



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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August 29, 2022 - BestSelf Behavioral Health, in partnership with Congressman Brian Higgins and numerous program partners, today announced that they have surpassed early goals for its innovative 24-7 Virtual Medicated Assisted Treatment Centers for individuals with opioid use disorder. In just three months, the program has serviced more than 50 individuals with substance use disorders. Those seeking treatment can access the on-call care directly without a referral from a physician or treatment center.

The approach utilizes evidenced-based medication assisted treatment (MAT) via the deployment of an existing pool of specially trained practitioners who will work on-call ensuring virtual access to MAT is always available to the region. The 24-7 Virtual MAT Center will include staffing from BestSelf, UBMD Family Medicine, Division of Addiction Medicine, and UBMD Emergency Medicine Service - Medication Assisted Treatment and Emergency Referrals (MATTERs) Program.

"This virtual hub is saving lives," **stated Elizabeth Woike-Ganga, President & Chief Executive Officer, BestSelf Behavioral Health.** "We knew this type of a resource was sorely needed in our community and that many with the need for treatment were not seeking it through traditional channels. This generous funding and the support of Congressman Higgins is vital to our efforts, and we are looking forward to working with multiple community partners on this project."

BestSelf was awarded funding in the amount of \$2,625,000 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) – Prescription Drug and Opioid Addiction (MAT-PDOA) grant program.

"The opioid epidemic has long impacted the Western New York Community and the COVID-19 has only exacerbated the challenges that people struggling with addiction face,"

said Congressman Brian Higgins. “This grant funding, provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), was an investment in removing barriers and increasing access to life-saving treatments by reaching those in need where they are in the community. Under the trusted leadership of BestSelf Behavioral Health, this program will only continue to further its impact, save lives, and make a difference for many Western New York families.”

To further address current treatment gaps, the 24-7 Virtual MAT Center staff will connect clients to long-term recovery supports such as substance use treatment disorder treatment providers based on location and client preference. Value Network, IPA, LLC is partnering with BestSelf to operationalize this connection by leveraging its 85 partner agencies across the region. Individuals seeking treatment can call the 24-7 Virtual MAT Center directly at 716-463-6222.

Andrea J. Wanat, Chief Operating Officer, Value Network IPA stated, “Value Network is pleased to work with our WNY Partners on this project and hope that we can assist with the development of protocols to connect patients in our community who are in need of long-term treatment and recovery programs.”

“The partnership between BestSelf Behavioral Health and the MATTERS Team providing 24/7 emergency telemedicine evaluations and referrals will absolutely save lives.” Stated by **Joshua Lynch, DO, FACEP, Clinical Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine, University at Buffalo.** “Patients can be assessed by emergency providers, given a prescription for medication to treat opioid use disorder, and get referred to a clinic of their choosing all without ever leaving their home.”

“BestSelf Behavioral Health’s virtual center opens another path for people with substance use disorder, which is a chronic disease of the brain, to access medication assisted treatment,” **said Erie County Commissioner of Health Dr. Gale Burstein.** “We welcome BestSelf’s efforts and appreciate federal support from Congressman Higgins’ office in expanding access to MAT in the Western New York region.”

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About BestSelf Behavioral Health

BestSelf Behavioral Health, Inc. is the largest community-based behavioral health organization serving children and adults with mental health and substance use disorders in WNY. We provide easy access to a full continuum of person-centered, trauma-informed behavioral health

treatment, rehabilitation and recovery services. BestSelf has an annual budget of \$94 million which serves more than 41,000 children and adults in 70+ locations in Western New York.