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NEWS RELEASE

Milestone Health Care Quality Unit West Debuts “Say No” Online Game that Teaches Self-Advocacy to Persons with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities

PITTSBURGH, PA, July 11, 2023 – Milestone’s Health Care Quality Unit (HCQU) West announces the debut of a free online game called “Say No.” The game is designed to promote the importance of self-advocacy for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. “Say No” may be found at <https://learning.hcqu.org/>.

“Milestone HCQU West developed ‘Say No’ to empower persons with disabilities to have healthy relationships with their direct support staff,” explained Natalie Symons, Director of Milestone Health Care Quality Unit West. “We want people to make good decisions for themselves.”

“Say No” transports the person playing to a community group home, where their character must complete a set of tasks before going out to see friends. The player must make decisions throughout the game that could affect them being on time. The game is preceded and followed by brief educational trainings about self-advocacy. Players earn badges for making decisions that display advocacy skills.

Developed in cooperation with OpenArc of Wexford, PA, “Say No” is designed to be played solely by a person supported, or with help from a Direct Support Professional.

“We made this training a game so players learn and have fun at the same time,” said Symons. “We wanted to easily reach people we support who regularly spend time on their smartphones and play video games in a way that’s familiar to them.”

“Say No” provides a variety of scenarios, all with the goal of empowering the player to be an effective self-advocate. The idea for the game arose a few years ago and Symons is hoping for it to be the first in a series of trainings about positive relationships. “Say No” does not track or collect any personal information.

In February, Milestone Health Care Quality Unit West launched the free “DSP Handbook” app, useful for anyone who provides care and support to persons with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, whether it be Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), family members or loved ones. The app is available in the Apple App Store and at Google Play.

(more)



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PITTSBURGH, PA, July 11, 2023 (continued)

The Milestone Health Care Quality Unit West is based in Butler and serves nine Western Pennsylvania counties: Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Indiana, Lawrence, Mercer and Venango. Health Care Quality Units operate across the commonwealth and provide training and assistance to families and professionals. The free DSP Handbook app can be used by anyone in any location.

A subsidiary of Partners For Quality, Milestone is a nonprofit social services organization founded in 1969. The agency supports more than 2,000 local individuals with intellectual & developmental disabilities and behavioral health challenges through community and residential-based programs, outpatient services and facility-based day programs.

About Partners For Quality

Headquartered in McKees Rocks, Partners For Quality provides administrative oversight for organizations that serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and behavioral health challenges. Serving Allegheny County since 1975, Partners For Quality, through its subsidiaries, serves more than 4,000 people annually and employs about 1,000 across its organizations. Partners For Quality subsidiaries have earned accreditation from The Council on Quality Leadership, The Council on Accreditation and the Sanctuary Institute (for trauma-informed care).

The Partners For Quality family of nonprofit agencies includes: **Allegheny Children’s Initiative**, serving children and families with behavioral health challenges; **Citizen Care**, which provides residential and community-based supports and services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities; **Exceptional Adventures**, an agency that provides travel opportunities to individuals with disabilities; **Milestone**, serving individuals with developmental and behavioral health challenges, including two Health Care Quality Units in Butler and Warren which train professionals in 18 counties; and **Partners For Quality Foundation**, which raises funds for all services throughout the family of agencies. For more information, visit PFQ.org and Facebook.com/PartnersForQuality.

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