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For more information, contact:

Brooke Cayot

405- 951-4821

405-629-3204 pager

E-mail: brooke.cayot@integrisok.com

Local Health Agencies Join Forces to Help the Underserved

OKLAHOMA CITY (Aug. 1, 2012) – A commission comprised of area health care leaders and decision-makers has created a master plan that will transform the way health care services for low-income, uninsured residents of Oklahoma County are planned, delivered, and coordinated.

There's no denying that the citizens of Oklahoma City are a caring and compassionate people. Their concern for the less fortunate is evident by the variety of resources currently available throughout the greater metropolitan area.

These consist of numerous charitable clinics supported by religious organizations and hospitals, two federally qualified health centers (Variety Care and Community Health Centers), and scores of physicians who volunteer their time and expertise at no cost.

Historically, the problem has been that despite all this effort, the care of the underserved has been disjointed, disconnected, and thus potentially ineffective. That is why leaders from various local health agencies recently joined forces to create the Commission to Transform the Health Safety Net of Oklahoma County.

This commission extensively reviewed the situation and drafted a master plan that will bring about lasting solutions. Stanley Hupfeld, Co-Chairman of the Commission and former Chief Executive Officer of INTEGRIS Health, said, "We have the opportunity to build an integrated system of care for the at-risk population that could be national class in scope, and would truly transform how communities care for the medically underserved".

The commission's report suggests for the first time the establishment of the Oklahoma County Community Health Network that will coordinate all the resources necessary to have a high-performing, outcomes-oriented health care system for those in need.

The plan recommends a single referral source supported and endorsed by the medical community that can move patients swiftly from an initial appointment at a charitable clinic or federally qualified health center to a higher level of care in a hospital or physician specialist's office when necessary. Care coordination for patients with complicated medical needs and other challenges will be provided.

Finally, the plan advocates that the network be responsible for its ongoing funding through charitable foundations and other community resources including the business community.

The commission believes this plan is a game-changing opportunity to insure those truly in need receive optimal care and kindness, befitting the best of what our city has to offer. There is significant hope that the plan will serve as an innovative road map for other communities to follow.

The commission's master plan is available online at Oklahoma City-County Health Department, Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, and Variety Care's websites.

www.VarietyCare.org

www.OCCHD.org

www.ODMHSAS.org

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INTEGRIS Health is Oklahoma's largest health system with hospitals, rehabilitation centers, physician clinics, mental health facilities, independent living centers and home health agencies located throughout much of the state. For more information, visit www.integrisOK.com.