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National Council Launches Project to Improve Depression Treatment

Washington DC, July 5 2011—The National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare (National Council) has chosen five community behavioral health organizations to participate in a Depression Care Collaborative to improve the quality of treatment for persons with depression. This year-long project seeks to measure patient responses to depression treatment to guide improvements in care.

“If we don’t measure it, we can’t improve it,” said Linda Rosenberg, President and CEO of the National Council. “And we are committed to improving care for depression. It is one of the most debilitating illnesses. Yet with effective care, we know people can recover and have full lives,” she added.

An estimated 1 in 10 U.S. adults report depression. Depression is a major cause of disability, lost productive time among workers, and death by suicide in the United States. On average, people living with depression go for nearly a decade before receiving treatment, and less than one-third of people who seek help receive minimally adequate care.

The National Council’s Depression Care Collaborative participants will receive expert consultation from the [Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement](#). The project seeks to introduce standardized tools and measurements for depression screening and treatment — including regular tracking of PHQ-9 scores — and encourage treatment changes when the response to treatment is inadequate. The project focuses on care management — routine follow-up, education and support, treatment adherence and side effect management and increasing patient skills in goal setting and self-management of their depression.

“Doctors don’t simply ask a patient ‘So, how’s your blood pressure today?’ They actually measure it on an ongoing basis and make adjustments to care accordingly. Similarly, we can’t just ask how someone with depression is doing, we need to measure their response to treatment on an ongoing basis and use the data to inform treatment choices,” said Chuck Ingoglia, Vice President, Public Policy, at the National Council. “If behavioral health wants to be treated on par with the rest of healthcare, we must be more results-oriented and be able to track treatment progress,” he added.

The five healthcare organizations chosen to participate in the National Council's Depression Care Collaborative, which is sponsored by AstraZeneca, are:

- Community Network Services, Farmington Hills, MI
- Directions for Mental Health, Clearwater, FL
- Jefferson Center for Mental Health, Wheat Ridge, CO
- Preferred Behavioral Health of New Jersey, Brick, NJ
- WellSpring Resources, Alton, IL

"The value of measurement-based care for depression is evident in discussions between the patient and clinician. The results from the use of tools like the PHQ-9 already help inform treatment decisions at each scheduled appointment in our clinic. We are looking forward to the lessons we'll learn through the National Council's Depression Care Collaborative to further improve measurement and the quality of care," said April Lott, CEO of Directions for Mental Health in Clearwater, FL.

Learning's from the year-long collaborative will be developed into toolkits for dissemination throughout the public behavioral health system.

The National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) associations of 1,950 behavioral healthcare organizations that provide treatment and rehabilitation for mental illnesses and addictions disorders to nearly six million adults, children and families in communities across the country. The National Council and its members bear testimony to the fact that medical, social, psychological, and rehabilitation services offered in community settings help people with mental illnesses and addiction disorders recover and lead productive lives.