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Georgia Consumer Groups Take New Approach to Keep Youth on Healthy Path

*Proven Strategies Can Improve Access to Screening, Intervention
for Risky Drug and Alcohol Use*

Atlanta, Georgia (June 16, 2014) – Young people in Georgia are gaining access to health insurance at historic levels, creating new opportunities to increase access to essential prevention and treatment services. At the same time, misuse of and addiction to alcohol and drugs blunt the potential of too many young Georgians. To fight this drug epidemic, [Georgians for a Healthy Future](#) and the [Georgia Council on Substance Abuse](#) are launching an initiative to expand services to prevent addiction in youth.

Together, the two organizations will run a three-year project in Georgia to improve access to effective screening and intervention services that can minimize the destructive consequences of alcohol and drug misuse and addiction among our youth. This new effort, focused on youth ages 15 to 22, will combine a cost-effective public health approach called Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) with the power of consumer-led advocacy. Georgia is one of five states selected to participate in the national project managed by Community Catalyst, a national, non-profit consumer advocacy organization, and funded by a \$2.5 million grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, which will be paired with \$1.7 million from other sources. The other states are Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

The project aims to improve access and coverage for early screening and intervention services by increasing both the number and type of locations where youth can access those services, and increasing

the number and type of professionals who can conduct screening and brief intervention. Community Catalyst will gather and disseminate the lessons learned from Georgia to improve screening and intervention nationwide.

“Risky substance use puts Georgia’s youth at high risk for addiction later in life,” said Neil Kaltenecker, Executive Director of the Georgia Council on Substance Abuse. “We are seeing the tragic results of this in the reports about opioid overdoses and suicides.”

“We look forward to working with a range of partners working in communities throughout Georgia to make sure early screening and prevention programs are available to all of Georgia’s at risk teens,” added Cindy Zeldin, Executive Director of Georgians for a Healthy Future. “Together, we can improve the lives of young Georgians and their families while reducing the huge societal and health care costs associated with addiction.”

Georgians for a Healthy Future and the Georgia Council on Substance Abuse will create a public health education campaign that brings together the power of local community groups that care about this issue, which has been an effective approach to serve local needs that impact the healthy decisions of Georgia's youth. Stakeholders will include youth organizations, parents groups, teachers, organizations working to reduce addiction, faith groups and health care providers.

About Georgia Council on Substance Abuse

The Georgia Council on Substance Abuse is a nonprofit advocacy organization with the overall mission to reduce the impact of substance abuse in Georgia communities. For more information, visit www.gasubstanceabuse.org.

About Georgians for a Healthy Future

With a mission to build and mobilize a unified voice, vision, and leadership to achieve a healthy future for all Georgians, Georgians for a Healthy Future provides a strong voice for Georgia consumers and communities on the health care issues and decisions that impact their lives. Georgians for a Healthy Future has a three-pronged approach which includes: 1) outreach, education, and engagement with consumers and communities; 2) coalition building and mobilization; and 3) public policy advocacy. For more information, visit www.healthyfuturega.org.

About Community Catalyst

Community Catalyst is a national, non-profit consumer advocacy organization founded in 1998 with the belief that affordable quality health care should be accessible to everyone. We work in partnership with national, state and local organizations, policymakers, and philanthropic foundations to ensure consumer interests are represented wherever important decisions about health and the health system are made: in communities, courtrooms, statehouses and on Capitol Hill. For more information, visit www.communitycatalyst.org. Read our blog at <http://blog.communitycatalyst.org>. Follow us on Twitter @healthpolicyhub.

About the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

The Foundation was created in 1944 by international business pioneer Conrad N. Hilton, who founded Hilton Hotels and left his fortune to help the world's disadvantaged and vulnerable people. The Foundation currently conducts strategic initiatives in six priority areas: providing safe water, ending chronic homelessness, preventing substance abuse, helping children affected by HIV and AIDS, supporting transition-age youth in foster care, and extending Conrad Hilton's support for the work of Catholic Sisters. In addition, following selection by an independent international jury, the Foundation annually awards the \$1.5 million Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize to a non-profit organization doing extraordinary work to reduce human suffering. From its inception, the Foundation has awarded more than \$1 billion in grants, distributing \$92 million in the U.S. and around the world in 2013. The Foundation's current assets are approximately \$2.4 billion. For more information, please visit www.hiltonfoundation.org.

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