



Commonwealth of Virginia

Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: September 27, 2019

Department of Medical Assistance Services

Contact: Christina Nuckols

christina.nuckols@dmas.virginia.gov

Virginia Medicaid Agency Awarded \$5 Million Federal Grant to Combat Opioid Crisis

*~New report shows reduced rates for hospital admissions and
emergency department visits for opioid use disorder ~*

RICHMOND – The Virginia Medicaid agency has been awarded a \$5 million federal planning grant to increase access to evidence-based treatment for opioid addiction and other substance use disorders.

“This grant will support our work to combat the opioid crisis that is devastating communities across the Commonwealth,” said **Karen Kimsey, Director of the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS)**. “I am particularly pleased that these federal funds will be invested in strategies to improve access to care for pregnant women as well as strengthened supports and treatment for individuals released from incarceration.”

Nearly 1,500 Virginians died of drug overdoses in 2018, a slight decline from the previous year but double the number of fatalities recorded a decade earlier, according to data gathered by the Virginia Department of Health.

“We have worked hard to build a comprehensive network of treatment services across the Commonwealth, but we know that gaps remain,” said Secretary of Health and Human Resources Daniel Carey, M.D. “This grant will help us identify racial, economic and geographic barriers to care and to develop the strategies necessary to eliminate those disparities.”

The planning grant awarded to DMAS will provide targeted resources to address treatment needs for pregnant women and individuals who have recently been released from the criminal justice system.

Other activities funded through the grant include:

- An assessment of treatment needs and community supports, conducted by Virginia Commonwealth University's Department of Health Behavior and Policy, that will include interviews and focus groups with pregnant women and individuals with a history of incarceration who have a substance use disorder (SUD) diagnosis.
- Recruitment, training and assistance to Medicaid providers who treat SUD.
- Strategies to improve access to Hepatitis C and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) prevention and treatment.
- Increased availability of naloxone to reduce overdose deaths.

The grant announcement coincides with the release of initial results from a preliminary report detailing results of Virginia's Addiction and Recovery Treatment Services (ARTS) program since its launch in April 2017. The second year of the program aligned with the expansion of Medicaid in Virginia, which opened eligibility for health coverage to more low-income adults. There are currently 321,000 Virginia adults enrolled and receiving services as a result of the new eligibility rules.

Key findings in the ARTS report include:

- Nearly 34,000 Medicaid members with SUD received treatment during the second year of the program, including 19,000 receiving opioid use disorder (OUD) services.
- 12,000 newly eligible adults under Medicaid expansion have been diagnosed with SUD.
- More than 4,000 outpatient treatment providers are serving Medicaid members, nearly four times the number before ARTS began.
- The rate of OUD-related emergency department visits by pre-expansion Medicaid members dropped from 31 percent of total members with OUD before ARTS to 21 percent in the second year of the program.
- Hospital admission rates for OUD declined from 23 percent of total pre-expansion Medicaid members with OUD before ARTS to 16 percent in the second year of the program.
- The rate of fatal overdoses among Medicaid members decreased by 9 percent between the first three quarters of 2017 and the same period of 2018, while the rate increased by 1.5 percent for Virginians who did not have Medicaid coverage.

For more information, visit the DMAS agency website at www.dmas.virginia.gov/#/arts.

“The ARTS program continues to make meaningful progress in improving access to addiction treatment,” said Ellen Montz, Chief Health Economist for DMAS. “These new findings give us confidence that we are moving in the right direction to achieve better health outcomes for our Medicaid members. The expansion of Medicaid gives us the opportunity to provide lifesaving

treatment to thousands of new members and empower them to continue on their path to recovery.”

The grant announcement is part of a national effort to increase the capacity of providers to deliver addiction treatment and recovery services. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid awarded 15 states, including Virginia, a total of \$48.5 million through the Substance Use Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment for Patients and Communities (SUPPORT) Act, a federal law that went into effect in October 2018.

Five of the states receiving planning grants will be selected for a second phase in the grant program. Those states will received enhanced federal reimbursements over a three-year period to strengthen Medicaid support for addiction treatment and recovery services.

###