ACMHA Launches Behavioral Health Leadership Excellence Network

Consistent with its leadership goal on improving outcomes through collaborative approaches, the American College of Mental Health Administration (ACMHA) has entered into a partnership with the National Center for Healthcare Leadership (NCHL) to address the workforce crisis in behavioral health. In conjunction with and in response to the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health and the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) Improving the Quality of Health Care for Mental and Substance Use Conditions, ACMHA is focused on the development of exceptional leaders to reinvent and redesign behavioral health services and systems through this collaboration. By partnering with NCHL, whose Leadership Competency Model is built around the six aims of the IOM report, ACMHA has joined a program which has momentum and traction in the development of health care leaders. Significant support for the initiative has been provided by the Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

“Effective leaders are a means to an end: we are committed to providing leadership development opportunities for cutting edge behavioral health organizations,” stated Dr. Sandra L. Forquer, ACMHA President. “We are most excited about this collaboration with NCHL – they have an extraordinary track record in producing Leadership Networks for the health care field. We’re looking to ‘import’ some of that expertise into our field with their coaching and facilitation.”

A Leadership Excellence Network (LENS) is a collaborative learning community that promotes the sharing of best practices, applies a nationally researched and validated systems and competency-based approach to leadership development, benchmarks evidence-based results of healthcare leadership initiatives, and fosters needs analysis, continuous improvement, and evaluation in a shared learning environment. NCHL has developed networks across the country in hospitals and healthcare systems. Through collaboration with ACMHA, NCHL will launch the first behavioral health LENS, using the strengths of the College to develop leadership competencies specific to behavioral health.

“We are pleased to be working with ACMHA to launch the LENS,” NCHL President and CEO Marie E. Sinioris said. “Behavioral health is a critical, and too often overlooked, part of our healthcare system. The LENS promotes the development of exceptional leaders. It is through leadership excellence that we achieve greater accountability, improved organizational performance, and better outcomes for those who need behavioral health services.”

Leadership teams from six behavioral health organizations across the United States will work together over the course of two years on shared goals of leadership development. Each organizational team is comprised of the chief executive and three – six additional leaders and
managers, allowing participants to develop leadership skills and enhance competencies of current and emerging leaders while simultaneously addressing issues that require attention in the transformation of the behavioral health system. Organizations comprising the ACMHA LENS Class of 2006 are Jewish Family and Children’s Services, Phoenix, AZ; Pikes Peak Mental Health, Colorado Springs, CO; Fayette Companies, Peoria, IL; Community Services Group, Mountville, PA; Department of Behavioral Health/Mental Retardation Services, Philadelphia, PA; and Sound Community Services, New London, CT. The first meeting of the LENS is September 6 in Chicago.

Over the past decade, ACMHA has significantly expanded its scope of work. Issues addressed include performance measures, financing, training, disparities, and the redesign and transformation of behavioral health delivery. Throughout that work the importance of cultivating a cadre of exceptional leaders has become increasing critical. Effective leaders and their organizations are a means to an end – improved behavioral health status and recovery and resiliency for individuals in treatment. Through the creation of the behavioral health LENS with participants from across the country, ACMHA has initiated a leadership competency plan that can be replicated elsewhere and provides the impetus to drive behavioral health systems toward needed change.

About the American College of Mental Health Administration
The American College of Mental Health Administration (ACMHA) is a professional organization of leaders concerned with core issues of behavioral health. ACMHA’s mission is to bring together diverse leaders from across systems of care to identify and address existing controversy, support emerging consensus, promote best practices, and broker ideas that contribute to the evolution of behavioral health. Its vision is to provide forums and facilitation that moves core issues of mental health and substance abuse from controversy to consensus, and discourse to action. For more information, please visit the ACMHA web site at www.acmha.org.

About the National Center for Healthcare Leadership
The National Center for Healthcare Leadership (NCHL) is an industry catalyst whose mission is to assure the availability of relevant and accountable healthcare leadership for the 21st century. Its vision is to improve the health of the public through leadership and organizational excellence. For more information, please visit the NCHL web site at www.nchl.org.

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