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NEWS RELEASE

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Sentara RMH Receives Federal Grant to Combat Opioid Misuse
Prevention initiative focused on women 35 and older in Sentara RMH Service Area

OVERVIEW

- **Opioid misuse and overuse affects women more than men, locally and nationally**
- **Sentara RMH partnering with Valley Program for Aging Services, VDH and Strength in Peers**
- **First Chronic Pain Self-Management workshop in Harrisonburg begins October 31**

HARRISONBURG, VA – Sentara RMH Medical Center has been awarded a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women’s Health (OWH) to help prevent opioid misuse in the Sentara RMH service region, particularly among women.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), between 1999 and 2015, overdose deaths from prescription pain killers increased nationally by 218 percent among men, while for women it increased more than 471 percent. The CDC notes that women are more likely to experience chronic pain and to be prescribed opioid pain medications for longer periods and in higher doses than men.

Sentara RMH will partner with Valley Program for Aging Services (VPAS), the Central Shenandoah Health District of the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), and Strength in Peers in using the federal grant money to help combat opioid misuse among women 35 and older. They seek to lower the number of inappropriate prescriptions provided to women in the central Shenandoah Valley, by providing support and education for both women and healthcare providers in the community, and by removing unneeded opioid medications from the community through drug take-back programs and other means.

“This new initiative is one additional way that Sentara RMH has been working to reduce the incidence of opioid misuse in our community,” said Katherine Robinson, Community Health Manager for Sentara RMH. “For example, recently Sentara IT linked access from Epic, the hospital’s medical record system, to the Virginia Prescription Management Program, which is a valuable resource for

physicians and other providers, enabling them to see which active prescriptions for controlled substances a patient has. These new grant-funded activities will complement the initiatives Sentara RMH already has in place to combat opioid misuse and overuse.”

Healthcare providers will be able to refer patients, as appropriate, to primary and secondary prevention programs funded by the grant, Robinson noted. Primary prevention will be offered through Stanford’s Chronic Pain Self-Management Program (CPSMP) by VPAS. Secondary prevention services will be offered through peer support services by Strength in Peers. Medication disposal kits that degrade unneeded or expired medications, rendering them unusable and environmentally safe for disposal, will be provided by all partners, including VDH.

“As a result of this project, women in the Sentara RMH service region will be better able to manage their chronic pain and those stressors that are associated with opioid misuse,” Robinson said. “And providers in the Sentara RMH service region will have the knowledge and tools they need to limit inappropriate opioid prescriptions.”

The beginning session of the first Chronic Pain Self-Management workshop in the area will be held Tuesday, Oct. 31, at the Harrisonburg Community Health Center, 1380 Little Sorrel Drive, Harrisonburg. For more information, contact Joyce Nussbaum, Valley Program for Aging Services, at 540-615-5341 or at joyce@vpas.info.

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About Sentara

[Sentara Healthcare](#) celebrates nearly 130 years in pursuit of its mission – we improve health every day. Sentara is an integrated, not-for-profit system of 12 hospitals in Virginia and Northeastern North Carolina, including a Level I trauma center, the nationally-ranked Sentara Heart Hospital, two orthopedic hospitals, accredited Sentara Cancer Network and the Sentara Neurosciences Institute. The Sentara family also includes four medical groups, Nightingale Regional Air Ambulance and ground medical transport, senior care, home care and hospice, nursing rehabilitation centers, ambulatory outpatient campuses, advanced imaging and diagnostic centers, a clinically integrated network, the Sentara [College of Health Sciences](#) and the [Optima Health Plan](#) serving 450,000 members in Virginia, North Carolina and Ohio. With nearly 28,000 employees, Sentara is strategically focused on clinical quality and safety, innovation and creating an extraordinary healthcare experience for our patients and members.