

# Only you can help confront the opioid epidemic

## Nine imperatives for hospital and health system executives

Opioid abuse and addiction have spread across the country, ravaging communities, flooding emergency departments and inpatient beds—and creating unprecedented urgency for hospitals and health systems to respond. C-suite leaders have a critical role to play in crafting a comprehensive and proactive intervention strategy to address this crisis. Read on to learn how senior executives can help confront the opioid epidemic.

### MOBILIZE AN ADDICTION **PREVENTION** AND PAIN MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

#### IMPERATIVE 1

##### **Commit to Change from the C-Suite**

The mandate for improving opioid prescribing behaviors must come from the C-suite. Executives should establish preventing new addiction as an organization-wide priority.

#### IMPERATIVE 2

##### **Harness Existing Clinical Standardization Strategies**

Executives should engage clinicians in improving opioid prescribing behaviors by combining existing care redesign strategies with opioid-specific education.

#### IMPERATIVE 3

##### **Create Opioid-Specific Education and Protocols**

Given the history of misinformation and miseducation surrounding opioids, leaders should overinvest in specialized support to help clinicians understand when to prescribe opioids and how to do so safely.

#### IMPERATIVE 4

##### **Empower Patients to Become Part of the Solution**

Beyond supporting clinicians, executives should also empower patients with education, resources, and accountability mechanisms to achieve safe opioid-use behaviors.

### MAXIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES TO DEPLOY ADDICTION **TREATMENT**

#### IMPERATIVE 5

##### **Base Treatment Strategy on Expansion of MAT**

Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) is the gold standard for treating opioid addiction. Executives should make increasing access to MAT the cornerstone of an addiction treatment strategy.

#### IMPERATIVE 6

##### **Capitalize on Hospitalizations to Begin Treatment**

Hospitalizations present a unique opportunity to begin addiction treatment. Leaders should develop and hardwire protocols for initiating treatment when patients present with opioid use disorder or overdose, and be prepared to tailor those protocols to meet the needs of high-risk populations.

#### IMPERATIVE 7

##### **Incorporate MAT into Existing Outpatient Assets**

Even with minimal investments, existing outpatient clinics can substantially increase access to addiction treatment and alleviate pressure on EDs and inpatient units.

#### IMPERATIVE 8

##### **Catalyze Broader Community Access to Treatment**

Executives should not default to investing in new opioid treatment facilities alone. Instead, they should partner with their communities, state agencies, or the federal government to fund large-scale projects.

### **PRIORITIZE** TOP INTERVENTION OPPORTUNITIES

#### IMPERATIVE 9

##### **Develop Response Based on Local Needs and Span of Control**

To most effectively deploy resources, executives must prioritize their strategic response based on the clinical areas of greatest local need and the interventions that lie within the organization's direct scope of control.