



THE HACKETT CENTER

FOR MENTAL HEALTH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Hackett Center for Mental Health Names Renowned Mental Health Policy Expert Dr. Gary Blau As New Executive Director

HOUSTON, Texas, July 16, 2019 – The Hackett Center for Mental Health announced today that Gary M. Blau, Ph.D., will be its new Executive Director. For the past 15 years, Dr. Blau has served as Chief of the Child, Adolescent and Family Branch for the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in Maryland. He will assume his new role in Houston beginning Sept. 13.

“After 25 years in government on the federal and state level, it’s been a dream for me to be able to take on a role such as this with a focus on putting policy into practice,” Dr. Blau said. “I’m thrilled with this opportunity to take my knowledge and skills and apply them to efforts in Houston, the greater Gulf Coast, and across Texas.”

At SAMHSA, Dr. Blau provided national leadership for children’s mental health, helping create systems of care across the country – including many projects in Texas – and launching an array of high-impact policy and practice transformation efforts that have changed the landscape of mental health for children. Prior to his work on the national level, Dr. Blau served as Connecticut’s Director of Mental Health and as Bureau Chief for Quality Management at the state’s Department of Children and Families (DCF). In addition, as Director of Clinical Services at the Child and Family Agency of Southeastern Connecticut, Dr. Blau supervised outpatient, home-based, and school-based services.

Dr. Blau has extensive experience in public policy, developing evidence-based community programs, implementing health care reform initiatives, and focusing on critical issues such as trauma, school-based mental health, prevention and early intervention, health disparities, and poverty. He is perhaps best known for his leadership in expanding awareness and support for the values and principles reflected in the “system of care” framework; namely, that services and supports should be organized into a coordinated network, that meaningful partnerships should be built with service users, and that services and systems should be evidence-based and culturally and linguistically competent. He has a wide range of experiences from direct clinical work, to supervising state-operated inpatient and residential facilities for children, to creating the “National Building Bridges Initiative (BBI),” which is focused on improving outcomes for youth who receive residential interventions.

Dr. Blau’s reputation as a collaborator who is skilled at bringing together service providers, researchers, and policy and decision-makers, as well as family members, youth, and community partners, connects directly with The Hackett Center for Mental Health’s mission.

“The Hackett Center is proud to have someone of Dr. Blau’s exceptional talent, experience, and reputation as our Executive Director,” said THC Founder Maureen Hackett. “His nationally-recognized leadership and expertise will help advance our mission to change mental health care and put policy into practice in Houston, along the Texas Gulf Coast, and beyond.”

“Dr. Blau is an extraordinary, accomplished thought leader within the national mental health community, and has a wealth of experience that will prove invaluable as The Hackett Center continues its important work of helping improve mental health care along the Gulf Coast, particularly among children,” said MMHPI President and CEO Andy Keller, Ph.D. “We are grateful to have someone of his caliber and reputation taking the reins at THC.”

Dr. Blau succeeds Susan Fordice, who served as Executive Director through THC’s first year of operation. Fordice now serves as a Senior Fellow for the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute.

A champion of youth and families, Dr. Blau helped craft the concept of “family-driven care,” ensuring families have a role in their treatment and in the improvement of services and systems. He is acknowledged as the “father” of Youth MOVE (Youth **M**otivating **O**thers through **V**oices of **E**xperience), a national, youth-led mental health organization that now has more than 65 chapters across the United States. Youth MOVE has named one of its annual awards the “Dr. Gary Blau Award,” which is given yearly to a mental health professional who has distinguished themselves as a voice for youth.

Dr. Blau received his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at Auburn University and continues to write and publish nationally in the area of children’s mental health.

About The Hackett Center for Mental Health

Through the generosity of the Maureen and Jim Hackett Family, The Hackett Center for Mental Health was established in January 2018 as the inaugural regional center of the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute. Leveraging the participation of exceptionally skilled researchers, community leaders, and health care providers, The Hackett Center’s purpose is to transform systems and influence policy through unprecedented collaboration.

About MMHPI

Since its public launch in 2014, MMHPI has helped Texas legislators, government officials, members of the judiciary, and local leaders identify systemic mental health needs and solutions, quickly becoming Texas’s most trusted source for data-driven mental health policy. MMHPI is helping Texas leaders address the mental health crisis in our jails and emergency rooms, improve access to care for veterans and their families, shift the focus of new investments toward early intervention, and expand the mental health workforce.

Learn more about MMHPI and The Hackett Center at www.texasstateofmind.org.

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