

## **Providence Journal**

January 11, 2012

HEALTH CARE/ By FELICE J. FREYER JOURNAL MEDICAL WRITER

### **Federal program selects four ‘innovators’**

*Their organizations will receive stipends up to \$20,000 for work on health-care issues*

Four Rhode Islanders have been selected as health care “innovation advisers” to the federal government, in a program that will help the winners test new ideas for health-care delivery and then draw on their expertise to guide others.

The four are working on projects as diverse as helping premature babies stay healthy after they leave the hospital and improving primary-care physicians’ practices. The advisers will commit up to 10 hours a week during the first six months, and their home organizations will receive stipends up to \$20,000.

The Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services selected 73 people nationwide from among 920 applicants. The program is part of the Affordable Care Act, the federal law to overhaul the health-care system.

“The selection of these Rhode Islanders by CMS is further recognition that our Ocean State is a leader in health-care innovation,” said U.S. Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, in a statement announcing the awards.

These are the four winners from Rhode Island:

• Gary Christensen, chief operating officer and chief information officer of the Rhode Island Quality Institute, is working on an electronic service that will automatically notify a primary-care physician when his or her patient is admitted to or discharged from the hospital. The goal is to reduce unnecessary hospital readmissions by improving coordination with community providers.

• Nancy Roberts, president and chief executive of the VNA of Care New England, is developing a way to better care for chronically ill people in the community through the use of home-care workers and collaboration with other providers.

• Dr. Betty Vohr, medical director of the Neonatal Follow-Up Program, is expanding a program that provides multifaceted in-home supports to families of premature babies, to reduce the rates of illness and hospitalization among these vulnerable babies.

• Jean Sanders of Aquidneck Medical Associates, a 13-physician multispecialty group that was among the first to adopt electronic medical records and the patient-centered medical home concept, will help other small and medium-size physician groups learn how to better coordinate patients’ care and reduce costs.

ffreyer@providencejournal.com