



News from the Office of ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARK POLONCARZ

NEWS RELEASE

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POLONCARZ, BURSTEIN TRAVEL TO CHEMUNG COUNTY

Fact-finding Mission Centers on Community Health Care Practices, Administration

ERIE COUNTY, NY— Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz, accompanied by Erie County Commissioner of Health Dr. Gale Burstein, today travelled to Elmira, N.Y. to visit and observe at Priority Community Health Care, a health care clinic serving southern central New York State. The visit, intended to serve as a fact-finding excursion to identify best health care clinic practices while observing the County's "Medical Home Strategy" initiative, included a look at successful Practice Level Tools & Resources, Financial Terms, and meetings with Chemung County Administration officials.

"During my campaign, I noted the short-sightedness and fiscal irresponsibility of closing health clinics in Erie County. These clinics, primarily serving the poor, were an essential link to health care for a significant percentage of our population," **said Poloncarz**. "Now, with the closing of Sheehan hospital, it's painfully obvious that the decision to close those clinics was wrong. The population that was using those clinics, and then was going to Sheehan, is still there and still in need of health care. We are here to look at efficient, cost-effective ways to better serve the health care needs of that population."

The day-long visit began with greetings from Dr. Thomas R. Mitchell, MD, PC, who administers the clinic, along with members of his clinical team. Poloncarz and Burstein then learned about tools and resources designed to better provide for, monitor, and tailor health care needs, including ScoreHealth, Salient Home Medical Solution, RelayHealth, Health Ed on Demand, and My Home Care Plan. These programs help doctors to treat patients more comprehensively by providing more detailed initial evaluations; examine County Medicaid patients' billing to discover patterns; provide "in office" educational materials and care coordinators to facilitate patients' education; and help patients to be more empowered in caring for themselves after their first visit.

"The tools and resources being used here are good guidelines on ways to provide more individualized care for patients, while at the same time giving those patients the information they need to care for themselves," **said Burstein**. "We not only want to keep people healthy, we want them to take charge of their own health. With better evaluations, targeted information provided by knowledgeable staff, and a home care plan that puts patients in charge, the benefits are many. Additionally, a closer scrutiny of Medicaid billing procedures helps to identify spots to save additional costs along the way."

During the visit the County Executive and Health Commissioner also examined financial models of paying for health care, as well as the use of data mining tools to detect and examine trends in patients' billing. These tools provide a data-driven look at expenses while highlighting salient points for potential cost savings; in addition to exposing potential fraud and abuse, they can also identify unnecessary expenses and duplicative services.

"As I noted during the campaign, the cost of a visit to a health clinic such as this is much less than a visit to a hospital emergency room. Unfortunately, as local access was cut off, costly ER visits went up," **added Poloncarz**. "The current system is unsustainable. Models like this provide many good lessons to draw from, lessons that can be applied in Erie County. We too hope to provide the levels of individualized, cost-effective care we've seen here."

Chemung County is already implementing Governor Andrew Cuomo's recommendations for Medicaid Redesign, with a review of the impacts of that redesign

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