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Cambridge Health Alliance

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Cambridge Health Alliance is a regional public, safety net health care system that provides mental health, substance abuse, and outpatient services to residents in Cambridge and surrounding communities. Three acute care hospitals and more than 20 community-based health centers serve Cambridge, Somerville, and Boston's Metro-North region. Comprehensive services are also delivered in many community settings including school-based clinics, subsidized housing developments, homeless shelters, hospital-based specialty centers, and free-standing centers for family medicine and occupational health.

The history of Cambridge Health Alliance is the story of three community hospitals that have cared for diverse populations for generations. Cambridge City Hospital became affiliated with Harvard Medical School (HMS) in 1965 when HMS dean George Berry, Harvard president Nathan Pusey, and Cambridge City Hospital director Theodore Austin announced the affiliation in order to promote patient care, teaching, and research. With the involvement and support of state, federal, and local governments, Cambridge Health Alliance was formed on July 1, 1996, with the merger of The Cambridge Hospital and Somerville Hospital, and expanded in July 2001 with the addition of Whidden Memorial Hospital in Everett. Because of its access to public hospital financing, Cambridge Health Alliance was seen as a solution to rescue these financially distressed community hospitals and their essential patient care services. Through these partnerships, Cambridge Health Alliance became the largest Massachusetts acute provider of mental health and substance abuse services.

As Massachusetts' last remaining public hospital system, Cambridge Health Alliance derives more than 85% of its funding from public sources. It serves as one of the state's largest safety-net healthcare providers to vulnerable patient populations with extensive ambulatory care, preventive care, and comprehensive employed physician services.

Cambridge Health Alliance also tackles racial and ethnic disparities, providing the best possible care for all who need it. Half of Cambridge Health Alliance's care is delivered to low-income, government health care dependent populations, compared to a hospital industry average of just 15%. In 2007, 33% of all Cambridge Health Alliance patients were non-English speaking, while 47% of its uninsured patients were non-English speaking. Cambridge Health Alliance provides interpretive services for 65 languages and about 250,000 patient encounters per year.

"We are committed to helping communities become and stay healthy," said Cambridge Health Alliance CEO Dennis Keefe. "Among Cambridge Health Alliance's greatest strengths is its ability to respond to community needs. We work with assorted agencies, individuals, community groups to connect people to essential healthcare services and inform them about health issues."

Located at 1493 Cambridge St. between Harvard and Inman Sqs., Cambridge Health Alliance's Cambridge Hospital campus is a primary teaching site for Harvard Medical School, training future generations of physicians to care for diverse and under-served populations in a culturally competent

environment. It offers a wide range of health care services, including 24-hour emergency care, primary care for adults and children, OB/GYN care, expert orthopedic, surgery, and specialty services, testing services, and mental health programs. Women can also benefit from the Cambridge Women's Health Center, Cambridge Breast Center, maternity suite, and natural childbirth center. Cambridge Health Alliance has recently invested in the health of Cambridge patients by adding new digital mammography and breast MRI equipment, a new 64-slice CT scanner, expanded oncology services, and expanded sports medicine services.

In addition to its Cambridge Hospital campus, Cambridge Health Alliance oversees eight primary care centers throughout the city of Cambridge and operates the Cambridge Public Health Department, a municipal agency which strives to improve the quality of life of residents and workers by reducing sickness and injury; encouraging healthy behaviors; and fostering safe and healthy environments in homes, schools, and workplaces.

Cambridge residents have welcomed Cambridge Health Alliance's innovative, community-based model of care. According to the 2008 bi-annual Citizens Opinion Survey conducted by the City of Cambridge, 77% of the respondents rated their experience related to Cambridge's health and hospital services as "excellent or good." The 2008 results reflect the highest rating for the health services category and are 6% higher than the 2006 survey results.

"The principal mission of Cambridge Health Alliance is to improve the health of its communities," said Keefe. "With great nurses, more than 100 doctors who teach at Harvard Medical School, and a wide range of services, our Cambridge Hospital campus is able to do this every day."

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