



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Social connections: Recovery Month highlights reaching out in face of mental health, substance use disorders

ASHEVILLE, N.C. – Vaya Health is joining organizations across the United States this September in celebrating National Recovery Month and calling attention to the importance of supportive relationships for people facing mental health and substance use disorders.

Now in its 31st year, Recovery Month celebrates the millions of Americans who are living in recovery from addiction and mental health challenges. It also promotes available treatment services. The 2020 Recovery Month theme, “Join the Voices for Recovery: Celebrating Connections,” embraces the adversity experienced in 2020 and highlights the benefit of interpersonal relationships in helping people from all walks of life be mentally and physically well.

Often, individuals who experience a mental health or substance use disorder feel isolated and alone. Addiction, in particular, is often called a “disease of isolation”.

Vaya Peer Trainer Rebekah McCloy, who has been living in recovery from substance use disorder for seven years, knows firsthand the importance of connection. Toward the end of her substance use, McCloy isolated from everyone she knew – her main relationship was with drugs.

Today, McCloy trains other people living in recovery to become certified peer support specialists, who provide support to others who can benefit from their own life experiences. “I traded my addiction to substances for supportive relationships with friends in recovery, family, coworkers and even the peers I now train,” she said. “These connections help keep me firmly rooted in my recovery. Through my personal life and my work, I know substance use and mental health challenges are treatable, and recovery does happen.”

One in every seven people in the United States experiences addiction at some point in their life, according to the U.S. Surgeon General’s Office. One in every five adults experiences mental health challenges each year, research from the U.S. Substance Use and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) shows. While obtaining treatment and living in recovery do not eliminate all life challenges, it does allow people to improve their health and wellness, take greater control over their future and strive to reach their full potential.

While rarely an easy journey, ongoing recovery is under tremendous stress this year due to the fallout from COVID-19, said psychiatrist Dr. Craig Martin, Vaya’s chief medical officer. State health officials recently reported

that symptoms of anxiety and depression have tripled during the pandemic, and emergency department visits due to opioid overdoses have increased 15 percent.

“Social distancing and isolation can hold a virus at bay, but they also increase the risk of loneliness, anxiety and depression,” Martin said. “How crises impact our recovery depends not only on our inner strength and capacities, but also on whether we have healthy relationships and communities. Working together, we can continue to care for one another and support each other in new and creative ways.”

According to SAMHSA, reaching out to people you trust is one of the best ways to reduce anxiety, depression, loneliness and boredom while social distancing. It also allows you to support the people you care about. If you can't visit in person, try contacting loved ones by telephone or by text messaging, social media, “face to face” video chat or email.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many treatment services and support groups have moved online. Anyone in western North Carolina can call Vaya's 24/7 Access to Care Line at 1-800-849-6127 for help in a behavioral health crisis or to learn more about local mental health and substance use treatment services. This free, confidential service is available every day of the year.

For more information on treatment services near you, visit www.vayahealth.com. To learn more about National Recovery Month, visit www.rm.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org.

About Vaya Health

Based in Asheville, N.C., Vaya Health manages public funds for mental health, substance use disorder and intellectual or developmental disability services in 22 western North Carolina counties: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey. Access to care and crisis assistance are available 24/7 at 1-800-849-6127. Learn more at www.vayahealth.com.

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