operates statewide in Connecticut. HHC works to improve the health and social well-being of Latinos and other diverse communities through community-based research, evidence-based direct services, provider training, and policy advocacy. Since its inception, the organization has developed, evaluated, replicated, and disseminated community health worker models to support health promotion and chronic disease management. Breastfeeding: Heritage and Pride is one of these models. HHC also has decades of experience developing and utilizing successful techniques for engagement of high-risk, hard-to-reach populations. HHC uses culturally relevant educational materials and social marketing

campaigns targeting individuals and communities with low health literacy. HHC serves over 20,000 individuals across the state. For more information, visit www.hispanichealth.com.

About the Cigna Foundation

The Cigna Foundation, founded in 1962, is a private foundation funded by contributions from Cigna Corporation (NYSE: CI) and its subsidiaries. The Cigna Foundation supports organizations sharing its commitment to enhancing the health of individuals and families, and the well-being of their communities, with a special focus on those communities where Cigna employees live and work.

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