



Nov. 1, 2024: State Advocacy Update

Healthy physicians are the backbone of a healthy system

Regional health system, Novant Health, updated the questions it asks on its credentialing applications because “when physicians are empowered to take care of their own health—both physical and mental—they are better able to serve their patients, collaborate effectively with peers, and contribute to a positive, thriving health care environment,” said Tameka Peterson, vice president, chief provider experience officer, Novant Health. Novant Health has locations in North and South Carolina.

Peterson, who led Novant Health’s work with the AMA and Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes’ Foundation, explained that there were four key reasons guiding the system’s work to ensure that Novant Health’s credentialing applications are free of stigmatizing language:

1. **Fostering a Culture of Inclusivity and Respect:** Eliminating stigmatizing language creates an environment where physicians and Advanced Practice Providers (APPs) feel valued and respected. This reinforces Novant Health’s commitment to belonging, fostering a workplace where all professionals can thrive without fear of judgment or discrimination.
2. **Supporting Mental and Physical Wellbeing:** Language plays a powerful role in shaping perceptions and behaviors. Credentialing forms that include stigmatizing or intrusive language can discourage health care providers from seeking help for personal challenges, such as mental health support, out of fear of being labeled or judged. Revising these forms promotes a culture where physicians are encouraged to prioritize their well-being without concern for professional repercussions.
3. **Improving Patient Care:** Healthy physicians provide better care. By supporting physicians’ well-being and ensuring that credentialing processes are nonjudgmental, Novant Health contributes to creating a health care system that is more compassionate, effective and patient-centered. When physicians feel supported in their professional environments, they are better equipped to deliver high-quality care.



4. Aligning with Regulatory Standards and Best Practices: Ensuring that credentialing applications are free of intrusive or stigmatizing language also helps Novant Health meet evolving regulatory standards, such as those set by NCQA and other governing bodies. It reflects our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of compliance, quality, and professionalism.

“I personally support healthy physicians because a strong, well-supported medical workforce is the backbone of any successful health care organization,” said Peterson.

Learn more about the work of the [AMA \(PDF\)](#) and [Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes’ Foundation](#) to encourage all hospitals and health systems to review their credentialing applications and peer review forms as a first step to removing stigmatizing language about mental health and substance use disorders.

More articles in this issue

- Nov. 1, 2024: National Advocacy Update