



## **WellCare Signs First Behavioral Health Home Agreement with Peace River Center for Personal Development**

*Agreement Aims to Improve Overall Health and Reduce Hospitalizations and Readmissions*

**TAMPA, Fla. (May X, 2017)** – WellCare of Florida, a subsidiary of WellCare Health Plans, Inc. (NYSE: WCG), formed a new value-based care agreement for the establishment of a behavioral health home with Peace River Center for Personal Development (Peace River Center).

Under the agreement, Peace River Center will provide both behavioral and medical services for Staywell Medicaid members who have been diagnosed with a serious mental illness (SMI). They will also be responsible for the integration and coordination of care for these member's care, providing holistic care in one location.

This is important due to a recent article in [JAMA Psychiatry](#) contains some sobering statistics about premature deaths for people with SMI. Those diagnosed with SMI, were more than 3.5 times more likely to die than the general population and it is estimated they lose 28.5 years of life, primarily because of natural causes. Further, 85 percent of premature deaths in SMI populations were due to largely preventable conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and heart disease. Research also shows that SMI members that are participating in a Behavioral Health Home are more likely to access primary care services and therefore avoid preventable conditions.

"Our members' health is our first priority, and our job is to help ensure they get the right care at the right time in the most appropriate setting," said Elizabeth Miller, president, WellCare of Florida. "Too often our members with SMI are using the emergency department for medical care. Now, these members will have access to a behavioral health home that will address behavioral, medical and social supports at one location in a coordinated manner."

"We are pleased to be partnering with Wellcare of Florida to help improve the mental and physical health for people with serious mental illness and to be their first "behavioral health home" in Florida, said Peace River Center CEO, Bill Gardam.

"People with common problems like depression or addiction often also suffer from medical complications and many die far too early," said Gardam. "In many cases, this happens because these illnesses make it harder for people to focus on their other medical problems like diabetes or heart disease. Study after study has shown that when people can get all of their healthcare needs met under one roof in a seamless, well-coordinated way, a 'no wrong door' approach to care, they get better results with improved satisfaction and compliance with treatment recommendations, which results in improved quality of life and lower medical costs."

As of March 31, 2017, WellCare serves approximately 776,000 Medicaid members, which includes 62,000 Florida Healthy Kids members, and 99,000 Medicare Advantage members, and 30,000 Medicare Prescription Drug Plan members in Florida.

**About WellCare Health Plans, Inc.**

Headquartered in Tampa, Fla., WellCare Health Plans, Inc. (NYSE: WCG) focuses exclusively on providing government-sponsored managed care services, primarily through Medicaid, Medicare Advantage and Medicare Prescription Drug Plans, to families, children, seniors and individuals with complex medical needs. The company serves approximately 4.1 million members nationwide as of March 31, 2017. For more information about WellCare, please visit the company's website at [www.wellcare.com](http://www.wellcare.com) or view the company's videos at <https://www.youtube.com/user/WellCareHealthPlan>.

**About Peace River Center**

Peace River Center (PRC) is a private not-for-profit integrated community behavioral health organization serving the residents of Polk, Highlands, and Hardee Counties for over 67 years. PRC serves families in crisis, children and adults in need as well as the severely and persistently mentally ill with 36 programs in 27 locations, including inpatient, outpatient, home-, school- and community-based and mobile services. PRC also operates two domestic violence shelters that serve victims of human trafficking and domestic violence, a Rape Recovery and Resource Center, Primary Health Care, Addiction Treatment Programs, and 24-hour Crisis lines and Intervention to the communities it serves. For more information about PRC, please visit the agency's website at [www.peacrivercenter.org](http://www.peacrivercenter.org)

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