



## **Minnesota Health Action Group selected for employer-led effort to improve mental health and substance use care in Minnesota and nationally**

**(Bloomington, MN) December 12, 2019** – The Minnesota Health Action Group (The Action Group) has been selected to lead efforts in Minnesota 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 (The Path Forward) 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. The Action Group 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, New Jersey, New York, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

“The Action Group’s work on mental health care through our Mental Health Guiding Coalition and PCORI research award has gained significant momentum,” said Deb Krause, vice president of The Action Group. “We believe that now is the time to accelerate progress, achieve goals, and improve outcomes. The opportunity to be a RESET Regional Coalition represents valuable alignment and support that will bring sustainability in our work to improve mental health care and outcomes for all Minnesotans.”

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.

“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.”

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.](#)

“We have tried to implement and enforce mental health parity without success,” said Sue Abderholden, executive director of NAMI Minnesota. “We believe the new path forward calls for companies that purchase insurance on behalf of people across the state and country to include coverage for a full array of needed mental health services, while also taking steps to ensure people can access that care when they need it.”

To learn more about how The Action Group is working to advance mental health care and benefits, visit <https://mnhealthactiongroup.org/key-initiatives/peer-to-peer/mentalhealth/mental-health/>.

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#### **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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://nationalalliancehealth.org), connect with us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

#### **About the Minnesota Health Action Group**

The Minnesota Health Action Group is a coalition of public and private purchasers whose sole purpose is to represent the collective voice of those who write the checks for health care in Minnesota. Action Group members collaborate with community stakeholders to drive innovations that support high-quality health care, create engaged consumers, and ensure the economic vitality of all Minnesota communities. Based in Bloomington, MN, the Minnesota Health Action Group was formed in 1988 as the Buyers Health Care Action Group. To learn more, visit [www.mnhealthactiongroup.org](http://www.mnhealthactiongroup.org). Follow on [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

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