



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Jane Walton
(602) 546-5871
(602) 202-2229 (pager)
jwalton@phoenixchildrens.com

**PHOENIX CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL TO PARTICIPATE
IN INITIATIVE TO HELP HOSPITALS BETTER COMMUNICATE
WITH PATIENTS WHO SPEAK LIMITED ENGLISH**

Phoenix Children's Hospital is one of 10 selected nationwide by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to Identify and Test Strategies to Provide Effective, Timely Language Services to Patients

PHOENIX, Ariz. (December 15, 2006) – Phoenix Children's Hospital has been selected as one of 10 hospitals nationwide to participate in *Speaking Together: National Language Services Network*, a national program to improve the quality of health care provided to patients with limited English proficiency (LEP). The hospitals will participate in a high-level national learning collaborative aimed at helping to develop tested language services programs that provide more effective and timely communications to patients with LEP.

Funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and administered by The George Washington University's School of Public Health and Health Services, *Speaking Together* is the latest addition to the Foundation's portfolio of programs to improve the quality of health care in America, while eliminating racial and ethnic disparities.

"At Phoenix Children's Hospital, we are fortunate to have trained staff interpreters for Spanish 24 hours every day," said Irma Bustamante, *Speaking Together* Program Coordinator at Phoenix Children's Hospital. "We know that communication between patients and providers is an urgent health and safety issue and are thrilled to work with hospitals that have many years experience working with multiple languages. Phoenix Children's is honored to have been selected to participate in the *Speaking Together* learning collaborative. We are dedicated to improving the quality of communication with LEP patients and families in Arizona, and ultimately across the nation."

Research shows that when patients have difficulty communicating with their health care providers, they are far less likely to understand their conditions, adequately communicate symptoms or adhere to treatment recommendations. While all hospitals nationwide are legally required to provide language services to patients who speak limited English, there are no federal guidelines on the most effective ways to communicate with these patients.

"Language differences represent one of the most obvious barriers to the provision of quality medical care," said Marsha Regenstein, PhD, MCP, associate professor in the department of Health Policy at George Washington University and director of the *Speaking Together* National Program Office. "Too often, bilingual family members or hospital staff members who have no training in interpreting medical terminology serve as the go-between for a patient and his physician and other hospital staff because a trained language services professional is not readily available. Just as any patient expects care from a trained, qualified health care professional, a patient with limited English proficiency should expect that timely interpreter services will be provided by professionals who are specially trained in interpreting health and medical information. Through this program, we're going to identify the most effective, efficient ways that can happen."

Phoenix Children's will receive a grant of up to \$60,000, as well as technical assistance and training using quality improvement measures developed by The George Washington University Department of Health Policy. The 16-month collaborative process will examine how the hospitals communicate with non-English-speaking patients, and will focus on how hospital staff can better structure and manage language services programs in order to have effective, efficient and timely communications with LEP patients.

Proven best practices learned from Phoenix Children's and other *Speaking Together* partners will be shared with health professionals across the nation, giving hospitals with linguistically diverse patients concrete and tested examples of effective language services programs and interventions that they can adopt.

For more information about Phoenix Children's, visit www.phoenixchildrens.com. Information about *Speaking Together* is available at www.speakingtogether.org.

###

Phoenix Children's is Arizona's leader in pediatric care and is one of the 10 largest free-standing children's hospitals in the nation. The most comprehensive array of pediatric specialists in the State practice at this one organization. The outstanding clinical expertise, as well as high patient volume, and an unwavering commitment to caring only for children, all contribute to Phoenix Children's leadership position.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 30 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime.