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HEALTH QUARTERS RECEIVES FUNDS FOR WORK WITH MARGINALIZED YOUTH
\$10,000 grant from North Shore Community Health Network will underwrite Healthy Conversations program with youth in Mass. systems of care

BEVERLY -- Health Quarters (HQ) has received a \$10,000 grant from the North Shore Community Health Network (NSCHNA) to conduct *Healthy Conversations*, an intervention whose goal is to improve the health, and educational and economic opportunity of teens linked to state systems of care through information and life skills building, as well as services for their parents and youth-serving providers. Health Quarters (HQ) is a Beverly-based, federal- and state-funded non-profit provider of reproductive health care and youth development and education programming for low-income and underinsured women, men, and teens in 60 communities in northeastern Massachusetts.

Health Quarters will collaborate with the Community Service Agency of Cape Ann/Salem (CSA), a program of Northeast Health System's Health & Education Services, Inc., to offer this program to marginalized or vulnerable youth linked to foster care, child welfare, juvenile justice systems, and runaway and homeless youth. "We are very much looking forward to this collaboration on behalf of the families we serve," said Michelle Fyrer, CSA Director.

Teens in systems of care [i.e. Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Department of Youth Services (DYS)] generally have less access to the education, supports, and services needed for healthy growth and development, leaving them at risk for difficulties including too early pregnancy as well as school drop-out, incarceration, drug use, sexually transmitted disease infection, and injury.

This grant will allow HQ to bring a multi-dimensional intervention to teens in the form of health groups and one-on-one sessions; to parents/caregivers in the form of workshops and individual consults; and to CSA professionals in the form of multi-part training. While services for the adolescent are at the center of the intervention, HQ's integration of education, training and coaching to parents/caregivers and youth-serving providers is designed to create a holistic network of support that surrounds the youth.

"It's important for at-risk teens to have a safe place where they can talk about things with a person who won't have a negative reaction," said Kim Lawrence, a juvenile probation officer from Essex County Juvenile Justice who referred teens in 2009 to an informational group that was a precursor to *Healthy Conversations*. "I was gratified when some of the teens asked for the group leader's phone number; I knew they ready to reach out."

Established in 1971, Health Quarters is a federal-and state-funded provider of gynecological exams; youth development and education programming; and prevention services such as birth control and emergency contraception, cervical and breast cancer screening, STD testing and treatment, and rapid HIV and pregnancy testing and counseling.