

*For immediate release*

## **Deal Reached to Preserve Critical Services for New Yorkers with Disabilities** *First and only Health Home in New York State to focus on people with physical disabilities*

**January 8, 2019 – New York City** – Independence Care System (ICS) has reached an agreement with the New York State Department of Health (DOH) to close its managed long-term care plan (MLTC) and to open the first and only “Health Home” in New York State specializing in care coordination for people with physical disabilities. The new ICS Health Home will bring the disability-expert care coordination practices ICS has developed over almost two decades to eligible residents of Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx.

Health Homes are not “homes.” Rather, a Health Home is designated by New York State to provide care coordination for Medicaid-eligible residents with multiple health conditions. The goal is to make sure members get the care and services they need to be as healthy as possible.

The ICS MLTC will close on March 31, 2019 and the new ICS Health Home will begin operations the following day, on April 1.

Current ICS members who do not choose another MLTC plan will be automatically enrolled into the MLTC plan of Visiting Nurse Services of New York, VNSNY CHOICE, on April 1. Under the agreement negotiated between ICS, DOH and VNSNY CHOICE, those ICS members who enroll in VNSNY CHOICE will be guaranteed the same level of services they currently receive for one year.

ICS members who choose to enroll in an MLTC other than VNSNY CHOICE will be guaranteed the same level of services they currently receive for 120 days. ICS is encouraging its current members to wait for automatic enrollment into VNSNY CHOICE to maximize the period of guaranteed continuity of care.

This agreement is the result of months of collaborative work between ICS, VNSNY CHOICE and DOH, with input from the disability rights community.

“DOH worked with us over many months to ensure that we will be able to use the specialized knowledge and skills we have developed to continue serving New Yorkers with disabilities, some of whom have been ICS members for almost two decades,” said ICS Chief Operating Officer Regina Estela. “We are thrilled that ICS will be able to continue filling the critical need for comprehensive disability-expert care coordination.”

“ICS has an impressive record of helping our members avoid disability-related health crises and unnecessary hospitalizations and nursing home stays,” said ICS President Rick Surpin. “Our services are vital to ensuring that New Yorkers with disabilities are able to live safely and independently in their communities, which lies at the heart of the ICS mission.”

ICS, which opened its doors in 2000, was created to fill a gap in managed long-term care for people with physical disabilities. It quickly became the care management plan of choice for New

Yorkers with spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, amputation, muscular dystrophy and other disabilities, all of which carry condition-specific health risks. ICS's care management staff and its network of providers and partners are experts in working with people living with these conditions, and helping them to live as healthfully and independently as possible in the community.

However, caring for a high proportion of members with significant-to-severe disabilities made it increasingly fiscally unsustainable for ICS to continue as an MLTC plan. As ICS's financial burden increased, and it became clear that ICS might have to close, the State was contacted by large numbers of members, advocates and clinicians noting the importance of keeping ICS's disability-expert services available to those who rely upon them.

While carefully considering input from ICS members and their families, healthcare providers, nonprofit leaders, elected officials, disability experts and disability rights advocates, DOH realized that ICS closing would leave a gaping hole in care, and began looking for a way to preserve the agency and to make its disability-expert care coordination more widely available, while putting it on a sound financial footing. By designating the new ICS Health Home, DOH has signaled its strong commitment to continuing to serve people with disabilities.

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