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DFW Business Group on Health Selected for Employer-led Effort to Improve Mental Health and Substance Use in North Texas and Nationally

Dallas – December 12, 2019 – The DFW Business Group on Health (DFWBGH) has been selected to lead efforts in North Texas to improve care for mental illness and substance use. This is part of a transformative initiative called “The Path Forward for Mental Health and Substance Use,” led by the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions, American Psychiatric Association, American Psychiatric Association Foundation, Center for Workplace Mental Health and Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute.

[Launched last month](#), The Path Forward has embarked on a five-year plan to execute a disciplined, private sector approach to improve mental health and substance use care for Americans across the nation.

“As an employer-led coalition, DFWBGH has always been in the forefront of healthcare improvement efforts in North Texas,” said Marianne Fazen, DFWBGH executive director. “Three years ago, we turned our attention to mental health and substance abuse in response to this growing crisis in the workplace. We have been educating our employers about strategies to recognize the symptoms of mental illness and substance abuse, reduce the stigma, and improve access to appropriate treatment. We’re excited to play a lead role in The Path Forward and carry out this transformative initiative in North Texas in concert with similar efforts in South Texas, led by our sister coalition, the Houston Business Coalition on Health.”

DFWBGH and HBCH together will lead one of eight Regional Employer Stakeholder Engagement Teams (RESET Regions) to leverage the influence of their employer members to work with health plans, medical and behavioral health providers, benefits consultants and brokers to combat this public health crisis. To gain national traction, similar efforts are underway in California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Tennessee and Virginia.

“The mental health and substance use system across the country is in crisis,” said Michael Thompson, National Alliance President and CEO. “The activities of the RESET Regions will be key to achieving and leveraging sustainable and measurable improvements to access, comprehensive care and parity. These employers are the primary financiers of the system and they will both set the tone and hold the stakeholders accountable for accomplishing these goals.”

A [report published last month](#) by Milliman found the current state of mental health and substance use treatment in America is dire and getting worse. The report showed that patients were much more likely to resort to “out-of-network” providers for behavioral health treatment than for other conditions, thus adding extra costs to patients’ already high healthcare costs.

To overcome these issues, The Path Forward has identified Five Priority Strategies that constitute our nation’s best opportunity to transform behavioral healthcare at a population level and improve access to necessary early detection and appropriate treatment. These best practices include (1) improving access to “in-network” behavioral health specialists, (2) expanding use of the collaborative care model to integrate behavioral health into primary care, (3) implementing measurement-based care in both

primary care and behavioral specialty care to improve quality and outcomes, (4) expanding tele-behavioral health, and (5) ensuring mental health parity compliance.

“This isn’t simply about greater access to care for mental health and substance use disorders; it’s about treating these medical conditions with the same urgency and care as other serious disorders, such as heart disease and diabetes, employing data-driven screening, measurement-based care, and cost-effective treatment,” said Andy Keller, PhD, President and CEO of the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute. “We know how to provide effective medical care, and we are going to now make that the norm for mental health care.”

The RESET Regions are already moving forward to coordinate the actions of their employer members and local stakeholders. [Learn more about The Path Forward for Mental Health and Substance Use here.](#)

About American Psychiatric Association

The American Psychiatric Association (APA), founded in 1844, is the oldest medical association in the country. The APA is also the largest psychiatric association in the world with more than 38,500 physician members specializing in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses. APA’s vision is to ensure access to quality psychiatric diagnosis and treatment. For more information visit psychiatry.org.

About American Psychiatric Association Foundation Center for Workplace Mental Health

The American Psychiatric Association Foundation, a subsidiary of the APA, works to create a mentally healthy nation by advancing mental health, overcoming mental illness and eliminating stigma. The Center for Workplace Mental Health helps employers create a more supportive workplace for their employees and advance mental health at their organizations. For more information, visit workplacementalhealth.org.

About Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

Since its public launch in 2014, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (MMHPI) has helped Texas legislators, government officials, members of the judiciary, and local leaders identify systemic mental health needs and solutions, quickly becoming Texas’s most trusted source for data-driven mental health policy. MMHPI is helping Texas leaders address the mental health crisis in our jails and emergency rooms, improve access to care for veterans and their families, shift the focus of new investments toward early intervention, and expand the mental health workforce. Learn more about MMHPI at texasstateofmind.org.

About National Alliance

The National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions is the only nonprofit, purchaser-led organization with a national and regional structure dedicated to driving health and healthcare value across the country. Our members represent more than 12,000 employers/purchasers and 45 million Americans spending over \$300 billion annually on healthcare. To learn more, visit nationalalliancehealth.org, connect with us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

About DFW Business Group on Health

The DFW Business Group on Health (DFWBGH) is a regional coalition of 65 DFW area employers committed to improving healthcare quality, costs and outcomes in North Texas. DFWBGH members spend over \$4 billion annually on healthcare for over 850,000 local employees and their families. DFWBGH members include American Airlines, Brinker International, Celanese, City of Fort Worth, Dallas Area Rapid Transit, Dean Foods, DynCorp International, Greyhound Lines, JCPenney, The Neiman Marcus Group, PepsiCo, Sabre, Southwest Airlines, Texas Instruments, Vistra Energy, and others. A member of the Texas Business Group on Health and the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions, DFWBGH’s mission is to educate and empower employers and employees to make informed healthcare

decisions and to encourage health care providers to continuously improve their performance. Follow on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#). dfwbgh.org

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