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HHC Adopts Community Service Society's Electronic Benefits Tool to Link Patients to Social Services

Social Workers Will Help As Many As 500,000 Patients Annually Connect to Benefit Programs and Services

(NY, NY) -- The New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC) and the Community Service Society (CSS) today announced a collaboration to provide social workers a one-stop electronic resource to help link patients to 60 city, state and federal government benefit programs and services in a timely and more efficient way. Approximately 250 HHC social workers this month began using the CSS Benefits Plus online manual to benefits, housing, food stamps and many more support programs available to both individuals and families who seek healthcare services at HHC. This new tool will help social workers connect as many as 500,000 patients annually to these services.

"We rely on our social workers to provide counseling, ensure safe and appropriate discharge planning for hospitalized patients, and connect patients to services they will need when they return to their families and communities. They spend countless hours making linkages to the community resources our patients need to support their well being outside the walls of our facilities," said LaRay Brown, Senior Vice President of Corporate Planning and Community Health. "The Benefits Plus tool will reduce the amount of time it takes to research various programs because the information is readily accessible in one place. We hope that by using this tool we will be able to link more patients to the services they need most."

"Benefits Plus is an indispensable online resource for social service providers who need quick, accurate and reliable information on public benefits," said Alina Molina, CSS Vice President for Program Services. "In New York City, it is estimated that some \$2 billion in public benefits go unclaimed. During these difficult economic times, helping New Yorkers apply for and receive the benefits they are entitled to can make a huge difference in a person's life. We hope more organizations in the business of serving the public consider taking advantage of this valuable resource."

HHC staff with access to Benefits Plus will be able to find comprehensive information for patients on major benefit and housing programs, such as food stamps, cash assistance, social security disability, unemployment insurance, public housing, Section 8, child care, Medicaid, Family Health Plus, Child Health Plus and more. The internet-based manual also features case examples that clarify complex concepts, information on questions and challenges clients frequently face when attempting to access benefits, and processes for appealing an agency's improper action, government contacts and additional resources.

The CSS Benefits Tool is just one of multiple electronic information tools available to HHC staff and patients that complement each other and provide easy access to vital information that help city employees and consumers alike. HHS Connect, a city resource tool that links many health and human services agencies, is used by HHC financial advisors when helping patients fill out Medicaid applications. Access NYC, an online pre-screening and eligibility tool, is available to consumers so they can directly access electronic forms to apply for benefits and programs.

“Serving the complex health and social service needs of our 1.3 million patients requires an array of resources. Our ability to access multiple online information tools is vital in our effort to help our staff help our patients,” added LaRay Brown.

About HHC

The New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC) is a \$6.7 billion integrated healthcare delivery system with its own 420,000 member health plan, MetroPlus, and is the largest municipal healthcare organization in the country. HHC serves 1.3 million New Yorkers every year and more than 475,000 are uninsured. HHC provides medical, mental health and substance abuse services through its 11 acute care hospitals, four skilled nursing facilities, six large diagnostic and treatment centers and more than 70 community based clinics. HHC Health and Home Care also provides in-home services for New Yorkers. HHC was the 2008 recipient of the National Quality Forum and The Joint Commission's John M. Eisenberg Award for Innovation in Patient Safety and Quality. For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/hhc.

About CSS

The Community Service Society draws on a 168-year history of excellence in addressing the root causes of economic disparity. As a leading voice on behalf of low-income New Yorkers and the working poor, CSS responds to urgent, contemporary problems through applied research, advocacy and litigation, and innovative program models that strengthen and benefit all New Yorkers and help promote a more prosperous city. For more information on *Benefits Plus* please contact Diane Wenzler at (212) 614-5473/dwenzler@cssny.org, or visit our Web site, www.cssny.org

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