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Passport Health Plan Aims to Improve Behavioral Health Among Kentucky's Medicaid Population

*Ensuring access to quality mental health and substance use disorder services
will boost health outcomes, control costs*

Louisville, Ky. – Approximately 147,000 adults in Kentucky live with severe mental illness, many of whom are Medicaid beneficiaries, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). [Passport Health Plan](#) – the leading provider-sponsored, community-based health plan administering Medicaid benefits to nearly 300,000 Kentuckians – is taking steps to ensure that some of the state's most vulnerable residents have access to behavioral health services while reducing the financial cost for taxpayers.

“Behavioral health – which includes mental health and substance use disorders – is just as important as physical health,” said Elizabeth W. McKune, Ed.D., Director of Behavioral Health for Passport Health Plan. “Poor behavioral health is often the result of poor physical health, and vice versa. Medicaid patients across Kentucky must have access to quality behavioral health care in order to improve overall health outcomes and control health care costs.”

Passport's statewide provider network includes more than 2,100 behavioral health specialists (as of June 13, 2016) who are committed to delivering timely, high-quality, clinically appropriate behavioral health services to Medicaid patients. Behavioral health providers have access to online and in-person resources and training seminars to help improve the delivery of care.

Passport also offers a behavioral health hotline, available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, to assist members in crisis and emergency situations, help them find local behavioral health providers, and get them connected to additional services or resources they may need. Other behavioral health services available for Passport's members include medication management, substance use disorder treatment, outpatient services such as counseling, and even inpatient treatment when providers and patients feel that outpatient treatment is insufficient.

Passport's partnership with Louisville-based WellSpring, a nonprofit agency that provides recovery and support services to adults with severe mental illness, has also revealed innovative ways to improve behavioral health outcomes while reducing health care costs among the Medicaid population.

(more)

Through an Improved Health Outcomes Program (iHOP) grant funded by Passport, WellSpring assessed the impacts of permanent supportive housing among adults with severe and/or persistent mental illness over a two-year period.

The results, published earlier this year, were promising: In the one-year span prior to entering permanent supportive housing, the aggregate cost of inpatient care for patients in the study totaled more than \$2.5 million. In the following year, after being placed into supportive housing, inpatient care costs for this group dropped by more than 52 percent. Emergency room costs decreased by nearly half. Ultimately, placing patients in supportive housing for just one year resulted in \$18,000 in savings per patient during the first year.

“Passport will continue working with organizations like WellSpring to determine new approaches to improve behavioral health among Kentucky’s Medicaid population,” said Dr. McKune. “From providers and insurers to patients and nonprofits, many in the Commonwealth have a vested interest in improving health, including behavioral health. This is a statewide effort that requires all hands on deck.”

About Passport Health Plan

[Passport Health Plan](http://passporthealthplan.com) is a provider-sponsored, non-profit, community-based health plan administering Medicaid benefits to nearly 300,000 Kentuckians. Named the top Medicaid plan in Kentucky by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) for 2015-16, Passport has been contracted with the Commonwealth of Kentucky to administer Medicaid benefits since 1997. For more information, please visit passporthealthplan.com or call toll-free (800) 578-0603. Passport also operates a Medicare Advantage program, called “Passport Advantage,” for residents of Jefferson, Bullitt, Hardin, and Nelson counties who are eligible for both Medicaid and Medicare. For more information, go online to passportadvantage.com or call toll-free (844) 859-6152.