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**A PIONEER IN IMPLEMENTING ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS IN COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS, *THE CHILDREN'S HEALTH FUND* CALLS FOR MORE FUNDING FOR NATION'S MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

***Citing 16 Years of Success, Dr. Irwin Redlener, Founder of The Children's Health Fund Recommends Paperless Health Records as Particularly Beneficial to Medically Underserved Children***

**WASHINGTON, DC (April 29, 2004) - The Children's Health Fund (CHF)**, a national advocacy and health services organization, today called on Congress to pass legislation that would dramatically increase Federal money available to fund a national adoption of Electronic Health Record (EHR) systems in public and private health centers across the country. The announcement came at a national meeting of CHF medical directors, held today in the Senate Caucus Room of the Russell Senate Office Building.

Dr. Irwin Redlener, president and founder of The Children's Health Fund, announced the organization's support of the efforts by President George W. Bush, who in his proposed 2005 budget included \$100 million toward EHR funding, as well as Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY), who has introduced the Health Information for Quality Improvement Act (S.2003), which calls for increased funding to health care providers for information technologies. In addition, Redlener called on Congress to hold hearings on the EHRs, which he said would show the value of these paperless health record systems.

***The Children's Health Fund*** has been a leader in the field of EHR since it first migrated from paper health records to electronic in 1989. Since then, almost all of the community health centers of excellence in the CHF network – including its fleet of mobile medical units (MMUs) – use EHR technology in treating their pediatric patients, tracking chronic childhood diseases, and collecting data from clinical findings. The EHR system being used was customized by CHF to fit the needs of an underserved pediatric population and a mobile medical unit environment.

The current interest in EHR technology and healthcare is due to a growing recognition that a

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stronger information technology (IT) infrastructure is integral to addressing such national concerns as the need to improve the safety and quality of health care, rising health care costs, and matters of homeland security related to the health sector.

Dr. Redlener said, "The implementation of electronic health records in our health centers and MMUs take us to a new level of health care with our patients. With EHR, our physicians will be able to have comprehensive and reliable patient information."

Medically underserved children are particularly vulnerable to the pitfalls of a paper-based health records system, and there are unique benefits to electronic health records that can enhance care to vulnerable populations.

These benefits include:

- Immediate access to a patient's medical record, which is critical for walk-in encounters, common among medically underserved populations;
- Adaptable software to meet special patient health needs or chronic diseases, such as asthma;
- Permanent storage of immunization records, which is important with transient patient populations who may lose paper records of immunization status leading to unnecessary duplication;
- Electronic information storage regarding medication history, drug interaction and safety, a key feature for medically underserved patients who may not have access to a pharmacist who can provide this kind of information;
- Formatted screening templates and ready availability of results — important for screenings required under Medicaid including developmental, hearing and vision screening – facilitates developmental surveillance for children at risk of delays;
- Storage and ready availability of information for health education and anticipatory guidance;
- Uniformity in data entry enables anonymous data extraction for research, an essential capability that facilitates the implementation of advocacy strategies to enhance care for medically underserved and other special care populations.
- Electronic storage enhances continuity of care for transient patients who may be seen at different sites within a care network, and the permanency of storage can facilitate transfer of information.
- Electronic health records have the ability to track and report who views the patient's medical record — which is important for federal confidentiality requirements.

**The Children's Health Fund** works nationally to provide medical care to the most medically underserved population – homeless and disadvantaged children. To date, The Children's Health Fund's National Network of 17 pediatric programs has treated at-risk children in more than a million medical visits.

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Since 1987, when **The Children's Health Fund** first began providing healthcare to the medically underserved, **CHF** has incorporated innovation into our clinical practice. **CHF** introduced the mobile medical unit (MMU), which enabled physicians to travel to the underserved communities. Through partnerships, the Fund has established new models of care to address chronic pediatric diseases such as childhood asthma, diabetes type 2, and HIV.

More information can be found at The Children's Health Fund website at [www.childrenshealthfund.org](http://www.childrenshealthfund.org).

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