



The Path Forward

for mental health and substance use

Health Equity for all Americans

Health Equity Demands Improved Access and Better Treatment

THE PATH FORWARD NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychiatric Association Foundation

Bowman Family Foundation

Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

THE PATH FORWARD EMPLOYER COALITIONS

California
Pacific Business Group on Health

Silicon Valley Employers Forum

Florida
Florida Alliance for Healthcare Value

Kansas
Kansas Business Group on Health

Maryland, DC & No Virginia
MidAtlantic Business Group on Health

Minnesota
Minnesota Health Action Group

NYC metro area including No New Jersey & So Connecticut
Northeast Business Group on Health

Tennessee
Memphis Business Group on Health

HealthCare 21 Business Coalition

Texas
Dallas Fort Worth Business Group on Health

Houston Business Coalition on Health

Inadequate mental health and substance use care has generated a crisis over the past decade, with record levels of suicide and drug-related deaths. While higher-paid Americans can access care, all others face huge (often insurmountable) challenges. Covid-19 has exacerbated this crisis.

Employers overwhelmingly identify the need to improve access to effective, affordable, and timely behavioral healthcare as a top priority. **Five evidence-based reforms can dramatically improve early detection and access to more effective behavioral healthcare.** The Path Forward’s goal is implementation of these reforms:

1. **Improve in-network access to behavioral health specialists:** Inadequate or “phantom” networks lead to a false sense of access for lower paid workers and a two-tiered system.
2. **Expand screening and testing for MHSUD:** Evidence clearly shows that consistent use of MHSUD symptom measurement tools (quantitative assessments) improves outcomes by a remarkable 20% - 60%.
3. **Expand integration of behavioral health into primary care:** “Collaborative Care” (as defined in the CoCM reimbursement codes) is a proven and scalable solution that improves access and outcomes, and reduces costs, by integrating the support of psychiatrists (virtually) and MHSUD care managers into primary care settings – where the majority of people receive behavioral care.
4. **Improve tele-behavioral health:** Tele-behavioral health has grown dramatically since the onset of Covid-19 as barriers to implementation have been addressed overnight. These gains must be “locked in” while standards are established to support populations with disparate needs, capabilities, and access to technology.
5. **Ensure mental health parity compliance:** Evidence clearly shows the need to revamp those “non-quantitative treatment limitations” that create disparities in access and outcomes.

These reforms have gained endorsements from accrediting bodies, provider groups, and payers...but have not been broadly implemented. Advancing a single strategy will not solve the crisis. Simultaneously advancing the five reforms of the Path Forward will solve the complex problems of behavioral healthcare by engaging and holding accountable all key stakeholders in a disciplined change process.

The Path Forward is the only national behavioral health initiative:

- Using a market-driven approach to assure major advances by leveraging the “purchaser” influence of employer coalitions
- Focusing on both behavioral specialists and primary care providers
- Transforming behavioral healthcare at a population level and achieving health equity for all Americans

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