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### **Metro Health clinical services transitioning to University Health System** *Move aims to improve care, increase prevention services and save money*

(SAN ANTONIO – FEB. 4, 2008) In an effort to move closer to creating a high-performing public health care system for San Antonio and Bexar County, today the staff and clinical preventive services from ten Metropolitan Health District clinic locations were officially integrated into University Health System. The move is designed to reduce duplication of services, enhance coordination of care, and increase our community's focus on prevention.

“Combining the efforts of the University Health System with Metro Health means the level of public health care in Bexar County will be better and stronger,” County Judge Nelson Wolff said. “Maintaining comprehensive and continuous care for our residents is important in the battle against health problems that plague this community, such as diabetes and heart disease. Prevention, early detection and continuity in care are essential to those efforts, which can only improve through consolidation while ensuring the taxpayers’ money is being wisely invested.”

The clinical preventive services provided at these facilities include prenatal care, family planning, well-child check-ups, senior health exams, immunizations, as well as breast and cervical cancer screenings. Locations where these services will be provided by University Health System include Eastside, Kenwood, Old Highway 90, Pecan Valley, South Flores, Zarzamora, Westend Clinic of the Frank Garrett Center, Naco-Perrin, Ricardo Salinas and the public health area of the Bob Ross Senior Multi-Service Health and Resource Center.

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“This is a smart move that reduces duplication, improves efficiency and saves taxpayer money,” Mayor Phil Hardberger said. “Because we know that so many of the health concerns in San Antonio are linked to preventative medicine, consolidation allows us to focus on this core mission.”

George B. Hernández, Jr., President and CEO of University Health System, specifically complemented the work of the senior executives from both organizations who worked diligently and collaboratively to bring about this important integration. “Today’s transition is the product of 14 months of planning and research by this dedicated team. The efforts of this Joint Planning and Operations Council (JPOC) will have a positive and long-lasting impact on countless families and individuals, as well as the overall health of our community,” said Hernández. The JPOC was created to advance efforts recommended by the City of San Antonio/Bexar County Citizen’s Commission on City/County integration in 2004.

“While the transition will result in improved operational efficiencies and, ultimately, a reduction in expenses, the long-term implications to the community are that the merger will reduce costly adverse health outcomes and illness through an emphasis on providing early preventive care,” added Dr. Robert L. Jimenez, Chairman of the University Health System Board of Managers.

This transition plan has been incorporated into an amendment to the current interlocal agreement between Metro Health and University Health System. The integration costs will be budget neutral to taxpayers.

Work is already underway to install University Health System’s computerized patient appointment and billing systems, as well as its new advanced physician order entry/electronic medical record system at all ten locations. This technology will improve communication and coordination of care between the clinic locations, University Hospital, as well as services such as radiology, pharmacy and laboratory. These changes should greatly improve patient service and communication throughout the system of care for patients.

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Metro Health will continue to provide a multitude of services including: the health authority responsibilities for Bexar County; population-based health services; community health monitoring and investigations; community-based preventive health services (such as dental care and WIC services); communicable disease control programs (for STDs and tuberculosis control); food and environmental health programs; maintenance of vital statistics; and leadership for public health emergency preparedness. University Health System will continue to work closely with Metro Health on disaster planning, and University Health System staff will continue to be available to respond during public health emergency situations.

In the months following today's transition, the JPOC will evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the clinical preventive services and expand cooperative health planning. Periodic reports will be made to the San Antonio City Council and the University Health System Board of Managers.

“This is a major accomplishment and I am extremely proud of not only the groundwork laid by the JPOC towards a high-performing health care system, but equally proud of the Metro Health team members who are transitioning to University Health System,” said Dr. Fernando Guerra, Metro Health Director. “Many are long-time employees well trained in public health. They will be a tremendous asset as they continue to serve our community in the areas of clinical prevention and health education in their new roles.”