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New Tools and Resources Aim to Help Guide Local, County, and State Policymakers Make Community Investments of Opioid Settlement Funds

Washington, DC | August 31, 2022—The Duke-Margolis Center for Health Policy announced today, International Overdose Awareness Day, the launch of a new effort to assist communities and states in investing opioid settlement funds to support local, sustainable community-based substance use disorder (SUD) treatment and recovery infrastructure. Through a \$365,000 grant from the Elevance Health Foundation, Duke researchers will work with their strategic partner, Third Horizon Strategies, to create a series of toolkits and playbooks for policymakers to maximize use of these funds in their communities.

“With billions of time-limited opioid settlement funds flowing over the next 18 years toward local decision-makers, this a unique opportunity for communities to design, scale, and support local infrastructure that is attuned to the chronic nature of addiction and can fill needed gaps,” said **Dr. Mark McClellan, Director of the Duke-Margolis Center for Health Policy**. “However, only limited guidance and resources are currently available to help local and county officials make informed decisions on the substance use treatment needs in their communities. This important support from the Elevance Health Foundation will further the Center’s work on opioids and substance use disorder, including the workshops and publications geared toward providing policymakers practical steps toward ending the opioid addiction crisis. Through this grant, we will be able to provide policymakers the critical tools they need to create sustainable prevention and treatment options to tackle substance use disorder.”

Today, 9.5 million adults in the U.S. report having both a SUD and a mental illness, and SUD alone affect over 40 million Americans aged 12 and over. “The startling reality that millions of Americans are struggling with substance use disorder drives home our commitment to partner with organizations to

deliver solutions on local, state, and national levels,” said **Shantanu Agrawal, M.D., Chief Health Officer of Elevance Health**. “By acknowledging the physical, behavioral, and social drivers of health as they relate to substance use disorders, this important work will provide meaningful solutions to achieve better health and advance health equity.”

“In order to sustain the impact of settlement funds, policymakers need to be able to assess where specific gaps exist on the ground, in addition to the special needs of their population and local community,” said **Tym Rourke, Senior Director, Third Horizon Strategies** and former Chair of New Hampshire Governor’s Commission on Substance Use. “Our firm is thrilled to lend its consensus-building and market analytics skills to provide policymakers with actionable tools they need to make informed life-saving decisions.”

To maximize the use of these settlement dollars, over the next two years the Duke-Margolis-led effort will inform best practices for community-level investments in sustainable, recovery-oriented infrastructure, including:

- **Potential Need** tool that will allow local officials to understand prospective demand for specific substance use and mental health prevention, treatment, and recovery support services in their community.
- **Recovery Readiness** measurement tool to signal the capacity for communities, counties and related regions to support individuals in recovery within the broad mental health/substance use disorder support system.
- **Playbook for Local Officials** for investing opioid settlement funding in sustainable SUD treatment and recovery infrastructure, highlighting best practices and potential areas of investment, along with case studies from around country.
- **A measurement toolkit to allow local officials to measure progress in patient outcomes and community-level SUD infrastructure**, providing decision-makers and healthcare stakeholders with specific metrics for evaluating the impact of opioid litigation settlement dollars have on their communities.

About the Duke-Margolis Center for Health Policy

The mission of the Robert J. Margolis, MD, Center for Health Policy at Duke University is to improve health, health equity, and the value of health care through practical, innovative, and evidence-based policy solutions. For more information, visit healthpolicy.duke.edu and follow us on Twitter @DukeMargolis.

About Third Horizon Strategies

Third Horizon Strategies is a Chicago-based strategic, boutique advisory firm focused on shaping a future system that actualizes a sustainable culture of health nationwide. Staff located in Colorado, Illinois, Virginia, Connecticut, and New Hampshire support and lead client engagements spanning the country – from Washington state to Washington, D.C. The firm offers a 360° view of complex challenges across three horizons – past, present, and future – to help industry leaders and policymakers interpret signals and trends; design integrated systems; and enact changes so that all communities, families, and individuals can thrive. Learn more at www.thirdhorizonstrategies.com.

About Elevance Health Foundation

Elevance Health Foundation is the philanthropic arm of Elevance Health, Inc. The Foundation works to advance health equity by focusing on improving the health of the socially vulnerable through partnerships and programs in our communities with an emphasis on maternal child health; substance use disorder; and food as medicine. Through its key areas of focus, the Foundation also strategically aligns with Elevance Health's focus on community health and becoming a lifetime, trusted health partner that is fueled by its purpose to improve the health of humanity. To learn more about Elevance Health Foundation, please visit www.elevancehealth.foundation or follow us @ElevanceFND on Twitter and Elevance Health Foundation on Facebook.