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For Immediate Release

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SCDHHS and Children’s Trust of South Carolina Launch New Resource, Community Connections, to Address Social Determinants of Health

Community Connections Provides Database to Connect Those Seeking Help to Programs and Resources That Can Lead to Better Health Outcomes

COLUMBIA, S.C.— The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, in partnership with Children’s Trust of South Carolina, today launched *Community Connections*, a free 24/7 online database of resources that connects South Carolinians in need with available social and health care services across the state. Individuals can search for free or low-cost services like medical care; employment and job training opportunities; food and financial assistance; and, education, transportation and childcare resources in their communities.

Social determinants of health are defined by the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion as “conditions in the environment in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.” [According to the ODPHP](#), the five key areas of social determinants of health include economic stability, education, social community context, health and health care and neighborhood and built environment. Research, including [research by the Pew Charitable Trusts](#), has also shown a strong link between employment, well-being and the future health of children.

“Community Connections is an exciting new way to strengthen communities by pairing South Carolinians with resources that can improve health and family financial outcomes,” said SCDHHS Director Robert Kerr. “Through Community Connections, SCDHHS will encourage healthy behaviors and help those in need overcome barriers to self-sustainability and financial independence by pairing them with existing programs and resources that can help address specific needs. We look forward to continuing to work with our partners at other state agencies and community-based organizations like Children’s Trust to continue to grow this easily accessible database of useful resources.”

“With more than 60% of the children in South Carolina enrolled in Medicaid, this work is critical to improving the well-being of children, their families, and the communities in which they live,” Children’s Trust CEO Sue Williams said. “We know that connecting families to the resources they need to keep children healthy and safe is a critical protective factor in the prevention of child abuse and neglect.”

The Community Connections database is available for anyone, regardless of whether they are enrolled in Healthy Connections Medicaid, and can be accessed through search bars on www.scdhhs.gov and scParents.org. The database is also a helpful tool for community-based organizations to use to find and refer individuals to resources that may be outside of their specialty. “There is no wrong door. We want

people to easily find tools that can help them lead healthier lives and remove any barriers that exist to referring those in need to programs that can help fill a need,” added Kerr.

The platform is available in a wide range of languages, including Spanish. Specific search categories include health care resources, employment and job training opportunities, education opportunities, food and housing assistance, childcare and transportation resources, financial aid and financial education resources and other community services. Within each of these broader categories, subcategories help users narrow their search.

Community Connections is supported by the Find Help platform. Organizations that want their services to be included on the Find Help platform can suggest their programs [through the site here](#). The platform can be used as a referral system and is available at no charge. Stakeholder webinars and demonstration sessions for the platform are available and can be obtained by contacting Amelia Wilks with Children’s Trust at awilks@scchildren.org.

The resources included in Community Connections are separate and in addition to the benefits offered through SCDHHS’ programs, including the Healthy Connections Medicaid program. SCDHHS provides health care coverage to approximately 1.2 million South Carolinians. Approximately 60% of those enrolled in Healthy Connections Medicaid are children and approximately 60% of children in the state are enrolled in Healthy Connections Medicaid. In addition, approximately 200,000 adult South Carolinians are enrolled in a limited benefit program administered by SCDHHS.

About the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services provides healthcare benefits to more than one million South Carolinians. Its mission is to purchase the most health for our citizens in need at the least possible cost to the taxpayer.

About Children’s Trust of South Carolina

Children’s Trust of South Carolina is the statewide organization focused on the prevention of child abuse and neglect. We provide funding, resources and training to help local program partners build strong families and positive childhoods. Children’s Trust leads the state’s coordinated efforts for the Strengthening Families Program; Triple P (Positive Parenting Program); S.C. Adverse Childhood Experiences Initiative; Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting; Child Abuse Prevention Month; Child Well-Being Coalition; and KIDS COUNT. For more information, visit scChildren.org.

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