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NEW REPORT FINDS AFRICAN AMERICANS EXPERIENCE WORSE HEALTH OUTCOMES THAN OTHER RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS IN NEW YORK'S PUBLIC INSURANCE PROGRAMS

NEW YORK, NY May 13, 2009—A new report issued by the Community Service Society of New York (CSS) and funded by the New York State Health Foundation (NYSHealth) urges New York State to promote health equity more effectively through its popular public insurance programs. These programs—Child Health Plus, Family Health Plus and Medicaid Managed Care—serve nearly three million New Yorkers, approximately 20 percent of whom are African American, and another 28 percent are Latino.

The CSS report's central finding is that African American enrollees experienced statistically significantly worse health outcomes on 10 out of 12 quality measures in its review of New York State Department of Health quality assurance data. The quality measures analyzed are in the areas of children's health and dental care, women's health and diabetes care.

"We know that the State has been able to use its purchasing power successfully to improve general health outcomes in State-contracted health plans that serve predominately poor and minority people," said David R. Jones, CSS President & CEO. "The State should now use this same power to target minority health outcomes."

CSS researchers also found that, in contrast with statewide and national surveillance data, Latino enrollees had statistically significantly better health indicators than the total of all other racial and ethnic groups on a number of measures, including: childhood immunizations, childhood dental visits, mammography screening, and two diabetes measures. Latinos experienced similar health outcomes as the total of all other racial and ethnic groups on all other measures. Asian/Pacific Islander enrollees had statistically significant better health outcomes than those of the total of all other groups in every area except childhood immunizations and nephropathy screening. These findings are consistent with other New York health surveillance data.

"These results show that there is incredible potential and peril in investing in managed care programs," said the reports main author, Elisabeth R. Benjamin, MSPH, JD. "While many have flourished in the State's decade-long Medicaid Manage Care experiment, others—especially African American enrollees—seem to be left behind."

"While we laud the State's efforts to expand public health insurance programs, we must ensure that those enrolled in the programs have equal access to quality care," said James R. Knickman, President and CEO of NYSHealth. "Improving health insurance coverage in our State requires important investments, and NYSHealth is committed to supporting projects like the CSS report."

CSS's report makes three policy recommendations about how New York State could better improve the quality of care for racial and ethnic minorities: (1) the State should monitor health plan quality indicators by racial and ethnic categories; (2) the State should publicly disclose the results of racial and ethnic disparities in health outcomes by health plan; and (3) the state should leverage its purchasing power for health equity through its existing pay-for-performance and monitoring mechanisms.

To download a copy of the research findings, please go to:

http://www.cssny.org/userimages/downloads/Promoting_Equity_May2009.pdf

For 160 years, the Community Service Society of New York has been the leading voice on behalf of low-income New Yorkers and continues to advocate for the economic security of the working poor in the nation's largest city.

NYSHealth, whose mission is to expand health insurance coverage, increase access to high-quality health care services, and improve public and community health was established by the State of New York with charitable funds from the privatization of Empire Blue Cross/Blue Shield.