

For Immediate Release

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Pathways' Telehealth Services Continue to Improve Patient Care & Accessibility **Partnership with HCC of Rural Missouri Expands Telehealth Reach**

(April 19, 2012) Lexington, MO – When it comes to the number of patients seen daily via telehealth, one could argue that Pathways Community Health is leading the charge in the state of Missouri. The not-for-profit community mental health center sees approximately 9000 patients per month with the patient at one end of a TV monitor and the behavioral health care specialist at the other.

“Psychiatrists are more productive with telehealth and provide on average 1000 more services per year,” said Richard Colvert, Pathways’ chief information officer. He said because of telehealth, psychiatrist are spending less time on the road and more time visiting with patients.

Pathways has also partnered with primary health care providers like I-70 Community Hospital in Sweet Springs, MO and Katy Trails in Sedalia, MO to create health care homes that serve the patients’ physiological and psychological well being. “We put the pieces in place last fall to enable patients to see a primary care provider through our telehealth services if needed,” said Colvert.

Conversely, I-70 and Katy Trail’s patients can also receive behavioral telehealth through Pathways if necessary. Colvert said the impetus for this collaboration was Pathways’ relationship with Health Care Collaborative (HCC) of Rural Missouri.

“When you are the only one implementing telehealth, it’s easy to get bogged down and lose focus,” he said. “With energy and dedication, the HCC helps providers move telehealth forward.”

HCC, a non-profit rural health network based in Lexington, MO partners with area agencies, businesses and other non-profits to advocate for the health and well being of rural Missourians. Last year, HCC (formerly the Health Care Coalition of Lafayette County), received a \$125,000 Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant award from the United States Department of Agriculture.

Leveraging these funds, Pathways purchased 175 signature pads that will prove instrumental in streamlining drive times and paperwork. Community support specialists and other clinical staff working in the field will soon be able to connect to Pathways’ network using a Netbook, pull charts and finalize paperwork with the help of the signature pad. Colvert said this is a welcomed alternative for clinical staff who drive to the patient’s home, pick them up, bring them to the clinic, have them sign necessary documents and then drive them back home.

“With the rapid changes in technology, it is important for rural providers to stay on top of the changes,” said Julie Coram, HCC’s Health Information Technology Manager. “Using grant funds, we are helping providers offset the financial obligations that these changes require.”

The signature pads roll-out mid-summer.

About HCC’s Telehealth Programs

HCC is also partnering with Pathways and seven other area providers to support Meaningful Use adoption. The move comes as a mandate by the Obama Administration’s American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Through the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the electronic health record (E) program will provide incentive payments to eligible providers, hospitals, and critical access hospitals (CAHs) as they adopt, implement, or

upgrade certified I technology. By 2017, most—if not all practitioners—are expected to use I technology. Medicare providers who do not will be penalized.

Through a \$900,000 health information technology grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, HCC is delegating the majority of these dollars to its health information technology partners for equipment purchases to support I adoption. HCC partners include: Lafayette Regional Health Center, I-70 Hospital, Fitzgibbon Hospital, Samuel U. Rodgers Health Center Lafayette Family Medicine – Dental & WIC Services, Richmond Family Clinic, Carroll County Memorial Hospital and Pathways Community Health.

For more information, contact HCC Executive Director Toniann Richard or Health Information Technology Manager Julie Coram at 660.259.2440.

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