

Contact for Journalists:
Andrea Daitz
RWJF

adaitz@rwjf.org

Office: (609) 627-5937

(Please note: Contacts for journalists within the 4 communities can be found at the end of this release)

***RWJF Announces Four Pilot Projects to Improve Health Care Quality
National Competition for Six Additional Sites Open until Sept. 7***

July 1, 2006 (Princeton, NJ) – Four communities have been awarded grants to undertake pilot projects intended to dramatically improve the quality of health care provided to people with chronic illnesses in outpatient settings, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) announced today. These sites —Detroit, Memphis, Minneapolis/St. Paul, and Seattle—are the pilot phase of a larger effort called *Aligning Forces for Quality: The Regional Market Project*. In addition to the four pilot sites, *Aligning Forces for Quality* is currently seeking proposals under an open national competition to fund six more sites. Proposals for this national competition are due Sept. 7; those interested in submitting a proposal for the competitive phase can find more information about the program at www.forces4quality.org.

Aligning Forces for Quality is designed to help communities do three things to advance the quality of chronic care: work with providers to improve the quality of ambulatory chronic illness care; measure and publicly report the performance of the providers; and, promote consumer demand for higher quality care. The expectation is that once these three key drivers are aligned, the communities will see more and faster improvement in the quality of care.

The four pilot sites were first identified in discussions with national experts and then chosen after site visits confirmed the communities were beginning to take steps to align drivers of quality and had the capacity for further improvement.

“These pilot sites present an exciting opportunity for us to work directly with communities to learn what is effective when it comes to quality improvement efforts in health care,” said John Lumpkin, M.D., M.P.H., RWJF senior vice president and director, health care group. “We expect the initial work we do with them will help guide efforts in the six additional communities chosen through the national competition.”

Patricia Powers, M.P.P.A., president and chief of executive officer of the Center for Health Improvement (CHI) in Sacramento, CA, directs *Aligning Forces for Quality*. “We already learned a great deal through the exploratory and design work for *Aligning Forces*,” Powers said. “The expert discussions and visits to these four pilot sites helped us better understand the forces a community will need to knit together into functioning economic units to drive ongoing quality improvement.”

This *Aligning Forces* market model requires that: (1) providers get support to improve care; (2) purchasers are willing to reward good care; (3) the community's civic, business and health care leadership are committed; (4) accurate, understandable information about health care is available; and (5) patients and consumers understand this information in making care decisions and are motivated to act on that information.

The four pilot phase communities will receive grants of up to \$600,000 and will have access to a pool of experts to help them with their work in a three year effort.

The national competition phase of *Aligning Forces* is a three-year \$10 million program. The six communities selected in the national competition will each receive grants of up to \$600,000 to use over three years. These second phase grants will begin in February 2007, and communities may use them for planning, convening, coordination and infrastructure development. In addition to their grant awards, the second phase community grantees will also have access to a substantial pool of technical assistance support.

The *Aligning Forces for Quality* Call for Proposals is available online at the RWJF Web site, www.rwjf.org. The deadline for applicant registration is July 14, 2006, with full proposals due Sept. 7, 2006. Potential applicants should contact the program at (916) 930-9200, or visit www.forces4quality.org for more information.

Aligning Forces for Quality is part of the Foundation's work to improve the quality of care for people with chronic conditions. Studies have shown that the quality of health care in America is not what it should be, including prior work supported by RWJF that demonstrated that Americans typically receive only about 55 percent of the recommended standard of care. Consistent with the Institute of Medicine's recommendation for alignment of multiple forces in a geographic area as the logical next step toward improving care quality, *Aligning Forces for Quality* was designed to provide support to communities to cultivate and accelerate the alignment of disparate local forces to improve ambulatory, chronic care quality.

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The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 30 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime.

The Center for Health Improvement is a national, independent, nonprofit health policy center dedicated to improving population health and encouraging healthy behaviors.

CHI uses evidence-based research as the basis for policy innovation and implementation. Since 1995, CHI has partnered with all levels of government, advocacy and community organizations, philanthropic foundations, and educators.

Additional Contacts for Journalists:

Detroit – Vernice Davis Anthony
President and CEO – Greater Detroit Area Health Council
(313) 963-4990

Memphis - Cristie Upshaw Travis
Project Director, Healthy Memphis Common Table
(901) 767-9585

Minneapolis/St. Paul - James Chase
Executive Director, MN Community Measurement
(651) 209-0390 x. 12

Seattle - Margaret Stanley
Executive Director, Puget Sound Health Alliance
(206) 448-2570