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## **ESD AND RESEARCH FOUNDATION OF SUNY PLATTSBURGH ANNOUNCE TELEMEDICINE INFORMATION NETWORK PROJECT IN NORTH COUNTRY**

*With critical funding in place, construction of the project gets underway*

*Project will develop state of the art infrastructure for healthcare providers in rural areas*

Empire State Development (ESD) and The Research Foundation of SUNY, on behalf of the college at Plattsburgh, today announced the launch of the Adirondack-Champlain Telemedicine Information Network (ACTION) in the North Country. This \$9.8 million project will develop a long-term, leased 239-mile telemedicine network, which will link 48 medical facilities in Clinton, Essex, Franklin, St. Lawrence, Warren, Saratoga, Washington, and Rensselaer counties. ESD provided \$550,000 to the SUNY Research Foundation, the sponsor of this project. Construction on the network begins this week in accordance with Federal Communications Commission Rural Health Care Pilot Program guidelines. The ACTION system is expected to be completed and all ACTION sites live by the end of July 2012.

"The ACTION project will dramatically improve the communication capabilities for healthcare providers who previously had little or no fiber access," said Empire State Development President, CEO & Commissioner Kenneth Adams. "By developing and expanding the current broadband initiative in the North Country we are taking another important step toward growing the local economy. I applaud all the partners involved for their work in helping to get this project off the ground."

SUNY Plattsburgh has been instrumental in helping to organize ACTION, which has now grown to a consortium of 48 health care facilities in an eight county region. In addition to ESD's \$550,000 grant, The Research Foundation of SUNY was also the grant recipient of \$250,000 in planning funds from both the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and ESD's City by City Capital grant program in 2007, as well as a pivotal \$7.6 million Federal Communications Commission Rural Health Care Pilot Program grant, awarded in 2008, that aimed to significantly increase access to acute, primary and preventive health care in rural America.

"We are grateful for the opportunity to work with our partners at ESD and the SUNY Plattsburgh campus to move this critical initiative forward," said Bonny G. Boice, Executive Vice President for the Research Foundation of SUNY. "This was a true collaborative effort that facilitates the creation of an infrastructure to support innovative applications and communication capabilities for providers and improves the delivery of healthcare across eight counties in New York State."

"This project demonstrates the power and importance of key institutions in a community working towards a common goal," said SUNY Plattsburgh Director of Sponsored Research and Programs Michael Simpson. "SUNY Plattsburgh is proud of the role it has played, but it has taken the efforts of many people from numerous organizations to get this far."

The SUNY Research Foundation has selected the Development Authority of the North Country to construct the ACTION Network. The Development Authority partnered with several local telecommunications companies in the bid including ION, Primelink, SLIC Network Communications, Tech Valley Communications, and Westelcom. According to James W. Wright, Executive Director of the Development Authority, "working with the local service providers on this bid allows us to construct the network at the lowest cost for ACTION and assured a high-level of local support from companies that the healthcare institutions already do business with. We are excited about the partnership and have been impressed with the teamwork to date. We look forward to a continued positive relationship and a successful project."

ACTION will allow participating healthcare providers to more readily access and share information and begin reducing costs for the transfer of medical information through interactive audiovisual media, such as voice, video and data applications, for the purpose of consulting and conducting examinations or remote medical procedures. Members will be able to create more diverse telemedicine applications, which will improve the long term sustainability of the network. The typical telemedicine applications of the new enhanced service are Telepsychiatry, Telestroke, Telecardiology, and Teledermatology, all of which require secure connections at high bandwidth. Existing internet connections can either be eliminated or reduced and used as an emergency backup service.

The potential benefits of developing this state of the art infrastructure include access to electronic health-care records as well as health-care specialists, who are difficult to attract to the North Country region. In addition, the development of this critical network offers the opportunity and potential for growth of the regional broadband initiative in the future.

Participating hospitals and clinics include: Glens Falls Hospital, CVPH Medical Center, Alice Hyde Medical Center, Adirondack Medical Center, Elizabethtown Community Hospital, Interlakes Health, Massena Memorial Hospital, and the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe clinic.

In addition, Congressman Bill Owens, New York State Senator Betty Little, New York State Assemblywoman Teresa Sayward, New York State Assemblywoman Janet Duprey, the New York State Division of Housing & Community Renewal, the Essex County Industrial Development Agency and the Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization (FDRHPO) were key players in developing the ACTION project. The FDRHPO—a cooperative health partnership of hospitals, physicians, and military medical leadership in Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties—provided technical assistance for the project. The organization already operates a successful telemedical fiber optic network under the FCC Rural Health Care Pilot Program project.

***Additional Quotes Offered in Support of the ACTION project:***

"I would like to congratulate Empire State Development and SUNY Plattsburgh on the launch of this telemedicine network," said Congressman Bill Owens. "This project is another step in the right direction to reduce the cost of health care, and will allow us to build on the success we have seen from similar programs elsewhere in the North Country. Based on my 30 years of experience working with health care providers – and the early success I have seen with telemedicine programs elsewhere in the region – I look forward to seeing the benefits that will come out of this program."

