



Summary Report  
March 21, 2017

NYC Health + Hospitals Community Conversations:

# Future of Health Care in New York City



**CRE**   
Community Resource  
Exchange

**NYC**  
**HEALTH+**  
**HOSPITALS**

# Overview

From November 1, 2016 to December 15, 2016, New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation (NYC Health + Hospitals), in partnership with Community Resource Exchange (CRE) and the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC), held nine community conversations across the five boroughs.

This report was put together with input from our partners at CRE and, most importantly, with input and insight we received from New Yorkers across the five boroughs who attended these nine community conversations and who were gracious enough to take the time to share their opinions and perspective with us.

The purpose of these events was to meaningfully engage New Yorkers in the NYC Health + Hospitals transformation process. To do this, NYC Health + Hospitals connected community members with the institution's senior leadership to 1) share the vision of the NYC Health + Hospitals transformation and 2) gather understanding about what communities want to see in the future of healthcare in their neighborhoods and the role they would like to see NYC Health + Hospitals play.



More than 250 New Yorkers attended these nine events, which were held at the following locations:

1. Lower East Side at Gouverneur Health Center, 227 Madison Street
2. Harlem at Henry J. Carter Specialty Hospital & Nursing Facility, 1752 Park Avenue
3. Jamaica at the Queen's Central Library, 89-11 Merrick Boulevard
4. Elmhurst at the Jewish Center of Jackson Heights, 3707 77th Street
5. Central Brooklyn at St Gabriel's Episcopal Church, 331 Hawthorne Street
6. Coney Island at the New York Aquarium, 610 Surf Avenue
7. North Bronx at Community Board 12, 4101 White Plains Road
8. South Bronx at Hostos Community College, 500 Grand Concourse
9. Staten Island at Faber Park Recreation Center, Richmond Terrace & Faber Street

NYC Health + Hospitals' Director of Community Engagement worked with local elected officials, community based organizations (e.g., nonprofits, block and tenant associations, faith-based organizations, etc.), NYC Health + Hospitals public affairs offices, the Mayor's Community Affairs Unit, and the NYIC to invite community members to these meetings.

Each community conversation was conducted using a consistent design and agenda, two facilitators from CRE, and two presenters from a rotating group of NYC Health + Hospitals leadership.

The agenda for each conversation included the following:

- + Welcome and introductions.
- + 5 minute NYC Health + Hospitals video that focused on recent efforts to provide more patient-centered care on a continuum from preventive and primary care to post-acute and home care.
- + 20 minute presentation by NYC Health + Hospitals about changes in the healthcare sector; the challenges and opportunities NYC Health + Hospitals is facing in its transformation efforts; as well as the importance of the social determinants of health.
- + 5-10 minute written survey completed by meeting participants on patient experience and health tendencies.
- + 20 minutes of small-group conversations around two questions:
  - What is one thing that should be different about healthcare in your neighborhood in the future?
  - What is one thing NYC Health + Hospitals could do to improve health in your neighborhood?
- + 10-15 minute report by each of the small groups back to the larger group about the themes that had come out of their discussions around the two questions.
- + Meeting evaluation form completed by participants.

The next section of this report will summarize the themes that emerged from the small-group discussions and surveys as well as the overall process of organizing, designing, and conducting these nine community conversations.

# Findings

Participants of the nine community conversations consistently and clearly articulated the desire for more community outreach, engagement, education, and marketing. Participants made clear that old models of care no longer serve their needs. They seek more care in the community – in public schools, churches, and affordable housing buildings – and want to know about the services that are available and how to access them as NYC Health + Hospitals continues to transform.

The conversations with the community affirmed the approach that NYC Health + Hospitals laid out last year in its transformation plan. In that plan, NYC Health + Hospitals detailed a shift from hospital-based care to more community-based care. Many of the ideas NYC Health + Hospitals is considering as a part of its transformation effort received support from participants, including increased access to preventive, non-emergency and urgent care, more convenient hours, more primary and preventive care, and improved partnership and coordination with community based organizations.

The groups welcomed this change, but expressed a desire for more public education about current and future offerings, especially among low-income communities, immigrant communities, and communities of color.



The following are the top five themes to emerge from the small-group discussions across the nine meetings.

