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HEALTH CARE QUALITY AND COST COUNCIL ANNOUNCES GOALS FOR 2008

BOSTON – The Health Care Quality and Cost Council (HCQCC) yesterday announced its first set of annual statewide goals for improving the quality and controlling the cost of health care in Massachusetts. The Council, created through the 2006 health care reform law, establishes statewide measures to improve health care quality, contain health care costs, and reduce racial and ethnic disparities in health care.

By 2012, the HCQCC seeks to ensure that Massachusetts will consistently rank among the states achieving the highest levels of performance in health care that is safe, effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient, equitable, integrated and affordable.

In announcing the FY08 goals, Secretary of Health and Human Services and Health Care Quality and Cost Council Chair Dr. JudyAnn Bigby said, “Containing health care costs, improving quality of care, and eliminating racial and ethnic disparities remain challenges for the Commonwealth. The Council’s goals for FY08 will help focus collaborative efforts by physicians, hospitals, insurers, consumers and others to make meaningful improvements.”

HCQCC Executive Director Katharine London said, “We look forward to working with physicians, hospitals, insurers and others to make these goals a reality in Massachusetts.” Council member James B. Conway, Senior Fellow at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, added, “By achieving these and future goals, Massachusetts will signal to the nation that leadership in health reform means significantly improving our quality of care and the overall health of our communities, while making better use of the money we spend.”

Over the next few months, the Council will consider specific steps to advance these goals. Measures to be considered include setting state standards and benchmarks; recommending specific actions necessary to achieve these goals; and estimating the costs of implementing strategies and the associated savings.

HCQCC GOALS FOR FY08

Reduce the cost of health care. Reduce the annual rise in health care costs to no more than the unadjusted growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2012.

- Promote cost-efficiency through development of a website providing comparative cost information. Develop a website that will enable consumers to compare the cost of health care procedures at different hospitals and outpatient facilities.
- Reduce health care spending by preventing the need for avoidable hospital stays.

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Ensure Patient Safety and Effectiveness of Care:

- Reduce hospital-associated infections (HAI) during FY08. Eliminate hospital-associated infections by 2012.
- Eliminate “Never Events” as defined by the National Quality Forum. Eliminate events that should never happen in hospitals, such as wrong surgery, wrong site, or wrong patient.

Improve screening for and management of chronic illnesses in the community:

- Improve chronic and preventive care. Improve care of chronic diseases, such as congestive heart failure, diabetes and asthma.
- Reduce disease complication rates, readmission rates and avoidable hospitalizations.

Develop and provide useful measurements of health care quality in areas of health care for which current data are inadequate:

- Develop processes and measures to improve adherence to patients’ wishes in providing care at the end of life. Ensure that health care providers ask about and follow patients’ wishes with respect to invasive treatments, do not resuscitate orders, hospice and palliative care, and other treatments at the end of life.

Eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in health and in access to and utilization of health care; health indicators will be consistent and consistently improving across all racial and ethnic groups:

- Reduce disparities in health care-associated infections.
- Eliminate disparities in “Never Events.”
- Reduce, and ultimately eliminate, disparities in disease complication rates, readmission rates, and avoidable hospitalizations.
- Reduce disparities in screening and management of chronic illnesses.

Promote quality improvement through transparency:

- Promote quality improvement through development of a website and other materials providing comparative quality information.

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