

# The Path Forward for Mental Health and Substance Use

## *Improving Access to Effective Treatment*

### Executive Summary

Over the past decade, morbidity and mortality stemming from inadequate mental health and substance use care have grown into a nationwide crisis, with rates of suicide and drug-related deaths at record levels. Over the same period, five key policy and practice reforms to improve behavioral healthcare have been developed to address this crisis. While each of these Five Priority Strategies have (1) demonstrated improved outcomes and cost efficiencies and (2) gained endorsements from accrediting bodies, provider groups, and payers, they have not yet been broadly disseminated into the infrastructure of behavioral healthcare delivery.

These Five Priority Strategies constitute our nation's best opportunity to positively transform behavioral healthcare at a population level, and to move us forward in improving access to effective detection and treatment. They are the Path Forward for Mental Health and Substance Use to improve access to effective mental health and substance use (MHSU) treatment, both in specialty behavioral health and broader healthcare systems (including primary care, which provides MHSU care for most people in need).

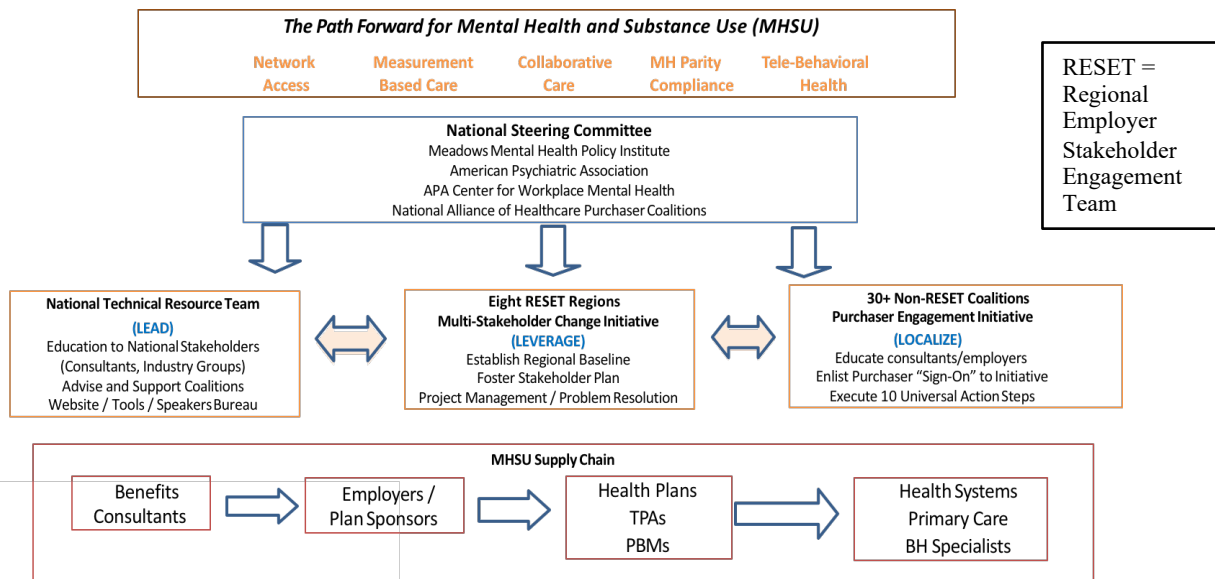
**The Five Priority Strategies include:** (1) improving network adequacy for behavioral health specialists; (2) expanding adoption of the collaborative care model for delivering behavioral health in primary care; (3) implementing measurement-based care in both the behavioral health and primary care systems; (4) expanding tele-behavioral health, and (5) ensuring mental health parity compliance.

Implementing these Five Priority Strategies is essential to re-focusing the nation's healthcare delivery systems through early detection and broad access to effective mental health and substance use care. Advancing a single strategy, as attempted in the past, has not been sufficient because the barriers to affordable access to outcomes-focused care are multi-dimensional and interdependent. Reforms are needed in care delivery in both primary care and specialty behavioral healthcare and must involve multiple stakeholders: payers, employers, providers, regulators, and advocates.

**The goals of this project will be achieved through a market-driven implementation plan leveraging the influence of employers and regional employer coalitions motivated for change, supported by the technical expertise and guidance of our nation's leading behavioral health experts.** It will be focused on clear and attainable process reforms and demonstrable outcomes, informed and empowered by engagement of key stakeholders at both the national and regional levels, combining nationwide efforts with a disciplined and intensive engagement focused on six regions most ready for change. The lessons learned will create the Path Forward for Mental Health and Substance Use through market-driven change across the country to address the dysfunctions of the current system and raise the bar on behavioral healthcare for all Americans.

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## Project Organization and Approach



### The Path Forward Anticipated Outcomes

The Path Forward project will be rooted in achieving measurable improvements in the five targeted areas over the course of the initiative. The project will be assessed against both process and outcomes metrics anchored by the Milliman MHSU Disparities Assessment, the National Alliance eValue8 Deep Dive Mental Health Assessment and the Bowman Family Foundation's Model Data Request Form for measuring disparities in access.

#### Outcome goals include:

- Improvement in network accuracy by reducing no or low billing network psychiatrists by 30% from baseline
- Improved network access as demonstrated by a 50% reduction in MHSU out-of-network disparities compared to other medical services
- Reduced network burdens as demonstrated by a 50% reduction in MHSU denial rate disparities compared to other medical services
- Increased prevalence of measurement-based care by adoption by at least 40% of patient centered medical homes and accountable care organizations including all the largest health systems in each RESET region
- Substantial adoption of collaborative care models including 50% of primary care practices in the largest health systems in each RESET region
- Substantial growth of tele-health for MHSU services with 100% of plans operating in RESET regions reimbursing for such services
- External validation of MHSU parity for nonquantitative treatment limitations (NQLTs) by 100% of plans

Most importantly, over the five-year implementation plan, the Path Forward will make progress to realign market forces to focus on a more sustainable approach to ensuring affordable access to high value and effective MHSU treatment for Americans across the country.