



# CareFirst Broker Flash

**For Consumer Direct contracted brokers only.**  
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**(Not intended for distribution to groups and members)**

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Market: Consumer Direct

## CareFirst's Response to the Addiction Crisis

Addiction is a national health epidemic affecting millions every day.

In 2016, approximately 204,000 CareFirst members received at least one opioid prescription. In the same timeframe, nearly 18,000 CareFirst members had a diagnosis for substance use disorder. However, because diagnoses are based on insurance claims, these figures may only represent a fraction of the total impact of opioid use or those living with a substance use disorder.

CareFirst is committed to meeting our members' needs through identification, prevention and treatment. Our comprehensive approach to combat the opioid crisis includes:

- Restricting unnecessary or excessive opioid prescription use through formulary design
- Monitoring members and prescribers for drug safety, potential fraud, waste and abuse
- Connecting members with high-touch care coordination and essential treatment
- Reducing financial barriers through a cost-share waiver (for applicable plans)

On **December 13**, CareFirst held a press event at Baltimore's City Hall to highlight our efforts to address substance use disorders and the opioid addiction crisis across the region. Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh and other elected officials were in attendance. More information can be obtained in the attached news release.

We have prepared the attached infographic, which provides a high-level overview of the opioid crisis and describes how CareFirst is helping. Additionally, we are developing new addiction/opioid content to add to the [Behavioral Health & Substance Abuse section](#) of our Member website. We will notify you when these resources are available.

If you have any questions, please contact your broker sales representative.

Vickie S. Cosby  
Vice President, Consumer Direct Sales, Distribution and Communications

# Attacking the OPIOID CRISIS

## Opioid prescriptions have increased dramatically:<sup>1</sup>



## On an average day in the U.S.:

**Over 1,000**

people are treated in emergency departments for misusing prescription opioids<sup>2</sup>

**MORE THAN 90**

people die from an opioid overdose<sup>3</sup>



Eighty percent of new heroin users start by abusing prescription opioids.<sup>3</sup>

## Staggering economic burden

**\$95 BILLION ANNUALLY<sup>4</sup>**

- Escalating health care costs
- Increased crime
- Lost productivity

## Confronting the Crisis Holistically

The opioid crisis took decades to develop, driven by several factors. These include new prescription opioids flooding the market, misinformation on opioids as “safe” treatment for chronic pain and a lack of prescriber education initiatives. The impacts of the misuse are devastating, and getting worse.

### CareFirst's comprehensive approach:



Restrict unnecessary or excessive opioid prescription use.



Monitor high-risk behaviors among prescribers and members.



Connect members with essential treatment.



Reduce financial barriers through a cost-share waiver.

#### References:

<sup>1</sup> [www.modernhealthcare.com/article/20170916/NEWS/170919916](http://www.modernhealthcare.com/article/20170916/NEWS/170919916); accessed November 6, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> [www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/overdose.html](http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/overdose.html); accessed November 6, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> [www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/opioids/opioid-crisis](http://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/opioids/opioid-crisis); accessed November 6, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> [www.modernhealthcare.com/article/20171116/NEWS/171119908](http://www.modernhealthcare.com/article/20171116/NEWS/171119908); accessed November 16, 2017.





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**CareFirst Media Contact: Media Relations**  
**1-800-914-NEWS (6397)**  
[mediarelations@carefirst.com](mailto:mediarelations@carefirst.com)

## **CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield Announces New Efforts to Combat Opioid and Substance Use in Communities and Among its Members** **-- \$1.5 Million in Community Funding; New Treatment and Prescribing Initiatives --**

**Baltimore, MD**— [CareFirst](#) BlueCross BlueShield (CareFirst), today announced new efforts to combat the region's opioid crisis in the communities it serves, as well as programs to address substance use disorders and provide addiction and behavioral health services to CareFirst members. The efforts include \$1.5 million in funding for non-profit community organizations for programs aimed at addressing substance use disorders, as well as new prescribing limits and treatment programs to limit opioid abuse and improve care for members battling addiction.

