



MEDIA RELEASE

May 5, 2022

Health Share of Oregon working to address behavioral health and housing solutions

(Portland, OR) – Health Share of Oregon is taking innovative steps to help address Oregon’s twin crises of housing and behavioral health. The state’s largest coordinated care organization is investing \$37M to support behavioral health providers and piloting a \$15 million housing benefit program that could benefit up to 6,000 Portland-area residents.

Housing

Working collaboratively with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), Health Share is proposing a defined housing benefit through Medicaid for those at-risk of losing their housing during times critical to their health. The Health Share collaborative has committed \$15 million to a targeted demonstration project of this benefit package for specific members throughout 2022.

For now this demonstration program supports members who are transitioning from institutional and inpatient settings who are at risk of losing their housing or who are houseless. The program uses a combination of existing authorities, flexibility from OHA in administration of Health Related Services, and other flexible funding to cover remaining gaps to create a pathway to stable housing in the community that has clear criteria and is available to all that qualify.

These Medicaid-focused housing solutions align with the state’s proposed changes to the 1115 Waiver for 2023 through 2027. Health Share’s plan aligns with these proposed changes, and initiates the process sooner rather than later, allowing a direct path to meaningful solutions.

The housing benefit includes supportive services that help people get into housing and stay housed and up to 9 months in rent assistance. Health Share estimates that between 4,500 and 6,000 people on the Oregon Health Plan in Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas counties could be eligible for this benefit.

Behavioral health

Health Share is also investing significantly in Tri County-area behavioral health by committing a \$30 million investment with the goal of supporting wages for behavioral health providers and investments to help retain these critical staff. This investment creates ongoing support, realized by a change in ongoing rates rather than a one-time investment amount.

“Behavioral health in Oregon is in crisis mode,” said James Schroeder, CEO of Health Share of Oregon. “Oregon can achieve a more stable health care system with the combination this one-time, crisis funding for behavioral health staff investments paired with long term funding increases in partnership with the state. At Health Share we are leading by increasing rates to create longer-term solutions. The Oregon legislature has approved a series of short-term, stop-gap initiatives. While each approach plays a meaningful role, it our hope that we at Health Share can model longer term funding as both tenable and necessary to address our behavioral health and housing crises.”

About Health Share of Oregon

Health Share of Oregon is the state’s largest Medicaid coordinated care organization , serving Oregon Health Plan members in Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties. Our mission is to partner with communities to achieve ongoing transformation, health equity, and the best possible health for each individual. Health Share was founded and continues to be governed by eleven health care organizations serving OHP members: Adventist Health, CareOregon, Central City Concern, Clackamas County, Kaiser Permanente, Legacy Health, Multnomah County, Oregon Health & Science University, Providence Health & Services, Tuality Health Alliance and Washington County.

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