Program Focuses on Community Health Needs Assessments

On June 27, more than 120 people from hospitals, local public health departments, and health centers across the state participated in a program focused on best practices in planning, implementing, and evaluating collaborative community health needs assessments (CHNA). A CHNA is a comprehensive study intended to identify a community’s health needs and lead to the development of strategies to address them, with a goal of improving community health.

Keynote speaker David Zuckerman, MPP, Research Associate, The Democracy Collaborative, discussed the social determinants of health and described the overlap between poverty and prevalent medical issues. He talked about the potential for building community wealth through the efforts of “anchor institutions” like hospitals. He said that when hospitals purchase from local businesses, it improves both the local economy and public health. You can read more about Mr. Zuckerman’s work here.

A full roster of 14 hospital and health department speakers described the process of conducting a CHNA, including how to get started, data collection, selecting priorities and strategic planning, communication, developing a community health improvement plan, and tracking progress and outcomes. Speakers provided information about their experiences, practical tips and guidance, and best practices.

The program was based on the guidebook, Guidelines for Conducting a Community Health Needs Assessment, developed in 2012 by CHA and the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health, along with community health center representation. The guide provides tools and resources to assist hospitals and local health departments in conducting collaborative community assessments to meet Public Health Accreditation Board and Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act requirements.

The program was sponsored by CHA, the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health, the Connecticut Department of Public Health, the Connecticut Public Health Association (CPHA), and the CT-RI Public Health Training Center. A follow-up session on collaborative CHNAs is planned for CPHA’s Annual Meeting and Conference on October 25, 2013.
Connecticut Hospitals Achieve Key Partnership for Patients Milestone

Connecticut hospitals are making significant progress in their work in Partnership for Patients, a national CMS initiative designed to reduce preventable inpatient harm by 40 percent and readmissions by 20 percent. All Connecticut hospitals participate in this program.

The latest progress report shows that Connecticut is one of 12 states in the AHA/HRET Hospital Engagement Network to achieve a key milestone set by CMS known as 30-6-60: 60 percent of the state's hospitals have achieved a 30 percent improvement in six topics. Specifically, Connecticut hospitals
achieved significant improvement in reducing adverse drug events, catheter-associated urinary tract infections, obstetrical adverse events, pressure ulcers, surgical site infections, and venous thromboembolism.

The next goal is for hospitals to meet the final project goal of a 40 percent reduction in harm and 20 percent reduction in readmissions.

CHA congratulates Connecticut hospitals on their achievement.

**Hospitals Participate in Cause Analysis Webinar**

On June 28, Connecticut hospital teams training to prevent, detect, and correct errors participated in a high reliability webinar on cause analysis. Cause analysis is a method to find and fix system problems, and is an imperative for hospital leadership.

CHA and Healthcare Performance Improvement (HPI) Consultant Steve Kreiser, CDR, USN Ret., MBA, MS, described the elements of cause analysis, which include investigating a safety event, identifying approximate causes, developing an apparent cause statement, validating the significance of the event, and identifying actions to address it.

Cause analysis is one of the fundamentals of the statewide high reliability collaborative, in which hospitals are participating to become high reliability organizations (HROs) – organizations that operate under high risk conditions but have decreased the probability of an accident by creating consistently reliable processes, making their systems ultra safe. To date, nearly 2,000 hospital staff, leaders, and physicians have been trained in high reliability science and behaviors.

**U.S. Senators Hold Discussion With Federal and State Leaders on Implementation of the Patient Protection And Affordable Care Act**

On July 2, U.S. Senators Christopher Murphy and Richard Blumenthal hosted a panel discussion with federal government agency personnel, hospital leaders, and other healthcare stakeholders at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford. The discussion focused on federal and state efforts currently under way on the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA).

Sen. Murphy underscored the tremendous amount of work being done by hospitals, community health centers, insurers, not-for-profit community-based organizations, and other providers to enroll the uninsured, as well as roll out and implement the PPACA. Sen. Blumenthal highlighted the commitment of healthcare providers in Connecticut to providing access and quality care to the residents of the state. He said Connecticut hospitals are national leaders in delivering high quality care. Connecticut Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman also participated in the panel discussion.

Overviews of the current rollout of the PPACA were provided by federal and state officials including Christie Hager, Regional Director of the Department of Health and Human Services; Robert Asaro-Angelo, Northeast Regional Representative from the Department of Labor; and Bernard Sweeney, District Director for Connecticut from the Small Business Administration. Access Health CT CEO Kevin Counihan provided an overview of the agency’s efforts to date.

**Connecticut Nurses’ Association Welcomes New Executive Director**

The Connecticut Nurses Association (“CNA”) announced that Kimberly Clear Sandor, MSN, FNP, will serve as CNA’s Executive Director. One of her chief goals is to increase membership and involvement in the statewide organization, a constituent member of the American Nurses’ Association.

“Connecticut has approximately 57,000 RNs who stand to benefit, on many levels, from a more active professional association. A strong CNA not only benefits nurses, but the communities we care for,” said Ms. Sandor.

Ms. Sandor brings more than 20 years experience in diverse nursing leadership settings. Among them, she has served as a charge nurse at Yale-New Haven Hospital, a family nurse practitioner with the National Health Service Corps, a nursing instructor at University of Central Florida and Gateway Community College, a community outreach collaborator, and an early childhood health consultant expert and trainer. She earned her BSN from Boston College and her MSN from Columbia University.

**HHS Updates Website to Help Consumers**
The United States Department of Health and Human Services has updated its website, HealthCare.gov, in preparation for open enrollment in the new Health Insurance Marketplace, which begins on October 1. The site was improved with the addition of tools, videos, and resources to help consumers more easily access information to compare plans.

The fact sheets, blogs, and news about the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act that used to be on HealthCare.gov will now be on another new site, HHS.gov/HealthCare. The latest official materials about the Marketplace can be accessed through the new Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services resource site.