"Technological advancements are ensuring outcomes for patients that save lives and also save money," said Senator Betty Little. "Without question this project is more than a worthwhile investment, but a needed one

in the North Country, where we have some unique challenges because of our rural nature. This is a great public-private partnership that will benefit many people in the years ahead.”

“The funding of the ACTION program is great news for our rural hospitals and particularly for the patients they serve,” said Assemblywoman Janet L. Duprey. “The services provided through the broadband network will bring affordable, high quality and immediate access to physicians and their patients. Given the distances between our hospitals and our difficult winter travel, this project will save lives, money and time in meeting the medical needs of the North County.”

“The ACTION Project is great news for the Adirondack Region, where electronic communication is challenging at best,” said Assemblywoman Teresa Sayward. “By linking our medical providers together, the North Country will not only take a giant step forward in improving health care, but also in stimulating our lagging economy.”

“This project provides a much needed service for our rural county,” said Jody Olcott, Co-Executive Director of the Essex County IDA. “We hope this project will be the foundation for telecommunications to our businesses, residence and government.”

“As the largest hospital in this region, with 29 regional facilities in six counties, this network will be an integral link to connecting patients and providers within Glens Falls Hospital’s comprehensive health care system and the greater Adirondack regional health network,” said Barney Rubenstein, M.D., Medical Director, Adirondack Medial Services.

“As an ACTION member since 2007 and lead applicant for FCC funding, CVPH Medical Center is extremely pleased to see this network finally come to fruition,” said Rosemary Miller, Associate Vice President of Information Services & Support, CVPH Medical Center. “The ability to connect the region’s healthcare providers, many of them remotely located, with high quality, low cost fiber affords opportunities for increased collaboration and sharing of clinical information.”

“Elizabethtown Community Hospital has telemedicine equipment in place, along with a strong fiber optic connection,” said Elizabethtown Community Hospital CEO Rod Boula. “This project will provide additional choices in offering care within our local community, and provide significant cost savings.”

#### **About the FCC Rural Health Care Pilot Program (RHCPP)**

In November 2007, the Federal Communications Commission announced it would dedicate more than \$417 million for the construction of 69 statewide or regional broadband telehealth networks in 42 states and three U.S. territories under the Rural Health Care Pilot Program (RHCPP).

Broadband deployment is one of the Commission’s top priorities – particularly in rural America. And nowhere is the need for broadband greater than in rural healthcare, where isolated clinics can save lives by using advanced communications technology to tap the expertise of modern urban medical centers. Telemedicine services provide patients in rural areas with access to critically needed medical specialists in a variety of practices, including cardiology, pediatrics, and radiology, in some instances without leaving their homes or communities. Intensive care doctors and nurses can monitor critically ill patients around the clock and video conferencing allows specialists and mental health professionals to care for patients in different rural locations, often hundreds of miles away.

The networks will deliver services efficiently, reduce costs and travel time for consumers, decrease medical errors, and enable health care providers to share critical information. Rapid and coordinated responses to

public health emergencies, such as bioterrorism attacks, pandemics or disease-related outbreaks, will be expedited through coordination with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other public health officials during public health emergencies.

**About the Research Foundation of SUNY**

Celebrating 60 years of supporting SUNY research, the Research Foundation of SUNY is the largest, most comprehensive university-connected research foundation in the country. The Research Foundation of SUNY supports over \$1 billion in SUNY research activity annually and facilitates university-industry-government partnerships to accelerate the growth of sponsored program and applied research opportunities. Areas of research encompass a vast range of disciplines including life sciences and medicine; engineering and nanotechnology; physical sciences and energy; social sciences; and computer and information sciences.

Founded in 1951 as a private not for profit educational corporation, the Research Foundation of SUNY works with academic and business leadership to support essential research and discovery that translate into invention, innovation, entrepreneurship, economic opportunity and public benefit. For more information visit the [RF website](#), read the [RF Fact of the Day](#) and connect with the RF on [Facebook](#).

**About the Development Authority of the North Country**

The Development Authority of the North Country is a Public Benefit Corporation founded in 1985 to provide infrastructure and economic development for Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence Counties. The Telecom Division of the Development Authority of the North Country was founded in 2003 and currently operates a 900 mile fiber optic network. The Telecom Division is operating one of the first Telemedicine Network's, the Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization Telemedicine Network.

**About Empire State Development**

Empire State Development is New York's chief economic development agency and administrator of the statewide business resource portal New York First ([www.NYfirst.NY.gov](http://www.NYfirst.NY.gov)). The mission of Empire State Development is to promote business investment and growth that leads to job creation and prosperous communities across New York State. ESD also oversees the marketing of "I LOVE NY," the State's iconic tourism brand. For more information on Empire State Development, visit [www.esd.ny.gov](http://www.esd.ny.gov).



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