



**NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Unique Pilot Program Reduces Emergency Department Visits and Improves Health Outcomes**

**Lewiston, Maine** – Community Health Options, in partnership with a local hospital, tested an innovative program designed to reduce emergency department utilization and promote better health outcomes for its Members through education and care management interventions.

As part of the pilot, conducted from October 2015 to October 2016, a telephone and in-person based care management program was established for Health Options Members who visited the emergency department (ED) multiple times. This facilitated timely communications and coordination of care between Health Options and hospital emergency department care managers.

“We partnered with ambulatory care practice managers affiliated with St. Mary’s Regional Medical Center for this pilot,” said Kathryn Caiazzo, Manager of Population Health at Health Options. “St. Mary’s would provide our care managers with a biweekly list that we reviewed to identify key motivators to emergency department visits.”

“The pilot identified several key reasons driving ED utilization: avoidable use of ED for non-emergency presentations when alternate levels of care such as Primary Care Provider (PCP) office visit or urgent care center are a more appropriate setting for the clinical presentation; limited understanding of what constitutes a medical emergency; not having an established relationship with a PCP; and lack of follow up with a PCP post-ED discharge, increasing the likelihood of avoidable repeat use of the ED,” noted Maggie Kelley, AVP Medical Services.

Caiazzo noted that “Health Options’ care managers conducted interventions, during which they educated Members about their chronic condition and appropriate use of the Emergency Department versus Urgent Care. They also offered to assist Members in selecting a Primary Care Provider (PCP) or scheduling a follow-up appointment with their PCP, and provided education about their health Plan benefits.”

“We are encouraged by the results of this pilot,” said Kelly. “We plan to continue to deliver high-quality services that improve the lives of our Members through partnerships like this in the future. Together we can improve lives, cut costs, and create an overall better experience of care for Maine people.”

Community Health Options is expanding this program to additional hospitals throughout Maine, especially those with higher emergency department utilization rates among Health Options Members.

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**About Community Health Options** – Community Health Options (Health Options) is a non-profit, Member-led health plan providing comprehensive, Member-focused health insurance benefits for individuals, families, and businesses. Health Options is a Consumer Operated and Oriented Plan (CO-OP) dedicated to providing affordable, high-quality health benefits through productive partnerships with Members, businesses, and a broad network of providers. Visit the website: [HealthOptions.org](http://HealthOptions.org) for more information about Health Options.