



January 19, 2009

Subject: Letter of Recommendation

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association contracted with Barbara Gerber of Devon Hill Associates, LLC to undertake an ambitious mystery shopping project for a select group of Virginia hospitals and health systems.

The purpose of the project, which was completed in 2008, was to conduct phone calls and on-site visits that would allow Devon Hill to assess and report on the extent to which the participating facilities were complying with provisions in VHHA's *Voluntary Guidelines for Financial Assistance Policies for Virginia's Hospitals and Health Systems*. Mystery shoppers sought answers to questions regarding hospital prices, financial assistance policies and the financial assistance application process, and looked for information about financial assistance programs in hospital intake, emergency, and billing departments. In addition they were asked to assess the manner in which they were treated when seeking information about financial assistance.

The form and the substance of the project required considerable creativity, flexibility and persistence. While a portion of the work was accomplished through a contract with VHHA, Devon Hill Associates also had to contract separately with nine VHHA members. This approach introduced a degree of complexity that presented various challenges, but Ms. Gerber worked patiently through the contractual questions, project design and mystery shopper recruitment issues that this approach presented.

Throughout the project Ms. Gerber was responsive and conscientious. The comprehensive nature of the reports produced at the conclusion of the project provided each facility with considerable feedback regarding opportunities for improvement in their financial assistance operations.

We were pleased with the results of the mystery shopping project Devon Hill Associates conducted for VHHA and have considered using the firm for further work. We would recommend Devon Hill Associates without reservation to others.

Further information can be obtained by contacting Betty Long, Vice President (blong@vhha.com.)