**WEST VIRGINIA MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS HEALTH PROGRAM**

**CASE FOR SUPPORT – Additional Information**

**THE ISSUE:**

**Public health, safety and trust is at risk.** Physicians are in a “safety-sensitive” occupation.Physicians and other health professionals suffer from substance abuse disorder just like the rest of the population. Health professionals develop substance use disorders at a rate equal to or in excess of the general population rate of 10-15% lifetime incidence. When physicians and other health professionals are struggling with alcohol or drug addiction, the implications for that individual, their families and the public can be serious. Physicians who suffer with substance abuse disorder can destroy trust, and potentially put members of the public, such as their patients, employers, bystanders and others, at risk.

**The culture of silent suffering for healthcare providers suffering from substance abuse is real.** Physicians are often reluctant to seek assistance due to a false sense of independence that they should be able to handle this themselves. The corporate and familial teams surrounding them are often inadvertent enablers because: Hospitals need revenue; medical groups need partners, spouses need spouses, families need income, physician’s lawyer up and state medical boards discipline after the fact. It can cost in excess of $50,000 for the first year of evaluation, treatment and monitoring services, the cost is daunting especially when physicians are relied upon to support their families and medical practices.

**One doctor commits suicide in the U.S. every day -- the highest suicide rate of any profession.** And the number of doctor suicides -- 28 to 40 per 100,000 -- is more than twice that of the general population, new research shows. The rate in the general population is 12.3 per 100,000. Suicide rate among physicians is higher than among those in the military, which is considered a very stressful occupation. Physicians, like everyone else, do not commit suicide, they die by suicide. Suicide is an illness, not a crime. [[1]](#footnote-1)

**THE SOLUTION:**

**The West Virginia PHP provides an opportunity for immediate confidential physician-directed assistance.** The WVMPHP provides a safe, non-disciplinary mechanism for over 10,000 physicians and healthcare providers to obtain assistance, guidance and peer support, treatment referral and care monitoring for substance abuse disorders, issues related to mental health and concerns related to aging.

**Because of WVHPMP services, healthcare professionals can document that they are in remission and continue practicing.** Healthcare professionals entering intensive evaluation and/or treatment and participating in an extended comprehensive continuing care and monitoring program experience recovery and success rates significantly higher than those of the general population – on average ninety-percent (90%).

**WHY IT MATTERS: PATIENT ACCESS TO CARE AND SAFETY + ECONOMIC IMPACT:**

**Every physician** **who is working as a safe and sober professional ensures access to care for many West Virginians.** In Primary Care alone 2015, West Virginia estimated that 1,319 primary care physicians are responsible for a total population of 1,859,514 and a MEPS-based estimate of 2,888,469 primary care visits. Based on these numbers, the 2015 population per provider ratio is equal to 1,410:1, with PCPs averaging 2,190 visits per year.[[2]](#footnote-2) The number of primary care physicians needed meet the need associated with universal coverage is equal to 1,361 in 2015. Altogether, West Virginia will require an additional 62 primary care physicians by 2030.

**The health of every West Virginian matters**. The population with poor access to care is 829,113 with only 107 primary care physician’s servings all of these areas. The population-to-physician ratio is 1:7,655. In the urban areas, the population of 1,050,290, has 1,906 primary care physicians providing care for a population-to-physician ratio is 1:551.[[3]](#footnote-3) One physician lost to substance abuse or suicide is one too many.

**Working West Virginia physicians have a direct economic impact.** Vital signs report the economic impact in West Virginia as $6.3 billion dollars with $3.7 billion as direct and $2.6 billion as indirect economic output. Physicians account for $243.4 billion state and local tax revenue, an average of $68,000 generated by each individual physician. The Robert Graham Study found that in West Virginia, family physicians have an economic impact of $764,244 per doctor, per year. The total impact of family physicians in West Virginia is estimated to be $393,585,486 per year.

