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**Connecticut-Based Community Health Center, Inc. Helps New Jersey Healthcare Providers Battle Against Pain, Opioid Addictions and Overdoses**

**MIDDLETOWN, Conn; June 31, 2014:** Community Health Center, Inc., a Middletown, Connecticut based, federally qualified health center with over 200 service locations throughout the state, announces the launch of *The Breakthrough Series Pain and Opioid Management Collaborative* between its Weitzman Institute (WI) and health centers in New Jersey. This collaboration seeks to train primary care providers in best practices and advanced treatment methods for chronic pain and opioid dependence and abuse; a sharply growing problem in New Jersey where, according to the Department of Human Services, the use heroin and other opiates — like prescription drugs — are the leading cause of admissions to state-licensed treatment facilities.

*The Breakthrough Series Pain and Opioid Management Collaborative* will engage providers and clinical support staff from Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and safety net practices in New Jersey with pain experts from the Weitzman Institute and the Integrative Pain Center of Arizona (IPCA), to both improve the quality and safety of pain management, and to increase the availability of buprenorphine treatment for opioid dependent patients in primary care settings. By meeting these goals, the project will reduce healthcare costs while improving health outcomes for patients.

Participating agencies in New Jersey include Trenton’s Henry J Austin Health Center, and St. Francis Hospital Outpatient Clinic, St. Peter’s University Hospital Outpatient Clinic and St. Peter’s University Hospital How Lane Community Health Center in New Brunswick, and Project H.O.P.E. (Homeless Outreach Program Enrichment) in Camden. Their participation is funded by the Newark-based Nicholson Foundation.

“To address the unmet needs of vulnerable populations in New Jersey, The Nicholson Foundation works to find programs that are at the forefront of delivery system change, whether they are in New Jersey or from around the country,” said Joan Randell, Deputy Director of The Nicholson Foundation. “When we learned about the success of Community Health Center’s Weitzman Institute in addressing pain within primary care, we felt it was the perfect partnership to help New Jersey primary care providers learn about pain management and take small, but meaningful steps toward mitigating the public health crisis of opiate abuse and addiction.”

The project will employ two evidence based, quality improvement strategies. WI will utilize the Institute for Healthcare Improvement’s (IHI) Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BTSC) model to help the participating NJ health centers adopt best practices for pain and buprenorphine treatment. The BTSC model is designed to help organizations create a structure in which they can easily learn from each other, and from recognized experts in topic areas where they want to make improvements. The second strategy in this project is for the primary care providers to participate in CHC’s Project ECHO (Extension for Community Health Outcomes), which provides case-based learning and support for individual clinicians to help improve knowledge and self-efficacy for pain management and buprenorphine treatment.

“The Nicholson Foundation is working with the Weitzman Institute to educate primary care doctors to provide state of the art pain management and opioid addiction treatment,” said Raquel Mazon Jeffers, Director of Health Integration for The Nicholson Foundation. “The Project ECHO for Pain Management and Buprenorphine Treatment initiative gives

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primary care providers the skills and tools necessary to address the complex and intertwined issues of pain and addiction.”

“There is an urgent need to help primary care clinicians gain the expertise to manage chronic pain and opioid addiction. These are among the most common things we see in the clinic,” explained Dr. Daren Anderson, Community Health Center’s VP/Chief Quality Officer and Director of the Weitzman Institute. “Our project is focused on helping primary care clinicians tackle these issues by using technology and quality improvement science to improve pain care and opioid addiction treatment”

As the official kick-off for the project, Anderson and his team recently conducted a two-day training session in New Jersey. “We are so excited to be working with Community Health Center,” said Dr. Lynda Bascelli, Chief Medical Officer, Project H.O.P.E., Inc., Camden's Healthcare for the Homeless. “We left the session energized and full of ideas. It is so helpful to have a framework for improving the quality of care for our patients at Project H.O.P.E. who are being treated with buprenorphine for opioid dependence.”

#### **About Community Health Center, Inc.**

Since 1972, Community Health Center, Inc. has been one of the leading healthcare providers in the state of Connecticut, building a world-class primary health care system committed to caring for uninsured and underserved populations. CHC is focused on improving health outcomes for its more than 130,000 patients as well as building healthy communities. Recognized as both a Level 3 Patient-Centered Medical Home by the National Committee for Quality Assurance and a Primary Care Medical Home by The Joint Commission, CHC delivers service in more than 200 locations statewide, offering primary care in medical, dental and behavioral health services. For more information, visit [www.chc1.com](http://www.chc1.com).

#### **About The Weitzman Institute**

The Weitzman Institute was established in 2013 by the Community Health Center, Inc., and is named in honor of Jerry Weitzman, a community pharmacist, one of CHC’s founders, and a long-time board member. Located in Middletown, CT, the Center promotes innovations in quality improvement techniques as well as critical investigation in primary care and systems redesign. Research and improvement work at the institute are focused on areas that have direct implications on the day to day practice of primary care for medically underserved patients. For more information, visit [quality.chc1.com](http://quality.chc1.com).

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