

## STANLY COUNTY LME/MCO DISENGAGEMENT PLAN

### I. PURPOSE

Stanly County is dedicated to improving the quality of life of the residents who call our community home. One of the key focus area goals for the Board of Commissioners is to improve public safety, health and wellness. With this being said, the Stanly County Board of Commissioners chose to pursue a relationship with Partners Health Management to manage our residents' behavioral health services funded by federal and state dollars, including Medicaid. Partners is a Local Management Entity/Managed Care Organization (LME/MCO), which is a governmental entity that manages mental health, intellectual/developmental disability and substance use services. Currently, our behavioral health services are managed by Cardinal Innovations Healthcare. However, Partners' intentional focus on community interaction and engagement with stakeholders, innovation and collaboration with providers and values based attributes, more closely aligns with Stanly County's vision of ensuring our citizens thrive in a healthy and safe community.

To prevent disruption of the behavioral health system in our county, this "Stanly County LME/MCO Disengagement Plan" has been developed to ensure a smooth and seamless transition for all those involved.

Our primary focus is to carry out this process with transparency, commitment to our community, and the involvement of those who will be impacted by the change. This plan primarily outlines the process for the County's disengagement from Cardinal. However, it references the process by which engagement will occur between Stanly County, Partners, and all relevant stakeholders. Partners has committed to working collaboratively with Stanly County and Cardinal to ensure a smooth transition for all involved. Stanly County has confidence and an expectation Cardinal Innovations will work collaboratively and cooperatively throughout the transition process.

### II. BACKGROUND

North Carolina law permits a county to choose its LME/MCO. On November 9, 2020, the Stanly County Board of County Commissioners voted unanimously to disengage from its current LME/MCO, Cardinal Innovations Healthcare, to realign with Partners Health Management. The resolution is attached and is also on our website at [www.stanlycountync.gov](http://www.stanlycountync.gov), where other information on this process (including this Disengagement Plan) is or will be posted.

### III. RATIONALE

Stanly County is committed to ensuring the best behavioral health system is available to residents in the community. We believe transitioning to the model of service management and community engagement operated by Partners will best accomplish this goal. Stanly County has engaged in analysis and review of the Partners' model of operations and have concluded it is one of intentional community integration at multiple levels. Leadership and staff throughout Partners are engaged in relationships within their communities, actively collaborating with stakeholders, providers, consumers and others to meet the challenges.

Stanly County also favors the Partners way of managing local maintenance of effort (MOE) contributions. Partners will work in collaboration with county officials and local stakeholders to develop plans to invest taxpayer funds on mutually developed projects to maximize benefits for our residents. Partners also

provides a transparent accounting of funds, frequent analysis and reporting of outputs, efficiency and outcomes and they promptly respond to requests from their counties to target MOE funds for desired projects on an annual basis.

Stanly County appreciates Partners' approach of inclusion in the development of their provider network. Stanly County has consistently desired more local behavioral health and substance abuse treatment options for our residents. Partners' hybrid approach to network development allows for flexibility and does not tightly limit providers or various levels of service.

Stanly County and Partners' have significant alignment when it comes to community priorities. Their implementation model is locally driven. Philosophically their style of execution aligns well with the views of Stanly County leadership. Stanly County believes problems are best solved at the local level and not addressed via a "cookie cutter", one size fits all fashion.

Additionally, Stanly County aligns well with Cabarrus and Union counties. Many of our providers are based in these counties and our counties have been historically linked when it comes to legacy area mental health service provision.

Partners has routinely demonstrated a high level of consumer engagement when compared to peer MCO entities in the state. State reports illustrating the number of individuals accessing care on a per capita basis indicate Partners consistently ranks near the top. This suggests a high level of accessibility of services for residents in the counties served.

Partners is also one of the highest performing programs as evaluated by the state contract external review organization. For the past two years, Partners has been at or near the top in the total score rating the performance by the independent, external review organization which indicates a commitment to excellence.

#### **IV. TIMELINE**

Disengagement will be effective as soon as reasonable and as permitted by law. While the default effective date of nine (9) months is recognized, Stanly County may seek to disengage and realign sooner to minimize any negative impact to consumers as a result of a slow transition. Stanly County acknowledges the official disengagement date will ultimately be determined by the Secretary of North Carolina's Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS). To protect our residents in greatest need, disengagement with Cardinal will occur simultaneously with realignment or "engagement" with Partners. The process will include a minimum of 60 days for the public to review and comment on this Disengagement Plan. Following the comment period and the 30 days of posting such comments, Stanly County intends to have ready for submission the Request to Disengage documentation and will look for approval within the 90 days outlined in rule.

Further, the County intends to seek a shortening of the overall 9-month requirement outlined in rule for the transition to become effective. A more timely transition, albeit with thorough and thoughtful engagement from the community, will best serve the county residents and minimize the delay in implementing improved behavioral health services and outcomes for our citizens.

