



# VHS NEWS

## VHS News

Valley Hope Solutions has been providing billing and administrative services for behavioral health issues for more than 50 years, we are even more focused today on keeping our stakeholders informed of leading stories and issues pertaining to our ever-changing industry. We hope this serves to be an informative resource, while providing helpful tips, networking events and educational opportunities. Thank you for your continued support of Valley Hope Solutions - enjoy the journey with us!



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**UPCOMING  EVENTS**

# 44th Annual Winter Symposium

January 28 - January 31, 2018  
Colorado Springs, CO

[Learn More on their website](#)



## National Wreaths Across America Day

Observed annually on the 3rd Saturday in December, National Wreaths Across America Day is a movement to cover all Veterans grave markers with a Christmas wreath.

Remember. Honor. Teach. This is the mission of Wreaths Across America

[Learn More on their website](#)



## 16 INSURANCE COMPANIES MAKE COMMITMENT TO ADDRESS OPIOID CRISIS

Nov 9, 2017 Forbes

On Wednesday, Gary Mendell, founder and CEO Shatterproof; and CEO Dr. Thomas McLellan, former

deputy director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy; Chris Hocevar, president (strategy, segments and solutions) of Cigna Corporation; and Mary Ann Christopher, vice president (clinical operations and transformation) of Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield New Jersey, announced that 16 major healthcare payers would adopt eight “National Principles of Care” for the treatment of addiction.

Unless you have been staying in the locker room all this time, you've probably heard that addiction to opioid medications has become so widespread that it's a national crisis (and recently declared a nationwide public health emergency). However, a concern is that many efforts to address the crisis have been stuck in the player lineup announcement phase. In other words, things have been a bit like that scene in Monty Python's *Life of Brian* movie where a council keeps discussing why they should be taking immediate action but never actually takes any action.

Wanting to get everyone on to the field to tackle the opioid crisis (yes, I know there's no tackling in baseball), Mendell and Shatterproof helped convene the Substance Use Disorder Treatment Task Force in April 2017. Securing commitments from the following 16 healthcare payers is the latest step taken by this task force: This group includes six of the largest payers in the United States, covers over 248 million patient lives, and has provided letters of commitment and signed a memorandum of understanding to advance the following eight “National Principles of Care”:

1. Universal screening for substance use disorders across medical care settings
2. Personalized diagnosis, assessment, and treatment planning
3. Rapid access to appropriate Substance Use Disorder care
4. Engagement in continuing long-term outpatient care with monitoring and adjustments to treatment
5. Concurrent, coordinated care for physical and mental illness
6. Access to fully trained and accredited behavioral health professionals
7. Access to Food And Drug Administration (FDA)-approved medications
8. Access to non-medical recovery support services

Aetna, AmeriHealth, Caritas Family of Companies, Anthem Inc.  
Beacon Health Options, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Cigna

Full article and list of providers [Read more](#)

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## HOLIDAY HIGHS AND LOWS - UNCOVERING THE HIDDEN EFFECTS OF AMERICA'S HOLIDAY SEASON

For many Americans, the end of the year brings images of happy families gathered around a Christmas

tree, big dinners of turkey and stuffing, holiday music, and cozy fires. For others, **the holidays can be a much darker and more difficult time** – a time of family conflict, financial strain, loneliness, grief, and seasonal affective disorder.

If you find the holidays to be an emotionally difficult time, you are certainly not alone. A Google search for “grief and the holidays” shows nearly 2.2 million results. Seasonal affective disorder (also known as SAD and seasonal depression) affects 6 percent of Americans. Another 14 percent experience a lesser form of seasonal mood change known as the winter blues.

The emotional strains of the holidays and winter weather take a grave toll – during the holiday months of December and January, the CDC reports that alcohol-and-drug-induced deaths spike.

To better understand the emotional toll of the holiday season and how it affects those who are struggling with drug or alcohol dependency, we surveyed more than 2,000 people about their emotional state during the holidays. Our results indicate that the majority of Americans are either overwhelmingly or moderately stressed during the holidays. **For someone struggling with drug or alcohol addiction, the holidays can be an especially trying time to maintain sobriety.**

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## **ADVANCING THE PRACTICE OF PAIN MANAGEMENT UNDER THE HHS OPIOID STRATEGY**

November 1, 2017

By: Christopher M. Jones PharmD, MPH and Vanila M. Singh, MD, MACM

Over the past 15 years, communities across America have been devastated by increasing prescription and illicit opioid abuse, addiction, and overdose.

