



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **SINFONÍA FAMILY SERVICES OF LOUISIANA PARTNERS WITH TULANE UNIVERSITY TO LAUNCH EARLY PSYCHOSIS INTERVENTION CLINIC IN NEW ORLEANS**

New Orleans, LA, August 26, 2015-Sinfonia Family Services of Louisiana, in partnership with Dr. Ashley Weiss, child and adolescent psychiatrist at Tulane University School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences is launching the Early Psychosis Intervention Clinic (EPIC-NOLA). This is a comprehensive early intervention program targeting teens and young adults first experiencing psychotic symptoms with the overarching goal of getting young people back on track in their lives while providing gold-standard psychiatric care.

The EPIC-NOLA clinic is modeled after the Specialized Treatment in Early Psychosis (STEP) program at Yale University School of Medicine. Founded by Dr. Vinod Srihari, the STEP clinic has recently published results from the first randomized-controlled trial of first-episode services in the United States. The study found that 75% of FEP patients who had access to services such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), vocational supports, and family education avoided hospitalization during a 1-year period compared with just over 50% of those allocated to usual care.

There is considerable national conversation about the importance of early intervention for psychosis, which is a psychiatric symptom of a mental illness, experienced as a loss of contact with reality. In 2014, Congress directed SAMHSA to require that 5% of their Community Health Services Block Grant to address the needs of people with early serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), people with schizophrenia have higher rates of heart disease and premature death, 10% die by suicide, and the economic burden is greatest during the first year following the index (first) episode. The promising news is that international and national research has shown that specialized, early treatment of psychotic disorders improves not only medical outcomes, but social, and quality of life outcomes as well.

“I’d like to put first episode psychosis in the real-world context. These are adolescents and young adults who may be completing their education, getting their first jobs, moving away from home for the first time, and becoming independent individuals. In essence, they are figuring out who they are and who they want to be, so having a life-altering diagnosis can be traumatic. EPIC-NOLA represents the opportunity to help these individuals during a critical period of not only their illness, but their lives. Our mission is to help patients become responsible for their health, recognize their diagnosis does not define them, and support them in continued pursuit of their goals,” says Dr. Weiss.

Kathleen Saintcross, State Director for Sinfonia Family Services of Louisiana, believes that “the passionate, talented and trained team at Sinfonia, with the guidance of Dr. Weiss, can help change the trajectory of major mental illness and provide hope to the individual and their family, decrease fear and

stigma, and help people towards recovery.”

Bess Hart, Deputy Director for Sinfonia Family Services of Louisiana, feels that “our focus on early intervention of psychosis will make a true impact for the mental health system in New Orleans, and the relationships of the lifestyle of the individuals in our program. Our staff are truly top-tier and dedicated to this outcome.”

“As an innovative private-academic partnership, EPIC-NOLA is the first of its kind to provide this type of programming in Louisiana. Currently providing services in the greater New Orleans area, but recognizing the greater need, we hope to replicate the model throughout the state”, says Jo-Ann Prisco, Sinfonia Healthcare Corporation Executive Vice President. Jo-Ann is responsible for introducing Sinfonia Family Services and their unique continuum in eastern markets.

**About Sinfonia Family Services:**

Sinfonia means "symphony" and since the 16th century has represented the "sounding together" of a variety of instruments to produce a harmonious sound. Sinfonia Family Services provides innovative, comprehensive care and integrated wellness services to individuals and families, with a commitment to compassion and excellence and a demonstrated ability to effect consumer-centered change. The vision of Sinfonia Family Services is to be the premier provider of high quality, evidence informed, comprehensive services to children, adults, and families in the communities served. Services are typically delivered in consumers' homes and are designed to prevent more intrusive and costlier care. The Sinfonia Family Services Eastern Region Administrative Office, located in Port St Lucie Florida, supports the following subsidiary companies:

- **Sinfonia Family Services of Florida**, with offices in Ft Myers, Ft. Pierce, and Gainesville
- **Sinfonia Family Services of Louisiana**, with offices in Metairie, New Orleans, and Covington
- **Quality Life Counseling of New Orleans (QLCNO)** with offices in New Orleans and Metairie, Louisiana
- **Sinfonia Family Services of Maine**, with offices in South Portland, Saco and Brunswick
- **Family and Community Support Services**, with offices in Farmville and Richmond, Virginia

About Sinfonia HealthCare:

Sinfonia HealthCare was launched in January 2013, in Tucson, Arizona, by pioneering healthcare executives Fletcher McCusker and Michael Deitch, the CEO & CFO team and founders of Providence Service Corporation (Nasdaq: PRSC). Sinfonia has created an innovative approach to community based medical care by establishing a full continuum of health services including: hospice, home health, companion care, primary care, wellness, and medication therapy management. Sinfonia also operates a behavioral health division designed to integrate mental health, pharmacy and primary care throughout the eastern United States.

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