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**Vaya Health Celebrates National Foster Care Month by Spotlighting Latest Foster Care Efforts**

**ASHEVILLE, NC** - In recognition of National Foster Care Month, Vaya Health, a managed care organization that oversees publicly funded behavioral health services in 31 North Carolina counties, spotlights its most recent efforts to prioritize the needs of the foster care population.

With a strong commitment to putting children and their families first, Vaya Health has partnered with community-based organizations and behavioral health care providers to develop new programs that address the unique needs of those served by the child welfare system. One such program called the Pathways to Permanency project, helps ensure that children and youth in foster care have access to the services and supports they need to thrive, both in and outside of their placements.

Vaya collaborated with Benchmarks, a North Carolina non-profit association of human service provider agencies, to identify areas of opportunity for increased support of members and families involved in the child welfare system. From that work, four key areas of focus were established.

- An accessible quality continuum of behavioral health services
- Foster family recruitment and retention
- Suitable placements to help families when children need daytime support
- Common language and shared understanding through cross-agency training

Workgroups composed of Vaya staff, behavioral health care providers in Vaya's network, representatives from local Departments of Social Services, and other community partners focus on each of the key areas. The vision statement for the project demonstrates the commitment to cross-agency collaboration and a shared focus on improving the child welfare system:

***Every child has the right to a permanent family and while on that permanency journey, resources to meet their safety and well-being needs are critical and must be met.***

"We know that children in foster care face unique challenges, and we're committed to providing them with the resources and support they need to overcome those challenges and find permanent homes," said Ashley Parks, Child and Family Treatment Continuum Director at Vaya Health. "With our Pathways to Permanency project, we're working alongside local partners to build on our existing efforts to improve outcomes for children, and their caretakers, in the foster care system."

As a respected partner in North Carolina's public health care system, Vaya helped pioneer a community-based approach that puts people first. Together with providers, human service agencies, local organizations, and families themselves, Vaya focuses on integrated, collaborative care and evidence-based practices that support the best outcomes.

"We know that it takes a village to support children in foster care, and we're grateful for the partnerships we've built across the state," said Rhonda Cox, Executive Vice President & Chief Population Health Officer at Vaya Health. "Together, we can continue to prioritize the needs of children and families served by the child welfare system and ensure they have access to the care, resources, and support they need to live happy and healthy lives."

Vaya's continuous efforts surrounding the state's foster care population come at a critical time, as many families and caregivers face challenges related to care. By putting children, their families, and their health needs first, Vaya Health is helping to ensure that the foster care system remains strong and resilient.

For more information about Vaya Health's programs and services for the foster care population, please visit [www.vayahealth.com](http://www.vayahealth.com).

### **About Vaya Health**

Vaya Health is a specialty managed care organization that oversees publicly funded behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disability services across a 31-county region of North

Carolina. Vaya manages Medicaid, federal, state, and local funding to meet member and community needs while advancing whole-person health. Together with our members, provider network and local partners, we're moving forward to a healthier North Carolina. Access to crisis assistance is available 24/7 at 1-800-849-6127. Learn more at [vayahealth.com](https://vayahealth.com).

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