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**MAHP Member Health Plans Aggressively Move to Address Opioid Crisis**  
*MAHP Member Plans Expand Medication Assisted Treatment to Cover Methadone*  
*Association Will Host Forum on Best Practices on Addiction Treatment*

**Boston, MA** – Leading Massachusetts health plans today announced efforts to make coverage of Methadone available by July 1 in an effort to enhance access to services to treat opioid addiction that are evidence based and promote clinically appropriate care. Following recent discussions with state officials about the opioid crisis and measures health plans can take to address the growing statewide epidemic, the plans individually announced their enhanced coverage through MAHP.

"Our member health plans are committed to ensuring that all residents of the Commonwealth who need opioid addiction treatment are able to get the care they need," said Lora Pellegrini, MAHP President & CEO. "We look forward to working with Governor Baker and members of his administration, Attorney General Healey, legislators and local officials, and providers to address this crisis. Today's announcement demonstrates our members' commitment to helping patients access services and treatments that meet their specific clinical needs and are shown through evidence to be effective."

"This will add to the range of covered treatments for addiction, a serious disease which impacts far too many of our residents and their families," said Marylou Sudders, Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. "We applaud insurers for taking this proactive step."

"Through collaboration with advocates and organizations like MAHP, the Legislature has laid a strong foundation for substance addiction treatment by increasing access to care and changing the way we respond to unprecedented public health crises like the one we're currently confronting," said House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo (D-Winthrop). "I commend MAHP for taking this step. It will allow individuals to receive appropriate and specialized care as they work towards recovery."

"I am pleased to see that Methadone will now be a covered treatment option for people who have substance addiction," said Senator Flanagan (D-Leominster), Senate chair of the Joint Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse. "Methadone is one of the many tools of recovery, and can sometimes be the only option for those who want to stay sober."

Pellegrini further explained that health plans provide coverage for a broad range of services to treat opioid addiction, using nationally based guidelines established by the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), the leading experts on opioid addiction. "ASAM calls for establishing treatment plans that are developed based on the individualized needs of each patient. There is a growing body of evidence that shows that Methadone and other forms of medication-assisted treatment (MAT) are effective forms of treatment for those suffering with this chronic condition."

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In addition to inpatient and outpatient treatments, commercial health plans currently provide coverage for most MAT services, such as Suboxone and Vivitrol. While some health plans, including the Medicaid Managed Care Organizations, have covered Methadone for many years and others have covered it as a treatment option, typically it has not been covered as part of commercial coverage for maintenance treatment. Instead, the Commonwealth, like other states, has bulk purchased Methadone and made it available through state addiction programs and clinics. Today's announcement recognizes the clinical effectiveness of Methadone in treating certain patients with opioid addiction.

"Medication assisted treatment, of which Methadone is one, is an extremely useful treatment adjunct for opioid-dependent individuals, and we are very supportive of commercial insurers providing coverage for this service," said David Matteodo, executive director of the Massachusetts Association of Behavioral Health Systems.

Pellegrini noted that given the current public health crisis, there is a need to focus on interventions that are evidence based and have been shown to be effective for the treatment of opioid addiction. Pellegrini announced that MAHP will be hosting a half-day forum on March 9 at Suffolk University Law School with leading national opioid addiction experts to discuss evidence based treatment options that are providing the most promising outcomes for those addicted to these substances. "It is essential that care is based on treatments that have been proven to work, with providers practicing evidence based standards that place the patient at the center of care. Our forum will be an opportunity for stakeholders to hear from national leaders in the substance abuse field on medical best practice and effective policy for addiction treatment, examining existing clinical guidelines, levels of care, barriers to accessing appropriate care, and recommendations for an improved treatment landscape."

Details and an agenda on MAHP's forum on opioid addiction will be released as they are finalized.

**About MAHP**

*The Massachusetts Association of Health Plans represents 17 health plans covering more than 2.6 million Massachusetts residents. It is dedicated to improving health for all in Massachusetts by promoting affordable, safe and coordinated health care.*

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