**New Healthcare Collaboration Addressing Affordability and Sustainability**

The Green Mountain Care Board’s consultant, Oliver Wyman, has been traversing the state, holding community forums, and sharing a simple message with independent community hospitals - they need to work more closely together with each other and their community partners to share services and reduce costs. Until now, independent community hospitals across New England have lacked the structure to implement this concept.

On July 15th, three Vermont hospitals, Brattleboro Memorial Hospital in Brattleboro, Copley Hospital in Morrisville, and Northwestern Medical Center in St. Albans, signed an accord as founding member organizations of the New England Collaborative Health Network (NECHN). Each member committed to work inter-dependently for the long-term sustainability of independent community hospitals, health systems and community partners in care.

NECHN is structured to develop and support shared solutions, achieving scale and efficiency. The philosophical foundation of NECHN creates a network of true collaboration, rooted in trust, respect, and deeds of integrity. It will offer services and opportunities that members can opt into, depending on their own independent needs.

“The collaborative is designed to provide a third option for small independent hospitals and health systems,” said Joseph Woodin, CEO of Copley Hospital and Chair of the NECHN Board of Directors. “Hospitals had two options-struggle to stay independent on their own, without cost savings of scale, or become part of an academic or regional medical center and give up control. NECHN now gives them a third option. Joining the collaborative offers community hospitals enhanced bargaining power and cost savings enjoyed by much larger organizations, while allowing them to stay independent and focused on the needs of their local community.”

“I have worked in large health systems and in small community hospitals,” added Peter Wright, CEO of Northwestern Medical Center. “Going alone is incredibly hard. Through NECHN, we now have a network of organizations with similar needs and philosophies, allowing us to work together, achieve cost savings, and learn from one another to better meet the local needs of our respective communities.”

“This is a great opportunity for small organizations to tap into the purchasing power that comes with size and scale,” said Chris Dougherty, CEO of Brattleboro Memorial Hospital. “It is an opportunity to reduce operating costs through an alliance with other independent healthcare organizations. The savings will allow us to invest in more resources to access high quality independent local healthcare services.”

Ovation Healthcare, who has been delivering value to independent hospitals and health systems for over 45 years through its shared services, is one of the collaborative’s key partners. Ovation provides industry knowledge, subject matter expertise and solutions for the NECHN’s independent Board of Directors to consider. “We are already working together to achieve savings in total supply spend and employee benefits with a strong list of additional opportunities in consideration,” said Chip Holmes of Fairfax, Vermont, and Executive Vice President of Ovation Healthcare. “Ovation is thrilled to be part of this proactive, positive approach to reducing expenses and improving collaboration among independent healthcare families.”

“Our work will stretch beyond group purchasing,” said Wright. “There are opportunities for us to share expertise and resources, as Copley and Northwestern are doing by sharing a cardiologist to meet the needs in both our communities. The network allows us to think more strategically about how we can provide services, ensuring better access, reduced expenses, and an increased focus on quality.”

NECHN Executive Director David Turner of Milton, Vermont is excited about the opportunities that interdependence offers as well as expanding that reach across the continuum of care. “We have already welcomed Northern Tier Centers for Health, the Federally Qualified Health Center in Franklin County, Vermont to NECHN. Other organizations in Vermont, New Hampshire, and New York are exploring the opportunity.

The majority of hospitals in Vermont are independent, making the opportunity for growth in a collaborative network strong. NECHN member hospitals are already working with their local community healthcare partners to offer them the same cost saving opportunities. More cost savings at every level means reduced expenses across the Vermont system.

For more information, visit nechnetwork.com.