



Houston Business Coalition on Health Selected for Employer-led Effort to Improve Mental Health and Substance Use in Texas and Nationally

HOUSTON – December 12, 2019 – The Houston Business Coalition on Health (HBCII) in partnership with the Dallas-Fort Worth Business Group on Health (DFWBGH), has been selected to lead efforts in Texas to improve mental health and substance use care. 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 (APA), American Psychiatric Association Foundation (APAF) 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.

“Mental health was identified as the top chronic condition of concern among Houston employers in our 2019 annual survey and we are pleased to be leading this important initiative in the Houston market,” said Chris Skisak, HBCII executive director. “We look forward to working with our employer members, health plans, health systems, physician groups and other stakeholders to improve access to affective care.”

HBCII and DFWBGH will lead one of eight Regional Employer Stakeholder Engagement Teams (RESET Regions) to leverage the influence of their employer and other health care purchaser members to work with health plans, medical and behavioral health groups, 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 coalitions will receive matching grants and HBCII is seeking funding for this multi-year effort.

“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 only getting worse. Results showed that patients were much more likely to resort to “out-of-network” providers for behavioral health treatment than for other conditions.

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 with coordinating 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 Houston Business Coalition on Health

The non-profit Houston Business Coalition on Health is the leading resource for Houston employers and their health services providers dedicated to providing health benefits at a sustainable cost while improving the quality and employee experience of their delivery through effective benefits design. With 85 members, HBCH represents 800,000 local and more than 2 million national employer-sponsored lives. HBCH a member of the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions. For additional information visit our website houstonbch.org and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#). houstonbch.org

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