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New Directions Behavioral Health steps up to stop the opioid epidemic
Better collaboration, education and management of pain among company's top goals

Kansas City, Mo. – Feb. 8, 2017 – The opioid epidemic has been called the worst drug crisis in American history, destroying lives across the nation and cutting across lines of age, race, gender and wealth. Since 1999, opioid-related deaths have quadrupled with 91 Americans dying every day from an opioid overdose (including prescription opioids and heroin). More than six out of ten drug overdose deaths involve an opioid.*

New Directions Behavioral Health, working with health plans and their pharmacy management partners, is taking action to curb the nation's growing opioid problem.

"We've got to adopt a team philosophy to solve this crisis," said Dr. Charles Freed, vice president and regional medical director for New Directions. "It's going to take everyone – doctors, patients, counselors, pharmacists, payers and governments – all playing their part and working together to reverse course and help the millions of people harmed from opioid misuse."

To establish a framework for this team approach, New Directions developed a multifaceted program focused on the prevention and treatment of opioid use disorder. New Directions' opioid program is committed to the same steps outlined in a white [paper](#) released last month by The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) Healthcare Fraud Prevention Partnership. It calls for five actions that "should be strongly considered for implementation by all payers as soon as possible."

Key action steps of New Directions' program include:

- **Collaborate on prescription management**
New Directions will support joint efforts with the health plan and their pharmacy benefit manager to establish protocols, transfer data, and provide mechanisms to promote safe and effective clinical and pharmaceutical practices. Collaboration between all organizations will enable earlier identification of patients at risk for opioid use disorder.
- **Focus on provider education and patient engagement**

Integral to changing the culture of opioid misuse is educating the provider community by offering assessment tools for monitoring potential opioid abuse, promoting CDC-recommended prescribing practices and encouraging effective alternative pain management therapies. For patients, New Directions will supply information on appropriate treatment therapies to manage pain, and provide care management and care transition services to prevent avoidable hospital readmissions.

- **Expand access to and usage of Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT)**
Science-based solutions like MAT reduce illicit opioid use and improve health outcomes. New Directions will implement a plan to identify providers trained in and currently practicing MAT, starting in geographic areas with the highest member need.

For more information on New Directions' managed behavioral health and substance use management programs, go to www.ndbh.com/Solutions/ManagedBehavioralHealth.

Infographic – [The Truth About Addiction in America](#). Click to download.

* *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

About New Directions

Founded in 1995, New Directions helps people live healthy, balanced lives. The fast-growing health care company provides managed behavioral health services, an employee assistance program (EAP), organizational consulting, and health coaching to private and public health plans, Fortune 100 companies, large and medium employers, and labor groups. For more information, visit ndbh.com.

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