



EASTCONN PHOTO

NEW EASTERN Connecticut Regional Health Insurance Executive Board members: front row, left to right: Holly McCalla, Kelly Vachon, Steve Werbner, William Hull, and Erik Christensen. Back row: William Guzman, John Elsesser, Beth Bauer, Doug Cutler, Robert Carroll, Ronald Lussier and John Baskowski. Missing from the photo is Dave Petrone.

Schools, Municipalities Join EASTCONN To Form Health Insurance Cooperative

Submitted by **Teddle Sleight**

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In a historic move in the region and in direct response to changes in state law, five northeastern Connecticut school districts and five municipalities have partnered with EASTCONN to form the area's first health insurance cooperative, aimed at saving taxpayers money.

"EASTCONN has been working with municipalities, school districts, and insurance carriers — in particular, Cigna — to hammer out the details of this insurance cooperative for the last two years," said John Baskowski, EASTCONN's chief financial officer.

"The goal is to reduce health insurance costs for all parties, while increasing local decision-making related to the provision of employee health benefits," Baskowski said. At a meeting on Wednesday, May 2, at EASTCONN's Hampton Conference Center, founding members from the municipalities and school districts of Coventry, Griswold, Plainfield, Putnam and Tolland, in addition to EASTCONN, met to form the Eastern Connecticut Regional Health Insurance Cooperative, officially creating the 11-member partnership. An executive board and alternates were also elected. Bylaws had been previously accepted.

Composed of a representative from each member town and school district, the board will guide the cooperative as it moves forward. Baskowski said that EAST-

CONN will provide staffing for the cooperative, whose new insurance policy period will take effect on July 1, 2012. Nearly two years ago, following the passage of Connecticut Public Act 10-174, which allowed school districts and municipalities to jointly purchase employee health insurance, EASTCONN invited representatives from across northeastern Connecticut to explore the possibility of forming a health insurance partnership. Talks have been ongoing since that time.

After the cooperative's first official meeting on Wednesday, new executive board members shared their thoughts. "It's been exciting to move forward as the first cooperative of this kind in the state and I hope this will result in reduced insurance costs for both towns and school districts," said Chairman Steve Werbner, who is also Tolland's town manager.

Executive board member William Hull, Putnam superintendent of schools, added, "It's a great start. Hopefully, it's something that will save towns money and bring the region together collaboratively to help all our employees."

The cooperative's executive board will meet soon to further develop operating procedures and address other details, according to Baskowski. EASTCONN is a public, non-profit, Regional Educational Service Center, which has been serving the education needs of northeastern Connecticut's schools and communities since 1980. Visit www.eastconn.org.