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N.C. Child and Family Improvement Initiative Already Proving Successful

North Carolina, June 14, 2022 – As part of the ***NC Child and Family Improvement Initiative***, launched on May 1, 2022, North Carolina's six Local Management Entities/Managed Care Organizations (LME/MCOs) have assembled North Carolina child welfare subject matter experts and thought leaders to create a statewide solution to the current pressing challenges of the service delivery system.

Responding to the most significant issues raised by members of the General Assembly, county Departments of Social Services (DSS), providers and families, the ***NC Child and Family Improvement Initiative*** will create ease of movement for children who relocate throughout the state to ensure continuity of care without delay or interruption and will alleviate administrative burden on providers who are involved in those inter-county movements.

Immediately following launch of the ***NC Child and Family Improvement Initiative***, the LME/MCOs have quickly developed nine critical objectives for a statewide model that will support seamless access to quality care for children in foster care, regardless of where they live in North Carolina.

- Establish a statewide provider network to ensure access to residential treatment and the other services these youth need.
- Ensure a standardized, seamless process for children moving from one LME/MCO region to another or changing custody to a new DSS.
- Establish rapid access to care by reducing authorization barriers for residential treatment.
- Increase capacity for crisis care across the state.

- Co-locate LME/MCO care managers across North Carolina's County and regional DSS offices, tailoring the approach to the unique needs of each county DSS.
- Establish a standardized reimbursement rate at 100% of the rate floor for out-of-network community-based providers.
- Adopt standardized child-specific In Lieu Of Services across all LME/MCOs.
- Develop a standardized, statewide referral system for all residential and Therapeutic Foster Care providers.
- Standardize case escalation frameworks in collaboration with local DSS departments.

"We applaud the rapid collaboration from the state's LME/MCOs to develop a coordinated statewide strategy so that children and families who are in the foster care system have a seamless experience of quality care," said Kevin Leonard, Executive Director of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC). "The immediate and significant efforts of the ***NC Child and Family Improvement Initiative*** support the NCACC's request that NCDHHS pause implementation of a statewide CFSP, which would allow time for LME/MCO results to be measured, and also would allow all stakeholders an opportunity to have dialogue that will assist in developing a long-term and sustainable solution to best serve the children in foster care programs across the entire state."

The LME/MCOs plan to vet these objectives with key representatives from local DSS agencies and service providers over the coming weeks to gather their input and finalize a plan for full implementation. Karen McLeod, president and chief executive officer of Benchmarks, an umbrella non-profit advocacy group for children and family service agencies, praised the development of the ***NC Child and Family Improvement Initiative*** *saying,* "We are really pleased that the LME/MCOs are working collectively to prioritize youth in foster care." McLeod stated that Benchmarks looks forward to working with the group to vet the objectives, which are designed to improve the administration of services behind the scenes. The commitment of all six LME/MCOs to partner on a shared health care model for youth in foster care "will go a long way toward providing statewide continuity of care for these children," McLeod added.

John Eller, Director of Social Services for Mecklenburg County Government adds, "Departments of Social Services (DSS) need solutions to the current challenges we are experiencing and more readily available access to services for the children and families in our community will help us with prevention both 'upstream and downstream.' Between the ***NC Child and Family Improvement Initiative***, planning being done by NCDHHS, support from the General Assembly, and advocacy from providers, counties and their DSS agencies, we hope all of these efforts

coupled with Medicaid Transformation will culminate into a cohesive system reform that complements each component. We applaud the LME/MCOs for engaging DSS stakeholders in the Initiative. We look forward to participating in these discussions and seeing the Initiative's collective objectives achieved."

As the ***NC Child and Family Improvement Initiative*** workgroups continue their efforts in the coming days and beyond, more details, including dates for delivery of the objectives, will be shared. The immediate improvements resulting from this partnership will be fully functional before the December 2022 launch of the North Carolina Behavioral Health and Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities Tailored Plans.

ABOUT THE NORTH CAROLINA LME/MCOs

North Carolina's six Local Management Entities/Managed Care Organizations (LME/MCOs) are responsible for managing Medicaid, state and local funding for North Carolinians who are uninsured or who receive Medicaid and seek services for mental health (MH) needs, substance use disorders (SUDs), intellectual/ developmental disabilities (IDD), and traumatic brain injuries (TBI).

The LME/MCOs are the cornerstone of North Carolina's public MH/SUD/IDD/TBI managed care system designed to improve quality and timely access to care for individuals and families. Established by the General Assembly in 2011, the LME/MCOs are built on a 50-year legacy of county area programs with deep local, community roots. The LME/MCOs ensure access to high quality provider networks, strong community collaboration to support robust System of Care, and budget predictability through the efficient and effective use of public funds and resources.

North Carolina's LME/MCOs include:
Alliance Health
Eastpointe
Partners Health Management
Sandhills Center
Trillium Health Resources
Vaya Health

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