

Psychiatric Health Systems Rebrands and Refocuses as Association for Behavioral Healthcare

If you are knowledgeable about the healthcare industry and have not heard of the National Association for Behavioral Healthcare, you needn't call into question how informed you really are. Rather, this is a reflection of a recent rebranding of a large behavioral healthcare organization with its eye on present needs and future growth.

NAPHS becomes NABH ... and reasserts its mission

The National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems (NAPHS), a not-for-profit advocacy group based in Washington D.C., has lobbied for some of the nation's largest psychiatric healthcare providers for more than eight decades. Last month it officially changed its name to the National Association for Behavioral Healthcare (NABH), and according to President and CEO Mark Covall, the new name is much more than gesture, and rather, is driven by the organization's goal of serving a greater number of providers and patients in today's world.

In a March press release, Covall stated: "Today, our country's behavioral healthcare challenges seem greater than ever. The opioid crisis, high rate of suicide, and spate of mass shootings remind us every day why our members are critical players in America's healthcare continuum. Our nation's behavioral health needs are as complex as they are numerous. That's why we decided our association's name should better reflect all our members and the comprehensive range of services they provide."

NABH focus: "Access, care and recovery"

Covall told Modern Healthcare that part of the rationale behind the rebranding (which includes a new tagline: "Access, care and recovery") is to more accurately reflect the group's expanded focus, particularly when it comes to addressing the nation's opioid epidemic. Covall cited a 2014 study by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) that revealed around 8 million adults experienced a behavioral health disorder as well as, simultaneously, a substance use disorder.

SAMHSA says that when both disorders are present in the same individual at the same time, medical professionals often have a steeper challenge in diagnosing each/both, which can explain the instances of such patients being treated for only one problem. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that 91 individuals die as a result of an opioid addiction every day in the U.S.

Covall said the organization's expanded focus on substance use disorders will not supplant its long-standing advocacy for meeting patients' behavioral health needs. "We want to focus on the patients that our members treat every day, and when you look at the patients that need mental health and addiction services, they really need a comprehensive approach," he said.

The mind/body question

Additionally, Covall discussed the trend in the healthcare field toward integrating the fields of primary care and behavioral healthcare. NABH believes in the importance of acknowledging the impact an individual's mental health has on his/her physical health.

“Our organization and our members have been advocating for integration of the mind and body,” Covall told Modern Healthcare. “We can’t treat the mind separate from the body—that’s the direction we believe behavioral healthcare is going, and that’s really a major reason why we wanted to change our name to more accurately describe the state of care and treatment.”

Last fall, NABH’s Board (at that time, NAPHS’s Board), when deciding on a rebrand for the organization, determined that the new name should: reflect the group’s goal of advocating for behavioral healthcare and represent providers delivering care to individuals with mental health and substance abuse disorders; reflect the association’s desire for a society in which behavioral healthcare is “recognized, respected, and allocated resources with fairness and equity as part of overall health”; reflect the organization’s diverse membership; and serve as an invitation for other organizations to join the association.

New name “positions the association for the future”

In a statement on NABH’s website announcing the name change last month, Board Chair Brent Turner said: “For 85 years, our association’s members have cared for those with mental health and substance use disorders, and always looking ahead to the new treatments, programs and services. Our Board understood that our new name should build on our association’s excellent and longstanding work — and, more important, position the association for the future.”

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