



## AUG. 17, 2023 | COMMUNICATION BULLETIN 2023-24 ISSUE 7

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### ALL NETWORK PROVIDERS

#### Provider Touchpoint Tomorrow, Aug. 18, 2023, 11 a.m.-12 p.m.

The Provider Touchpoint webinar is your source for the latest information on topics that affect Vaya Health network providers. We encourage all network providers to attend. Registration is not required. The link to each webinar is published both the week prior to and the week of the event in the Provider Communication Bulletin.

**PROVIDER TOUCHPOINT – AUG. 18, 2023**

#### Xylazine Information for Health Care Workers

Xylazine is contributing to an increasing number of overdose deaths in North Carolina, including in the Vaya region. Read below for more information for health care professionals.

##### **Xylazine Overview and Use Increases**

Xylazine is a powerful sedative and tranquilizer used in veterinary medicine. Xylazine is not an opioid, but instead is an alpha-2 agonist, which is related to a class of blood pressure medications. Illicit xylazine is commonly found in powder form and mixed with heroin, fentanyl, fentanyl analogues, and other illicit opioids. It has also been found in samples of cocaine and methamphetamine. Using substances that contain both fentanyl and xylazine creates an increased risk of fatal overdose.

The [U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration \(DEA\)](#) has reported an increase in [xylazine detection nationwide](#), with the southern region of the United States seeing the largest growth between 2020 and 2021 at 193%. The DEA has seized xylazine and fentanyl mixtures (also called “tranq”) in 48 states.

Since first launching in 2021, the [UNC Street Drug Analysis Lab](#) and [North Carolina Survivors Union](#) found 153 of 574 tested drug samples from North Carolina contained xylazine. Most recently, xylazine-positive samples came from Guilford, Randolph, Robeson, Surry, Buncombe, Wake, and Henderson counties.

### How to Spot Xylazine Use, Toxicity, and Withdrawal

Xylazine injection may cause wounds and ulcers in locations not being used for injection. These wounds may appear as “pick marks” but often worsen and become ulcers or open wounds. Wounds may be more common on the legs and arms of people who inject drugs or who otherwise [ingest substances containing xylazine](#), often beginning as small bumps with a white or purple center with a dark red fluid. People who use drugs may be using xylazine knowingly or unknowingly.

Signs of acute toxicity may include central nervous system (CNS) and respiratory depression, hypotension, bradycardia, hypothermia, miosis, or high blood glucose levels. Severe CNS depression can cause the tongue to relax and block the individual’s airway. Xylazine toxicity resembles opioid toxicity, making it difficult to distinguish between the two. Health care professionals who see patients with severe, necrotic skin ulcerations should consider repeated xylazine exposure.

[Some withdrawal symptoms](#) associated with xylazine include non-specific anxiety, high blood pressure, increased heart rate, sweating, restlessness, agitation, and irritability.

### Learn More

For more information, review the NCDHHS [“Know What’s in Your Drugs” fact sheet](#) about xylazine and the Department’s [Xylazine Exposure Guidance](#) memo (May 12, 2023).

## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH, I/DD, AND TBI PROVIDERS

### Urgent Network Need: Providers of I/DD Psychological Evaluations, LOC Determinations

Vaya has an immediate need for providers offering I/DD psychological evaluations and level of care (LOC) determinations for members who were recently awarded NC Innovations Waiver slots and live in one of the following counties: Buncombe, Caldwell, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Person, Polk, Stokes, Transylvania, Vance, Wilkes, or Yancey. Eligible providers must be enrolled in the Vaya network prior to service provision.

Psychological evaluations must include the member’s developmental history to support the LOC determination, cognitive and adaptive functioning measures, any necessary testing to clarify diagnoses, and other assessments based on identified needs.

Vaya offers a bundled enhanced rate for the completion of the evaluation and LOC determination. To learn more, email [provider.info@vayahealth.com](mailto:provider.info@vayahealth.com).

## LEARNING AND PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES

### Delay in Person-Centered Planning Training, Compliance Requirement

NCDHHS has pushed back the debut of a Person-Centered Planning training on the UNC Behavioral Health Springboard website from Aug. 11, 2023, to Sept. 15, 2023.

Providers will not be required to comply with the new standards outlined in the [Person-Centered Planning Guidance Document](#) until Nov. 1, 2023. For more information, email Brittany Jones at [Brittany.T.Jones@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Brittany.T.Jones@dhhs.nc.gov).

### Vaya to Sponsor CWCN DDS Certification for Up to Five

# Provider Staff

Vaya's [Children with Complex Needs](#) (CWCN) Workforce Development Plan allocates funding from NCDHHS for up to five network provider staff to obtain their [Dual Diagnosis Specialist](#) (DDS) certification through the [National Association for the Dually Diagnosed](#) (NADD).

Selected individuals will participate alongside Vaya staff in virtual monthly cohort learning sessions, facilitated by Vaya, and the [40th Annual NADD Conference](#) on Dec. 13-15, 2023, in Nashville, Tennessee. Please note that providers are required to pay for conference-related transportation and any hotel and meal costs above the September 2023 federal government per diem rate.

To be considered, providers must serve Medicaid-eligible individuals ages 5-20 with both I/DD and mental health diagnoses and who are at risk for not being able to return to or maintain placement in a community setting.

Interested providers should send their name, credentials, organization, contact information, and a brief summary of their experience serving children with complex needs no later than Aug. 31, 2023, to [provider.training@vayahealth.com](mailto:provider.training@vayahealth.com).

**Why did I receive this email?** Vaya Health requires all network providers to subscribe to our Provider Communication Bulletin. For more information, reference our [Provider Operations Manual](#).

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Vaya Health | 200 Ridgefield Court, Suite 218, Asheville, NC 28806

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