

## Cuyahoga Health Access Partnership (CHAP) Highlighted at the American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting

The Cuyahoga Health Access Partnership (CHAP) was pleased to participate in the 138th Annual Meeting and Exposition of the American Public Health Association (APHA) where more than 12,000 public health professionals from around the world met to address the nation's top public health challenges.

The APHA Annual Meeting provides a unique platform for thousands of public health professionals to come together to share the latest research, discuss advocacy efforts, build new partnerships and address emerging health issues currently facing the nation. Themed "Social Justice: A Public Health Imperative," the meeting provided a forum to address a broad range of significant public health issues, including health reform implementation, health disparities, climate change and health, and emergency preparedness.

The CHAP partners were honored that our project was asked to send a presenter to this prestigious national forum. Ms. Kate Nagel, the CHAP board chair, provided the presentation at APHA during the Access to Care session. The following is a brief overview of the points Ms. Nagel covered at the event.

### CHAP Organization and Vision

Ms. Nagel began by providing background on CHAP stating that it is a joint-public-private partnership focused on access to care for the uninsured in Cuyahoga County and was founded on the principle of shared responsibility of all healthcare organizations to face the uninsured crisis. She provided information on the partners participating in the project, which includes safety net providers, major hospital systems, government entities, health plans, foundations and other relevant organizations. *(For a list of all participating partners please see the end of this article.)*

She further explained how diverse stakeholders are committed to expanding access to care through a county-wide access program with the intent to provide a user-friendly system of health access to replace the current state of fragmentation for the county's uninsured adults.

### Goals

CHAP's vision is to provide a system of access for uninsured adults in Cuyahoga County. While CHAP focuses on the importance of primary care,

its efforts will extend throughout the entire spectrum of care. This would include standardized financial eligibility screening and the development of a web database for CHAP members — with the intent to identify a primary care home for members and facilitate referrals to specialty care.

### Immediate Community Benefits

CHAP plans to standardize the enrollment and eligibility process across the provider network for patients at or below 200% of the federal poverty level; develop continuity of care across the primary and specialty care provider networks, and reduce reliance on episodic emergency department visits in favor of primary care homes for acute, non-life-threatening and chronic problems.

### Accomplishments and Challenges

Ms. Nagel provided insight on some of the project's accomplishments to date which include a contract to purchase customized web-based financial eligibility software as well as the development of a provider directory tool modeled on insurance provider networks. She also noted some of the challenges which include differences among stakeholders in their FPL calculation, as well as differences in information technology capabilities. In addition, the program design has to ensure that neither financial hardship nor administrative burden falls disproportionately on certain organizations (e.g. hospital vs. non-hospital organizations, organizations with advanced IT systems vs. those without).

### Long-term Benefits

Ms. Nagel informed the audience that CHAP plans to promote continuity of care by establishing a primary care home for participants in order to manage chronic disease more effectively with the intent to improve health outcomes. Other benefits include the increased screening of the adult uninsured population to identify eligibility for existing insurance programs as well as the intent to reduce episodic care

and duplicative financial evaluations, thereby lowering the financial/ administrative burden of uncompensated care for provider organizations. This partnership will also create a shared model of accountability and responsibility across the Cuyahoga County health provider community.

### Future Plans

In closing, Ms. Nagel outlined some future plans for CHAP such as the improvement in primary care through advancing the patient-centered medical home model, improvement in quality data collection and dissemination, the use of CHAP utilization data to direct expansion of primary care capacity and the recruitment of private practice providers to treat uninsured patients.

### Timeline for CHAP

CHAP is using a phased approach to operationalize the enrollment, to work through coordination, cooperation and referral patterns so it is seamless for the client. First clients are to be enrolled starting December 1, 2010.

### CHAP Partners

The Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio  
Care Alliance Health Center  
CareSource  
City of Cleveland  
Cleveland Clinic  
Cuyahoga County  
Kaiser Permanente  
MetroHealth System  
Neighborhood Family Practice  
Northeast Ohio Neighborhood Health Services  
North Coast Health Ministry  
Saint Luke's Foundation  
Sisters of Charity Health System  
The Free Medical Clinic of Greater Cleveland  
University Hospitals

*The AMCNO has been integrally involved in the planning and implementation of CHAP and we continue to collaborate with the CHAP partners. AMCNO members may be contacted in the future to ascertain their level of interest in CHAP participation. ■*