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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 19, 2019

OPTIMAE JOINS MAYORS IN MENTAL HEALTH ROUNDTABLE

May 19, 2019 (DES MOINES, Iowa) – Optimae LifeServices continued the national conversation about mental health on Friday by participating in a roundtable discussion with two mayors; one local, and one gaining national attention.

Optimae, a health care and human services agency that provides mental health and community-based services to residents from nearly half of Iowa’s counties, accepted a request from New York City Mayor and newly announced presidential candidate Bill de Blasio to meet with him and Des Moines Mayor Frank Cownie to shed light on the state of mental health services in the U.S.

“As a provider of mental health services for more than 30 years, Optimae was invited to speak with Mayor Cownie and Mayor de Blasio during de Blasio’s visit to Des Moines, and we accepted that invitation. We welcome any conversation that helps to reduce the stigma related to mental health and discuss ways to better serve those with mental illness,” said Bill Dodds, Optimae president and CEO.

“We applaud the recent efforts of the Iowa General Assembly and Governor Reynolds that led to the passing and signing of the children’s mental health bill,” Dodds continued. “As we explore ways of improving access to services for all Iowans, we appreciate the willingness of Governor Reynolds’ staff and administration to meet and discuss potential solutions. Similarly, we welcomed the opportunity to discuss the subject at a national level Friday.”

A key point of the discussion with de Blasio was mental health parity, the equal treatment of mental health conditions and substance use disorders in insurance plans. If a plan has parity, mental health conditions are eligible for the same level of visits received for physical conditions. Federal parity, detailed in the 2008 Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA), makes inclusion of some mental health benefits optional.

The group also discussed the need to increase education surrounding people’s mental health needs, thus reducing stigma. Whether in a rural or urban area, many U.S. citizens avoid seeking the help they need to manage their mental health conditions because of what friends, employers or family members might think about their diagnoses.

“Stigma is an issue of national importance,” Dodds said. “Whether in Des Moines, Davis City or New York City, people must feel safe enough to seek assistance.”

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About Optimae LifeServices

Optimae LifeServices, Inc. provides health care and human services for individuals with disabilities and mental illness from more than 40 central, eastern and southern Iowa counties. For more than three decades, we have equipped our customers with supports and services that encourage choice, empowerment and community integration. Our programs include community-based, behavioral health, home health, rehabilitation and residential care services. We advocate for the rights and needs of more than 5,000 Iowans each year, providing the quality of care we would want for our own family.