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# Community Healthcare Network

January 17, 2014

Dear Community Board 3,

This is a request that Community Healthcare Network (CHN) be placed on the agenda for the Community Board Committee meeting in February to announce the launch of our Comprehensive and Integrative Primary Care Initiative (CIPCI). This initiative strives to support our patients' physical, mental and spiritual well-being by adding some complementary and alternative medical (CAM) services to the care we provide in our patient centered medical home. Making these holistic services accessible and affordable to our patients will allow us to focus on promoting wellness and improving health outcomes of the "whole" person by building upon the excellent primary care we already provide. It will be piloted at our Downtown Health Center at 150 Essex Street, which targets the underserved region of the Lower East Side.

We would like to inform the community board members of this exciting project by giving the following 5-10 minute overview:

### 1. Background on CHN

CHN has been providing essential healthcare services to underserved populations in New York City for decades. Today, CHN provides a long list of medical services which include family planning, women's health, pre- and post-natal care, adult and adolescent preventive and primary healthcare, pediatrics, mental health programs, HIV counseling and testing, HIV primary care, care coordination, social services, adolescent pregnancy prevention and education, dental services, nutritional counseling, podiatry, outreach and education, and other ancillary services. Our President and CEO Catherine Abate, former New York State Senator who represented this area, was diagnosed with uterine cancer almost two years ago. In addition to traditional cancer treatment, she took a more holistic and integrated approach to her care. As a result, she has made incredible progress. Her vision is to share what she has learned with our patients.

### 2. Background on Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)

To provide the best comprehensive care to our patients, we plan to embrace an integrative medical model which combines western medicine with a complementary and alternative medicine model. CAM is an important component of care in many low income and minority communities. Many health centers who serve these communities provide some CAM services, but little is known about how they are integrated into these centers or the impact they may have on health disparities and costs. As part of our CIPCI, we will be conducting studies on health outcomes and costs. Studies have shown that the inclusion of evidence based methods of complementary and alternative care may significantly reduce health disparities by making care more accessible, culturally appropriate and affordable. They may also provide a vehicle for education about self-care, wellness and prevention — all of which are a big part of our CIPCI mission.

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### 3. Patient Input for CHN's CIPCI

Since September 2013, we have conducted several focus groups at the health center to start gaining patient input so we can provide those CAM services that patients are most interested in.

The groups were overwhelmingly excited about the initiative. The services they were particularly interested in were yoga, meditation, acupuncture and group exercise. Several patients reflected that they had received acupuncture in their "home" countries, but did not have access to it in NYC. There was a common view that CAM was not accessible due to cost and they would welcome a low-cost option.

### 4. Initial CAM Services to be Provided by CHN

Based upon patient input, the initial CAM services to be offered are:

**Yoga** — a mind and body practice whose origins are embedded in ancient Indian philosophy. Known as a meditative movement practice used for health purposes, yoga typically combines physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation or relaxation. Recent studies in people with chronic low-back pain suggest that a carefully adapted set of yoga poses may help reduce pain and improve their ability to walk and move about. Studies also suggest that practicing yoga might help reduce heart rate and blood pressure, and may also help relieve anxiety and depression. CHN will work with yoga instructors who are trained and certified and capable of modifying techniques to meet the unique needs of our clients. All participants will be advised to consult with their medical providers prior to participation.

**Acupuncture** — it's among the oldest healing practices in the world. The term acupuncture describes a family of procedures involving the stimulation of points on the body using a variety of techniques involving thin, solid, metallic needles. Acupuncture will be offered to our patients primarily for pain management and possibly for smoking cessation.

**Meditation** — originated in ancient religious and spiritual traditions. Generally, a person who is meditating uses certain techniques, such as a specific posture, focused attention, and an open attitude toward distractions. Meditation and other stress reduction techniques will be offered to increase calmness and physical relaxation, to improve psychological balance, to cope with illness and to enhance overall health and well-being.

Starting this spring, CHN will gradually introduce these new CAM services that focus on maintaining a healthy lifestyle through exercise, stress management and the reduction of pain. We have identified individuals who are interested in collaborating to offer these services at no-cost or low-cost. We will be providing comprehensive training for our staff, as well as educating our patients and the community to support this changing culture of care. We look forward to working with each of you and hopefully improving the well-being of our most underserved populations. We will keep you posted on our progress and we hope you will assist us in promoting this exciting initiative within our community.

Sincerely,

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