**THE NEED FOR YOUR INVESTMENT:**

**The West Virginia Medical Professionals Health Program (WVMPHP) is uniquely positioned to assist safety-sensitive health professionals.** The mission of WVMPHP is “To protect consumers through seeking the early identification and rehabilitation of physicians, surgeons and other healthcare professionals with potentially impairing health concerns including abuse of mood altering drugs including alcohol, mental illness or physical illness affecting competency so that physicians, surgeons and other healthcare professionals so afflicted may be treated, monitored and returned to the safe practice of their profession to the benefit of the healthcare profession and the patients we serve.”

**Adequate funding is paramount to ensure the provision of comprehensive WVMPHP services.** Philanthropic support provides long-term availability and viability of a program. With a 90% recovery rate, it is imperative that the WVMPHP has resources to provide essential education and outreach. The WVMPHP serves some, but there are so many more to reach. The WVMPHP must remain in a continual state of readiness to provide rapid intervention for those suffering with substance abuse. Case management services critical to providing evidence of recovery and the opportunity for advocacy require significant staff time to gather proof of participation in recovery activities including: treatment, toxicology testing, therapy and attendance at mutual support meetings.

**THE IMPACT OF YOUR INVESTMENT:**

**Physicians have a confidential resource for help.** Since inception in 2007, WVMPHP has assisted over 700 individuals. Annually 50-70 physicians, podiatrists, physician assistants, medical students and residents receive confidential consultation; intervention; assessment and referral; recovery monitoring and case management service. Over 90% of referrals to the WVMPHP are voluntary.

**The West Virginia PHP is a messenger of awareness and hope.** The WVMPHP has delivered 150+ education/prevention workshops and presentations to over 16,000 attendees across the state. Families have access to support and employers are able to confidently employ physicians and others by receiving documentation of compliance with treatment provider recommendations.

**Hospitals comply with Joint Commission requirements:** By partnering with the WVMPHP, over 35 hospital staffs comply with the Joint Commission’s Medical Staff (Rule) 11.01.01. In addition, WVHPMP provides consultations for hospitals, medical staffs and other organizations and functions as an extension of the medical affairs committee much like an employee assistance program.

**Physicians monitored by the PHP have lower medical malpractice relative risk.** After monitoring, PHP clients’ relative risk of malpractice is 20% lower than non-PHP participants.

**WVMPHP protects the public and saves lives and careers.** The loss of one physician to substance abuse or suicide can negatively impact a hospital or medical group revenue by $1.5 million. Every dollar invested in addiction treatment programs yields a return of between $4 - $7 in reduced drug-related crime, criminal justice costs, and theft. When savings related to healthcare are included total savings can exceed costs by a ratio of 12 to 1, there is a significant cost benefit when the public is protected, and careers are salvaged.

**SUSTAINABILITY OF THE WVHPMP IS VITAL:**

The WVMPHP utilizes a comprehensive funding philosophy to garner funds for current and future needs of the program. Due diligence is taken to avoid conflicts of interest when accepting gifts. Philanthropic support directly advances the mission of the WVMPHP by providing:

*Sustainable, direct services* – WVMPHP services should be accessible to all physicians, podiatrists, physician assistants, residents and medical students.

*Education and outreach* – throughout West Virginia to a multitude of audiences inclusive of hospitals, organized medicine, medical groups, training institutions and the broader national PHP community.

*Financial hardship support* – making drug and alcohol treatment available to WVMPHP participants who need it, regardless of the ability to pay.

**YOUR INVESTMENT IS LIFE-CHANGING:**

**Patients are protected, lives are saved and careers are preserved.** WVMPHP participants are professionals in safety sensitive, high-stakes vocations. The daily decisions made by physicians and other healthcare professionals are often matters of life and death. The WVMPHP implores physicians to get the exact same care they would prescribe to their own patients.

1. Doctors' Suicide Rate Highest of Any Profession (2018). https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/news/20180508/doctors-suicide-rate-highest-of-any-profession#1 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. West Virginia State Profile of Primary Care Workforce and Social Determinants of Health, The Robert Graham Center: Policy Studies in Family Medicine and Primary Care 1133 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20036 <https://www.graham-center.org/content/dam/rgc/documents/publications-reports/monographs-books/WestVirginiaPrimaryCareSocialDetHealth.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Health Care in West Virginia – Workforce Demand Analysis 2018 <http://wvrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2018-FINAL-WV-Workforce-updated-9_26.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)