



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WNC addiction expert to address rising opioid drug use among pregnant women

June 16, 2017 – Insights into western North Carolina’s opioid drug epidemic will be shared with healthcare professionals across the country at a summit Thursday in Washington, D.C.

The one-day event, “Opioid Epidemic: Crisis to Care in Medicaid,” is sponsored by the D.C.-based Institute for Medicaid Innovation. The summit will feature clinical, research and policy experts in opioid misuse during pregnancy, as well as neonatal abstinence syndrome. Psychiatrist Dr. Craig Martin, chief medical officer of Asheville-based Vaya Health, will address the group and moderate two panel discussions.

“Western North Carolina is in the midst of a serious opioid epidemic, including use by women who are pregnant and babies who are born addicted to heroin, other illicit opioids and prescription painkillers,” Martin said. “The experiences and lessons learned from our region are of interest nationwide. This summit will allow experts from across the country to better fight the epidemic through Medicaid managed care.”

Vaya is a regional managed care organization that administers Medicaid and other public funds for services for mental health, substance use disorder and developmental disabilities. Martin specializes in alcohol and drug use disorders and is a diplomate of the American Board of Addiction Medicine.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, a baby suffering from opioid withdrawal is born every 25 minutes in the United States. Locally, an estimated 400 babies were born at Mission Hospital with positive toxicology screens in 2016.

Statistics from the American Medical Association show a steep increase in both the rates of maternal opioid use and the number of newborns with opioid withdrawal from 2000 to 2009. In North Carolina, approximately 20 to 30 percent of pregnant women enrolled in Medicaid from 2000 to 2007 were prescribed opioid medications by a medical provider, according to a 2014 study published in the Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

In western North Carolina, Vaya is working closely with community partners to increase access to substance use treatment and recovery services, provide leadership for the Western North Carolina Substance Use Alliance and strengthen prevention and education efforts. To learn more about substance use treatment services, or for help in a crisis, local residents can call Vaya’s 24/7 Access to Care Line at 1-800-849-6127.

About Vaya Health

Vaya Health manages public funds for mental health, substance use disorder and intellectual or developmental disability services in 23 North Carolina counties: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey. Access to services and crisis help are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-800-849-6127. Learn more at www.vayahealth.com.

About the Institute for Medicaid Innovation

The mission of the Institute for Medicaid Innovation is to improve the lives of Medicaid enrollees through the development, implementation and diffusion of innovative and evidence-based models of care that promote quality, value, equity and the engagement of patients, families and communities. Learn more at www.medicaidinnovation.org.

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