



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“There Is No Health Without Mental Health,” Says National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems (NAPHS) Board

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Board Urges Congress to 1) End Discrimination; 2) Fix Gaps in the Mental Health and Addiction Treatment System; and 3) Support Health Information Technology Funding

(Washington, DC, March 10, 2014)...The National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems (NAPHS) Board of Trustees this week made recommendations in key policy areas that have the potential to significantly improve the lives of individuals with mental and addictive disorders. The meeting (led by Board Chair **Gail Ryder**, vice president, BayCare Behavioral Health, BayCare Health System, Clearwater, FL) resulted in Board actions and discussion around three issues.

#### **End Discrimination**

Mental illnesses are the leading cause of disability and contribute to premature death, yet discrimination prevents people from getting the right care at the right time. For example, adults (ages 21 to 64) with Medicaid don't have coverage for short-term, acute care in psychiatric hospitals because of the "Institution for Mental Disease" exclusion. "The IMD exclusion is penalizing the disabled and poor," said NAPHS President and CEO **Mark Covall**. "People are not getting the psychiatric hospital treatment they need, putting families and communities at risk." The NAPHS Board called on Congress to modify the IMD exclusion through legislative action.

#### **Fix gaps in the mental health and addiction treatment system**

The NAPHS Board urged Congress to support comprehensive mental health legislation to address gaps. The *Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act* (H.R.3717) would, among others things, create a pathway under Medicaid for people to get access to short-term acute psychiatric care, give behavioral health organizations funding for health information technology, promote primary care integration, and elevate mental health in the federal government by creating an Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

#### **Support Medicare and Medicaid funding for health information technology**

Psychiatric hospitals and other organizations providing mental health and addiction treatment are not currently eligible for Medicare and Medicaid health information technology incentive payments. The NAPHS Board urged Congress to support legislation to change this. "As we transform health care, coordination of care requires the professionals who treat both mind and body to have equal access to health information technology," said Mark Covall. Several bills have been introduced, including S.1517 (the *Behavioral Health Information Technology Act*); S.1685 (the *Behavioral Health IT Coordination Act*); and H.R.2957 (the *Behavioral Health Information Technology Act of 2013*). Health IT incentives are also included in a comprehensive mental health reform bill (H.R.3717, the *Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act*).

#### **About NAPHS**

The National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems (NAPHS) advocates for behavioral health and represents provider systems that are committed to the delivery of responsive, accountable, and clinically effective prevention, treatment, and care for children, adolescents, adults, and older adults with mental and substance use disorders. Its members are behavioral healthcare provider organizations that own or manage more than 700 specialty psychiatric hospitals, general hospital psychiatric and addiction treatment units and behavioral healthcare divisions, residential treatment facilities, youth services organizations, and extensive outpatient networks. Founded in 1933, the association is headquartered in Washington, DC.