

## Laura K. Nelson, MD

### QUALIFICATIONS

Laura is a Principal within Mercer's Government Human Services Consulting group, a part of Mercer Health & Benefits LLC (Mercer) in the Phoenix office. Laura brings extensive Medicaid managed care clinical and administrative expertise to the Mercer team in the areas of mental health (MH), substance use disorders (SUD), and intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD). Laura is a board certified psychiatrist with experience ranging from direct care within inpatient and outpatient settings to state-level executive leadership positions in public health, behavioral health (BH), and I/DD.

### EXPERIENCE

Prior to joining Mercer, Laura served as Arizona's state behavioral health (BH) director. In that role, she oversaw the Medicaid managed care carve-out program for MH and substance use disorder (SUD), numerous federal block and discretionary grants and the State Hospital. She has also served as Chief Medical Officer for the Arizona Department of Health Services and for the Department's Division of Behavioral Health Services, as well as Quality Management Administrator/Associate Medical Director for Arizona's Division of Developmental Disabilities.

Since joining Mercer in September 2012, Laura has worked with state Medicaid, BH and intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) agencies in Arizona, Delaware, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Louisiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Washington to design and implement program and policy changes that support cost-effective community-based services, integrated care and system transformation, increase the use of clinical best practices (for example, medication assisted treatment [MAT], assertive community treatment [ACT], supportive housing, supported employment, applied behavior analysis and others) and recovery-oriented care aimed to increase community tenure, incorporate enhancements to funding approaches (for example, shift to managed care from fee-for-service (FFS), build in value-based purchasing) and to lead or participate in numerous readiness reviews and operational reviews.

Examples include:

- Supported New York's recent system transformation for improved BH/physical health (PH) integration for adults, including assistance with the development and implementation of the Request for

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*Principal/Physician/Client Leader*

### EDUCATION

*Doctorate of Medicine,  
Medical University of South Carolina*

*Bachelor's degree,  
Biology, Magna Cum Laude,  
Middlebury College, Vermont*

*Psychiatric residency,  
Banner University Medical Center  
Phoenix, Arizona*

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

*20+ years of experience*

### CORE COMPETENCIES

*Serious mental illness*

*Substance use disorders*

*Intellectual/developmental disabilities*

*State behavioral health systems*

*Managed care*

### AFFILIATIONS

*Medical License, Arizona*

*Board Certified, American Board of  
Psychiatry and Neurology*

*Physician waiver for buprenorphine*

Qualifications, evaluation criteria and scoring and readiness reviews for its Mainstream Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) and fully-integrated Health and Recovery Plans for Medicaid-eligible adults with serious mental illness (SMI) and/or serious SUDs.

- Served as the clinical BH subject matter specialist for FFS and capitation rate-setting activities, including outpatient and residential withdrawal management and treatment levels of care for SUDs in New York and Delaware. Delaware uses the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) criteria.
- Participated in the development and implementation of Delaware's state plan amendment and rate setting process to bring BH crisis services and all ASAM levels of care, including MAT, into managed care. This also included development and delivery of training for SUD providers and MCOs in January 2017.
- Participated in the development and implementation of Delaware's 1115 waiver amendment to establish numerous new, Medicaid-reimbursable recovery-oriented home- and community-based services for adults with SMI (for example, supported employment, peer support) and to strengthen implementation and oversight of ACT. This included development and delivery of training for state care management staff.
- Provided clinical consultation to the State of Missouri and the Mercer actuarial team in the development of an 1115 waiver application targeting young adults experiencing a BH crisis with the goal of delaying or reversing the progression toward disability by providing a coordinated set of PH and BH benefits, including supported employment.
- Provided clinical consultation in the development of the comprehensive primary care payment reform initiative in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that established bundled payment rates for PH and BH services in progressively more integrated healthcare settings.
- Led and/or participated in operational and clinical assessments of Prepaid Inpatient Health Plans in North Carolina focusing on member services, network development/management, utilization/care management, care coordination and quality management to identify opportunities for operational efficiency and use of clinical best practices.
- Led development of clinical sections in a published report commissioned by the National Association of State Medicaid Directors summarizing best and promising practices and innovations to address the national public health epidemic of opioid abuse and overdose.
- Currently leading triennial Medicaid managed care contract compliance reviews of primary contractors and sub-contracted BH-MCOs in Pennsylvania.
- Led development of a best practices report for Pennsylvania directed toward individuals with co-occurring mental illness and I/DD. Led development of a second report assessing cost effectiveness of dual diagnosis treatment teams in Pennsylvania.
- Led Mercer's clinical team to assist Arizona's I/DD agency as staff extenders to resolve a backlog of approximately 100 clinical eligibility reviews. Three licensed Mercer clinicians reviewed approximately 80 cases and rendered a clinical recommendation for agency consideration regarding program eligibility secondary to autism, cognitive disability, cerebral palsy or epilepsy.
- Led Mercer's team in a comprehensive review and analysis of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Arizona I/DD agency's support coordination program, including an analysis of information systems,

management and operations, support coordinator roles and responsibilities, supervision and training, caseload size and compensation.

- Participating in the development of tools to support a comprehensive state-level Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act compliance analysis. Currently supporting Missouri's Medicaid/Children Health Insurance Program parity compliance analysis efforts, including training and technical assistance for state staff involved with analysis on the non-quantitative treatment limitations.
- Currently leading Mercer's team in supporting Ohio's BH redesign efforts, including readiness activities associated with moving BH services into managed care for the State's dual eligible members in July 2017 and the carve-in of BH for the remaining managed care population in January 2018.

## PUBLICATIONS AND PUBLIC FORUM PRESENTATIONS

- Presenter at the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual State Health Policy Conference for the National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP); *Adding Even More Substance to Managed Care: Optimizing Medicaid to Respond to Substance Use Disorders* (2017)
- President, Board of Directors, National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD; 2011–2012).
- National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD) President's Award (2012).
- Phoenix Business Journal Award: Most Admired CEO's and Top Level Executives (2011).
- Board Member, Stand Together and Recover (S.T.A.R.), a consumer-run organization in Phoenix, Arizona (2012–2017).