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# Georgia Southern University researchers help Chatham County Safety Net Planning Council develop health information exchange program

*MAY 1, 2008*

Electronic medical records have been around for more than a decade, but Georgia Southern University researchers in the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health are now working with the Chatham County Safety Net Planning Council to develop the technology and methods to share those records more effectively.

The collaboration comes as the result of a Georgia Department of Community Health grant to the Safety Net Planning Council to develop a secure system to manage and share electronic medical information. The Safety Net Planning Council then contracted with Georgia Southern to conduct formative research to develop a pilot program for health information exchange.

Georgia Southern University faculty members Mondie Mason, assistant professor of community health and health behavior, and Renee Hotchkiss, assistant professor of health services policy and management, are co-investigators on the project. By conducting individual interviews and focus groups, Mason and Hotchkiss will assess the readiness of providers and patients across six health clinics affiliated with the Chatham County Safety Net Planning Council.

‘Our goal is to maximize the benefits of sharing medical records among Safety Net stakeholders,’ says Mason. ‘As part of this project, we are looking at how information is shared and who has access. We want to consider and alleviate concerns of both the patients and the medical providers.’

‘This project will lead to better care for patients,’ says Dr. Diane Weems, chief medical officer of the Chatham County Health Department and chair of the Safety Net Planning Council. ‘This health information exchange will allow our providers to be more effective, and our patients will be able to participate more fully in their own health care.’

Several graduate students in the health services policy and management program are assisting Mason and Hotchkiss as they conduct focus groups and individual interviews across the health clinic sites. This experience will provide critical data collection and analysis skills that they can easily transport to other projects and jobs in the future.

In a larger context, Mason points out that many healthcare systems, especially safety net settings in healthcare, have lagged behind in the realm of technology, either because of cost or training. In Chatham County, the Safety Net Planning Council wants to eliminate that lag and bring its key stakeholders to the forefront in this effort to expand the use of electronic medical records.

Weems added, 'The Council is pleased to have this opportunity to partner with Georgia Southern University in this collaborative effort to improve health care delivery to the uninsured and underinsured in our community.'

## **Savannah legal seminar will address Georgia employment law**

*MAY 1, 2008*

Business owners, managers and human resource personnel are invited to attend a legal seminar in Savannah that will help them stay on the right side of the state's compensation and discrimination laws.

'Georgia Employment Law' will be held on Tuesday, June 24, from 6 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. at the Coastal Georgia Center.

Part of the Legal Awareness in the Workplace (LAW) series sponsored by Georgia Southern University, the seminar will be taught by Rachel C. Young, an attorney from the employment law firm of Hunter, Maclean, Exley and Dunn, P.C.

Young will discuss a wide range of employment law topics, including the creation of at-will and contract employment, negligent supervision/retention of employees, defamation in the context of employment references, and workplace privacy.

The LAW series will continue with 'Effective Recruiting, Screening and Background Investigations' in Savannah on July 22, 'Internal Investigations and Documentation, Discipline and Discharge' in Brunswick on Aug. 12, and 'Hostile Work Environment: A Case Review' in Savannah on Sept. 23.

The fee for each seminar is \$69 per person. The fee will be reduced to \$59 for anyone who signs up for three or more seminars, and for groups of three or more people from the same firm.

Each seminar provides 1.5 recertification credit hours for individuals with (Senior) Professional in Human Resources (PHR/SPHR) certification.

Advance registration for any of the seminars may be made by calling Georgia Southern University's Continuing Education Center at (912) 478-5551.

For more information on any of the seminars, visit <http://ceps.georgiasouthern.edu/conted/lawseminar.html> or contact J. Marie Lutz, SPHR, at [seminars@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:seminars@georgiasouthern.edu) or (912) 478-1763.

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