In 2016, 11 million Americans misused prescription opioids, nearly 1 million used heroin, and 2.1 million had an opioid use disorder due to prescription opioids or heroin. And every day, an estimated 90 Americans die from an opioid overdose—resulting in more than 300,000 deaths since 2000. Meanwhile, an estimated 25 million Americans experience pain every day. For many of these individuals, this pain interferes with their physical and mental health, work productivity, and ability to engage in social activities. The opioid crisis has a variety of causes. In many communities, it has been driven by both socioeconomic challenges and lack of attention to behavioral health issues. Research has also shown that the significant

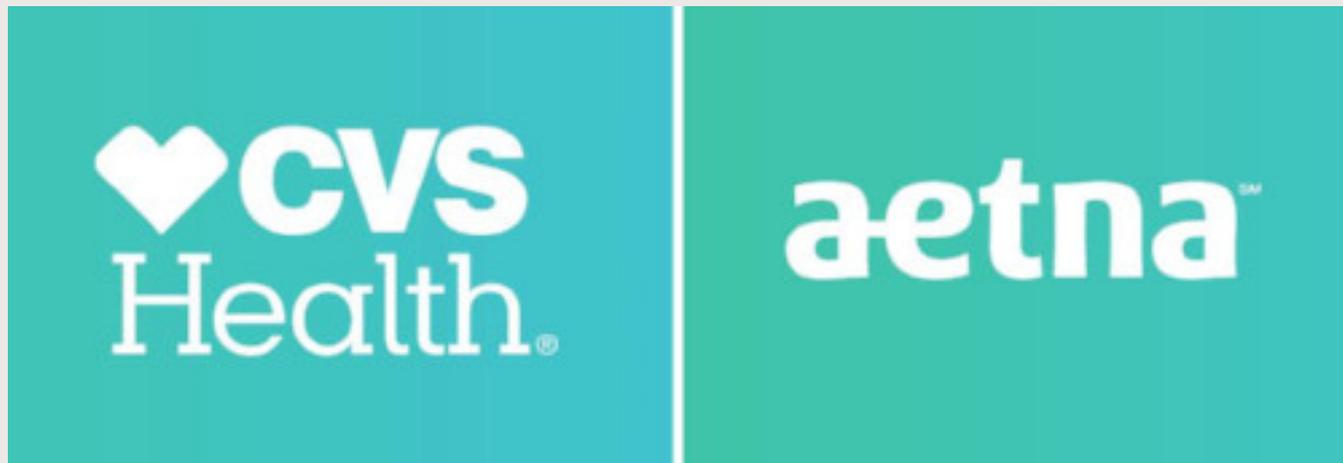
rise in prescribing of opioid pain medications that began in the mid to late 1990s has been a key factor in the increase in opioid use, abuse, overdose, and death.

Transforming how we treat pain and recalibrating the role opioid medications play in pain care are a critical part of achieving the goals of reducing opioid harms and improving the quality of life for patients living with pain.

Rethinking pain treatment is a critical piece of the five-point Opioid Strategy HHS unveiled in April 2017. The strategy aims to:

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## **CVS IS BUYING HEALTH INSURANCE GIANT AETNA, THE COMPANIES ANNOUNCED SUNDAY**

If approved, the \$69 billion acquisition -- \$77 billion including debt -- would drastically remap the health care industry. CVS Health (CVS) is a massive drugstore chain and prescription drug insurer, while Aetna (AET) is one of the nation's largest health insurers.

It would also go down as the largest health insurance deal in history, far exceeding Express Scripts (ESRX)' \$29 billion acquisition of Medco in 2012, the last record-holder.

The acquisition is not a done deal. It will have to be approved by antitrust regulators, who have been skeptical of similar health care mergers.

Buying Aetna puts CVS in a better position to compete with other integrated health care providers, such as UnitedHealthcare (UNH) and pharmacy benefits manager Optum. PBMs like Optum and CVS's Caremark help manage prescription drug plans for commercial health insurers.

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# Valley Hope Solutions

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Valley Hope Solutions' mission is to help with the quality of care for patients seeking mental and behavioral health treatment, by providing billing and support services led by industry experts, so healthcare providers can focus on the most important element of recovery: the patients.

### ***Valley Hope Solutions Services include:***

- Experts in Electronic Insurance Claim Submission
- Stringent Collection follow-up process
- Eligibility and Benefit Verification Services
- Insurance Contract Negotiations and SCA
- Administrative/Operational Consulting Services
- Boutique Billing (Specialty Services)
- Specialized Consulting For All Your Business And Accreditation Needs

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