"The impact of opioids in the region we serve has been well documented," said CareFirst President and Chief Executive Officer Chet Burrell. "As the region's largest health insurer and one with a unique community mission, we want to take a comprehensive approach to address the opioid crisis for the greater community, as well as to create and promote policies and programs for our members that address addiction and its disastrous health impacts on the individuals and families we cover."

"Far too many individuals are familiar with the toll on our community caused by the use and abuse of opioids. It takes a toll on individuals, families, and the entire community. The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) has developed a comprehensive, three-pillar strategy to combat opioid addiction: prevent deaths from overdose and save lives, increase access to on-demand treatment and long-term recovery support, and provide education to reduce stigma and prevent addiction," said Baltimore Mayor Catherine E. Pugh. "But, this is one of those situations which you can never do enough to address, and where you always welcome additional partners and resources. I'm glad to be here today with representatives of CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield. We know CareFirst as the area's largest health insurer, but the company is also one of the biggest corporate philanthropists in the region, and this effort is great example of their commitment to greater Baltimore."

CareFirst is taking a number of steps to address opioid and substance use disorders:

- **Funding for Community-Based Initiatives:** In January CareFirst will issue a request for proposals (RFP) to community non-profit organizations serving the company's Maryland, Washington, D.C. and Northern Virginia Service area. Through an RFP to be issued in the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter of 2018, a total of \$1.5 million will be awarded for programs and initiatives designed to directly address opioid use, addiction, and related issues.

- **Expanded Network of Specialized Addiction Recovery Centers:** CareFirst has in place and continues to develop a network of high-performing addiction recovery centers. These partners are leaders in intensive outpatient programs, providing highly individualized treatment, including relapse prevention, coping strategies and medication assisted treatment.
- **New Behavioral Health and Substance Abuse Program:** Because many individuals with addiction have co-occurring medical and behavioral health disorders, CareFirst has developed a Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorder program through which primary care providers, nurses, and behavioral health providers can refer CareFirst members. In the program, members are assessed and connected to specially trained clinicians who work one-on-one with patients to identify mental health providers, assist with access, and coordinate their overall care.
- **New Quantity and Duration Limits:** Based on Centers for Disease Control Guidelines for the Management of Chronic Pain, CareFirst implemented in October of this year new requirements related to opioid prescription quantity and duration limits.
- **Enhanced Prescription Drug Monitoring:** CareFirst monitors controlled substance pharmacy data to identify members with multiple prescribers/pharmacies, excessive use and high claims costs which indicate behavior patterns that signal possible misuse. Pharmacists notify providers of the member's utilization history and work with them to outline and address concerns.

“All of these efforts are intended to work together, both to address what has become a public health crisis, and beyond that to treat addiction for what it is – a chronic disease,” said Dr. Daniel Winn, CareFirst Senior Medical Officer and Vice President. “Unfortunately, only one in ten people in the United States with addiction to alcohol and drugs are diagnosed and receive treatment – compared to 70 percent with hypertension or diabetes. Community-based efforts, new guidelines and programs to staunch the dangerous flow of opioids, and programs that comprehensively treat addiction and its attendant medical issues, are all necessary to address this pressing problem.”

The community funding RFP is expected to be release in January. Details on how to apply and specifics on the types of programs eligible for funding will be available at that time on [www.carefirst.com/community](http://www.carefirst.com/community).

### **About CareFirst**

In its 79th year of service, CareFirst, an independent licensee of the BlueCross BlueShield Association, is a not-for-profit health care company which, through its affiliates and subsidiaries, offers a comprehensive portfolio of health insurance products and administrative services to 3.2 million individuals and groups in Maryland, the District of Columbia and Northern Virginia. In 2016, CareFirst invested nearly \$44 million to improve overall health, and increase the accessibility, affordability, safety and quality of health care throughout its market areas. To learn more about CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, visit our website at [www.carefirst.com](http://www.carefirst.com) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#) or [Google+](#).