



# The Path Forward

for mental health and substance use

Health Equity for all Americans

## Health Equity Demands Improved Access and Better Treatment

### THE PATH FORWARD NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions

American Health Policy Institute

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychiatric Association Foundation

Bowman Family Foundation

HR Policy Association

Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

### THE PATH FORWARD RESET REGIONS AND COALITIONS

#### California

Pacific Business Group on Health

Silicon Valley Employers Forum

#### Florida

Florida Alliance for Healthcare Value

#### Kansas

Kansas Business Group on Health

#### Maryland, DC & No Virginia

MidAtlantic Business Group on Health

#### Minnesota

Minnesota Health Action Group

#### NYC metro area including No

New Jersey & So Connecticut  
Northeast Business Group on Health

#### Tennessee

Memphis Business Group on Health

HealthCare 21 Business Coalition

#### Texas

Dallas Fort Worth Business Group on Health

Houston Business Coalition on Health

Inadequate mental health and substance use care has generated a crisis over the past decade, with record levels of suicide and drug-related deaths. While higher-paid Americans can access care, all others face huge (often insurmountable) challenges. Covid-19 has exacerbated this crisis.

Employers overwhelmingly identify the need to improve access to effective, affordable, and timely behavioral healthcare as a top priority. **Five evidence-based reforms can dramatically improve early detection and access to more effective behavioral healthcare.** The Path Forward’s goal is implementation of these reforms:

1. **Improve in-network access to behavioral health specialists:** Inadequate networks lead to a false sense of access for lower paid workers and a two-tiered system.
2. **Expand screening and testing for behavioral conditions:** Evidence clearly shows that consistent use of mental health/substance use symptom measurement tools (quantitative assessments) improves outcomes by a remarkable 20% - 60%.
3. **Expand behavioral health integration in primary care:** Reimbursement codes are available for a specific integration model called “Collaborative Care”, which is a proven and scalable solution that improves clinical outcomes and reduces costs by integrating the support of psychiatrists (virtually) and behavioral care managers into primary care settings – where the majority of people receive behavioral care.
4. **Improve tele-behavioral health:** Tele-behavioral health has grown dramatically since the onset of Covid-19 with barriers to implementation addressed overnight. These gains must be “locked in” while standards are established to support populations with disparate needs and access to technology.
5. **Resolve legacy mental health parity issues:** Implementation of “1” - “4” will resolve most coverage disparities by improving access to, and quality of, behavioral care in both specialty behavioral health and primary care settings.

These reforms have gained endorsements from accrediting bodies, provider groups, and payers...but have not been broadly implemented. Advancing a single strategy will not solve the crisis. Simultaneously advancing the five reforms of the Path Forward will solve the complex problems of behavioral healthcare by engaging and holding accountable all key stakeholders in a disciplined change process.

The Path Forward is the only national behavioral health initiative:

- Using a market-driven approach to assure major advances by leveraging the “purchaser” influence of employer coalitions
- Focusing on both behavioral specialists and primary care providers
- Transforming behavioral healthcare at a population level and achieving health equity for all Americans

More Information