- 1. Increased public education and public outreach.** Feedback from participants indicated that recent efforts by NYC Health + Hospitals to streamline and clarify branding and to improve patient experiences is paying off. Several participants noted the benefit of more clearly communicating improvements already implemented by NYC Health + Hospitals (such as those highlighted in the video shown at the meeting about Post-Acute Care). Community members expressed a desire to have a better understanding of services offered, pointing to a need for more public education about services and on topics such as preventive care, nutrition, self-care and behavioral health. Participants encouraged NYC Health + Hospitals to do this in partnership with local organizations that bring with them established networks and trust in the community such as non profits, other healthcare providers, labor unions, elected officials offices, faith-based organizations, and community networks such as block and tenant associations. Participants also suggested that NYC Health + Hospitals increase its presence at schools, churches, grocery stores, transit hubs, and housing developments including affordable housing to continue to educate the community about ongoing improvements.
- 2. A shift from over usage of emergency rooms to local, community-based care.** Participants expressed a desire for people to rely less on emergency rooms for care, reiterating the clear need addressed by the NYC Health + Hospitals transformation plan. They brought attention to patients using emergency rooms for services that could be obtained from urgent care or a primary care physician and expressed a desire for more local neighborhood ambulatory care facilities so people can have consistent access to care, close to their homes, underscoring the need for more of these kinds of services.
- 3. Greater emphasis on nutrition and preventive care.** At each community conversation, the attendees expressed a desire for more resources to be put towards preventive care and addressing the social determinants of health, especially relating to nutrition. Community members recognized that poor dietary habits were leading to preventable health problems and urged NYC Health + Hospitals to provide services such as health screenings, exercise classes, mental health, dental services, nutrition classes and even farmers markets at their facilities.
- 4. Improved coordination that fosters seamless transitions in care across the NYC Health + Hospitals system and with outside providers.** Participants expressed a desire for better coordination between staff and providers across all of the various departments and facilities within NYC Health + Hospitals. They described experiences of trying to navigate from one department to another within a hospital without receiving guidance or support. That fragmentation of care only increased when they received referrals to providers outside of NYC Health + Hospitals. The following ideas were raised as strategies for improved customer care:
  - **Navigation.** The move towards customer-centered, coordinated care with help navigating from one step to the next, which was highlighted in the Post-Acute Care video shown at each meeting, was welcomed by participants.
- 5. Improved access through language and cultural competency.** Participants highlighted the importance of language access and cultural competency on the part of NYC Health + Hospitals staff and providers as most critical to ensuring access for members of the community. Community members repeatedly reiterated the importance of bilingual staff, staff representative of the community and staff trained to provide culturally competent services. Ideas offered by participants for improving access included better signage in multiple languages, translation services, cultural competency training for all NYC Health + Hospitals staff, mobile vans out in the community providing education, testing services, a triage nurse over the phone so patients would know whether they need to go to the ER, and increased numbers of bilingual providers.

# Reflections

As NYC Health + Hospitals looks towards the future and its ongoing transformation effort, it is considering the lessons it learned from the past few months of organizing, designing, marketing, and holding community meetings across New York's five boroughs. We believe these recommendations can help inform our next steps.



- 1. The community and NYC Health + Hospitals are largely aligned - how can we better work together?** Many of the strategies that NYC Health + Hospitals came into this series of meetings considering received support and affirmation by the participants of these meetings. Participants agreed there should be a shift from emergency room use to primary, preventive, and ambulatory care. They agreed that more flexible hours would be helpful. They supported and advocated for greater partnership with community based organizations to address social determinants of health. The challenge is not whether the community wants to move in a different direction than NYC Health + Hospitals leadership but instead to ensure that the community remains involved in each subsequent stage of planning, that communication lines remain open so NYC Health + Hospitals continues to receive feedback, and that community members and institutions see themselves not just as recipients of services but as active partners in NYC Health + Hospitals' transformation. NYC Health + Hospitals has a unique opportunity to engage various stakeholders - patients, labor unions, elected officials, and nonprofits in the reshaping of their public health system by recognizing where they are aligned, have common goals, and how they can help each other.
- 2. Community engagement as a strategy for transformation.** Significant effort to do community outreach, both directly and through partnerships with other organizations, was done for these nine meetings. Some of the challenges that public institutions face when engaging the community were evident. While enough of a critical mass attended each session to engender thoughtful discussion, NYC Health + Hospitals should continue to build on the relationships gained through these nine events to build broader reach into its communities.

In order to effectively engage the community, public engagement must be prioritized at all levels of NYC Health + Hospitals staff and leadership across the entire system from the central office to the smallest neighborhood clinic. Those who did attend from NYC Health + Hospitals' local facilities showed an interest in learning more about the transformation and voicing their perspectives. In order to develop more meaningful community relationships that support continuous improvement at NYC Health + Hospitals, we recommend that staff develop comprehensive outreach and engagement strategies in the communities surrounding NYC Health + Hospitals facilities.

In order for NYC Health + Hospitals as an institution to effectively and meaningfully involve the community in this process moving forward, it will need leadership and staff, of all levels across its many facilities, to also be able to engage with community members where they are, from a place of curiosity and wanting to learn the community's experience, values, and perspective.

- 3. Continuous engagement is essential for improving health.** The community's message at these nine meetings was clear: We want NYC Health + Hospitals and its partners to have an increased presence in our community, educating our neighbors about how to live healthy lives including what healthcare services are available to them and how to access them. Engaging all of the diverse communities that NYC Health + Hospitals serves, including immigrant, low-income, and communities of color, is an important strategic direction. There is no question that the community wants NYC Health + Hospitals to be there in the neighborhoods promoting health, promoting its services, informing the community about its transformation, and engaging the community to advance that transformation.