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Community Care and Rural Providers Implement a Health Home for People with Serious Mental Illness

PITTSBURGH (September 29, 2011)—In an effort to reduce high morbidity and mortality rates among people with serious mental illness, Community Care Behavioral Health Organization is implementing “health home” models at two behavioral health sites in Pennsylvania.

The Behavioral Health Home Plus model was created in collaboration with the Behavioral Health Alliance of Rural Pennsylvania (BHARP), which includes County MH/MR Administrators, Human Service Directors, and Single County Authorities from 23 counties in north central Pennsylvania. The model promotes the integration of behavioral and physical health services.

The health home model recognizes the high morbidity and mortality rates among persons who have serious mental illness and who often use tobacco and struggle with their weight. The model provides tools for consumers and providers that support tobacco cessation, weight management, and the management of physical health conditions.

Key components include:

- Inclusion of nurses with physical health expertise within the behavioral health system.
- Training of case managers and peer specialists to serve as health navigators.
- Web-based tools for consumers and providers to support wellness and care coordination.
- Implementation of strategies to engage primary care settings in improved coordination.

The first two sites for the implementation of this model are the Columbia/Montour/Snyder/Union (CMSU) Mental Health/Mental Retardation/Drug and Alcohol Program and the Northumberland County Behavioral Health and Intellectual/Developmental Services. Nursing services will be provided by Geisinger Health System. Plans are underway for Mathematica Policy Research and Community Care to evaluate the impact of this model.

About BHARP

In partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare’s Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) and in collaboration with other stakeholders, BHARP works with Community Care to ensure that a comprehensive, responsive, unified, cost-effective, recovery-oriented behavioral health system of care is available within a 23-county region in Pennsylvania.

About Community Care

Community Care, a nonprofit, tax-exempt recovery-focused behavioral health managed care organization headquartered in Pittsburgh, manages mental health as well as drug and alcohol services for approximately 700,000 members throughout Pennsylvania who are covered by Medical Assistance. Community Care was incorporated in 1996 with a mission to improve the health and well-being of the community through the delivery of effective and accessible behavioral health services.