## **V. DISENGAGEMENT**

This Disengagement Plan serves as a guide for the first step in the process of transitioning from one LME/MCO to the other. While this plan should not be considered all-inclusive, Stanly County has made every effort to identify the areas on which we need to focus and the necessary steps to ensuring the needs of our residents are met. Both Stanly County and Partners are dedicated to carrying out this plan, as outlined in the following focus areas:

### **a. Transition Planning**

To ensure active and robust community involvement in this transition and to facilitate input and feedback from subject matter experts, the Stanly County Manager will form an LME/MCO Realignment Committee consisting of key County officials and agencies, Partners, and other appropriate stakeholders. This will include the following, or their representatives, plus others as appointed by the County Manager:

- i. County Manager (Chair)
- ii. County DSS Director
- iii. County Human Services Planner & Evaluator
- iv. Partners in Health – Board Chair
- v. District Court representative
- vi. District Attorney (or designee)
- vii. Sheriff (or designee)
- viii. Atrium-Stanly Healthcare System Representative
- ix. One or more Partners executives and directors

This Committee will meet as needed to share information; to schedule listening and education meetings with key stakeholders (providers, consumers, advocates); to consult subject matter experts; and to assist the County and Partners in whatever tasks are needed to ensure a smooth disengagement and transition.

The County and Partners envision the transition plan to include a focus on our people, supporting the providers of behavioral health services in our community, the continuity of existing behavioral health projects and enhanced outcomes for those receiving services.

### **b. Continuity of Services Plan**

Stanly County recognizes the importance of ensuring services for its community are uninterrupted and provided with high quality, timeliness and a focus on community involvement. Therefore, a separate written Continuity of Services Plan is being developed and will be published shortly after this Disengagement Plan. Partners has committed to ensure all current providers contracted and in good standing with Cardinal and serving our county will be contracted with Partners as well, if not already. Likewise, Partners intends to honor consumer service authorizations, annual plans and other documentation and decisions essential to ensure a smooth transition.

### **c. Notification of Stakeholders**

Stanly County and Partners will collaborate to notify all stakeholders impacted by this transition. Additionally, a concentrated effort will be made to solicit comments, feedback and suggestions from consumers, advocates, self-advocates, providers, State and Local Consumer and Family Advisory Committees (CFACs), and all other interested parties. We will use our usual Stanly County established

communication methods, primarily our website, mailings, stakeholder meetings, press releases, and social media messaging. All input is welcome and encouraged.

**d. Community Initiatives**

Partners is committed to becoming ingrained in our community and supporting our current community initiatives involving behavioral health. A list of all current, planned and proposed projects/initiatives will be compiled and agreed upon prior to the transition effective date.

**e. Distribution of Real Property Plan**

In accordance with State law, a written Distribution of Real Property Plan must be developed during a LME/MCO realignment process. This disengagement involves no real property (land, buildings, etc.) to be distributed, so a Plan stating as much will be posted with or shortly after this Disengagement Plan.

**f. Financial Liabilities**

Stanly County affirms that, to its knowledge, it has no outstanding financial liabilities to Cardinal, nor will the County have any within 30 calendar days of the request to disengage. Should Cardinal reasonably disagree, the County will work amicably and promptly with Cardinal to resolve equitably and if unable to do so, defer the matter to the NCDHHS Secretary for resolution. Partners has agreed to work with the County to ensure its financial liabilities under maintenance of efforts requirements are not increased by realigning with Partners.

**VI. NEXT STEPS/PUBLIC COMMENT**

The law requires Stanly County to seek public comment on this Disengagement Plan. For 60 days from the posting of this Disengagement Plan on our website at [www.stanlycountync.gov](http://www.stanlycountync.gov), public comment is welcome and encouraged by email to [alucas@stanlycountync.gov](mailto:alucas@stanlycountync.gov) or by mail addressed to:

Stanly County Manager  
ATTN: LME/MCO Realignment  
1000 N. First Street, Suite 10A  
Albemarle, NC 28001

Following this public comment period, the County will post all responses for an additional 30 days. Stanly County will take into consideration feedback received, will review all written plans, and submit a written request to disengage to the Secretary of NCDHHS for approval (details of which are outlined in the NC Administrative Code referenced below).

In keeping with our dedication to transparency, both Stanly County and Partners commit to keeping the public informed during this process, including public meetings, information and listening sessions with key stakeholders and groups, and more.

**VII. AUTHORITY**

This Disengagement Plan has been developed in accordance with current state laws and regulations governing a counties' disengagement with an LME/MCO. Specifically, the following were used to create the plan and ensure compliance:

- North Carolina General Statute 122C-115 (a3)
- North Carolina Administrative Code 10A NCAC26C.0701-.0703