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Amida Care Joins Advocates, Elected Officials, and Health Care Leaders in Albany for 2018 Ending the Epidemic Summit

Albany, NY -- On December 4 and 5, Amida Care, New York's largest not-for-profit Medicaid Special Needs Health Plan, joined advocates, health care leaders, and elected officials at the 2018 Ending the Epidemic Summit at the Empire State Plaza Convention Center. New York State has achieved record-low levels of new HIV diagnoses, with 2,769 diagnoses in 2017, down about 4 percent from 2016's 2,881 new HIV diagnoses. Amida Care led workshops and poster presentations that highlighted the need for programs and initiatives that will help meet the goal of New York State's [Blueprint to End the HIV/AIDS Epidemic \(EtE\) by the year 2020](#)—to have fewer than 750 new HIV infections annually.

Amida Care presented two poster sessions: “Viral Load Suppression of Members Enrolled in a Medicaid Special Needs Plan (SNP) in New York City: A Cohort Analysis” and “Viral Load Suppression, CD4 Count, and Comorbidities Among a Cohort of Persons of Transgender Experience Living with HIV/AIDS in New York City.” The research illustrated the power of Amida Care's unique model of care to partner with community-based organizations and primary care providers to improve rates of viral load suppression among plan members. Achieving an “undetectable” viral load enables them to live healthier lives and makes it virtually impossible for them to transmit the virus to others. Research also focused on Amida Care's transgender members, with findings showing that 70% have achieved viral suppression. The top three comorbidities among members of transgender experience were drug dependence (55%), depression (42%), and nutritional deficiency (29%), which suggests that interventions for people of transgender experience should focus on substance use programs, mental health initiatives, and food security/nutrition.

Amida Care also led two breakout sessions during the Summit. “Employing Consumer Workers to Reach ETE Goals: Developing and Implementing Successful Peer Programs” discusses peer workers' powerful ability to use their experience to assist others in improving their health. Peer certification and job training programs empower health care consumers as workers and demonstrate to community providers that they too benefit when they employ people living with HIV. Workers gain critical training, work experience and technical skills needed to gain and keep living-wage jobs. Amida Care has provided job training and placement since 2014. Thanks to generous support from the New York City Council, since 2016 Amida Care has partnered with six Community Health Centers to provide funding and technical assistance support for these safety-net providers to employ consumer workers within their own HIV, HCV, and harm reduction programs. Consumer workers are matched with health care providers, where they apply their lived experiences to support others and improve care. This innovative approach produces Medicaid cost savings by preventing more intensive and expensive care, including emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

“Developing a Comprehensive Transgender Health Program within Medicaid Managed Care: Best Practices and Lessons Learned” details services that Amida Care offers to address the unique needs of transgender individuals, including care coordination, gender-affirming primary care and behavioral health services, hormone replacement therapy, gender-affirming surgeries, trauma-informed care, sexual health services including access to PrEP, and job training/placement.