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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Medicaid Agency Awards Grants to 16 Primary Care Practices
Implementation of community health worker initiative to improve health in South Carolina

COLUMBIA, S.C. — The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) announces that 16 primary care practices will receive a grant to participate in the Community Health Worker program (CHW). This program uses trained and certified community residents to improve patient care and health outcomes in conjunction with the physicians' medical home plan of care. The CHW program is a component of the SCDHHS Health Access at the Right Time (HeART) Initiative that identifies alternative methods and providers of health care delivery to Medicaid recipients.

"Community Health Workers are a vital part of improving the health outcomes of a population. They go directly to the heart of one of the biggest problems in our health system, which is the lack of meaningful connection between patients and their health providers," said SCDHHS Director Tony Keck.

CHWs come from the local communities they serve and aid in building trust and vital relationships with the residents of that community. This peer-to-peer opportunity enables the CHWs to be effective links between their own communities and primary care system. The goal of the CHW initiative is to significantly lower health disparities in South Carolina by providing access to services, improving the quality and cultural competence of care, creating an effective system of chronic disease management and increasing the health knowledge and self-sufficiency for Medicaid recipients.

The SCDHHS CHW Initiative award recipients are: **Carolina Pediatrics, Columbia; Palmetto Family Medicine Center, Columbia; Lakeview Family Medicine, Lexington; Fairfield Medical Associates, Winnsboro; Kershaw Health Primary Care Clinics, Camden; Colonial Family Practice, Sumter; GHS OB-GYN Center, Greenville; Spartanburg Center for Family Medicine, Spartanburg; AnMed Health Williamston Family Medicine, Williamston; AnMed Health Anderson Family Medicine, Greenville; Family Healthcare-Ware Shoals, Ware Shoals; Palmetto Primary Care Physicians, Lake City; Palmetto Primary Care Physicians, Kingstree; MUSC Children's Care Network, Charleston; CareSouth Carolina, Cheraw; Little River Medical Center, Little River.** The practices were selected based on their organizational structure, reporting mechanism, planned integration of the CHW into the practice and the health services provided by the primary care practice.

As members of care delivery teams, CHWs will assist Medicaid individuals within their community in managing their own health. This will include promoting compliance with appointments, screenings, treatment and medications. A CHW will assist patients in navigating the health care system, improve patients' health knowledge and self-sufficiency by helping them understand their health condition(s) and develop strategies to improve their health and well-being.

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The selected primary care practices will receive a \$6,000 grant to cover education and training costs for the CHWs as well as administrative costs for the first year. The CHWs will participate in a six-week continuing education training curriculum administered by Midlands Technical College that includes a classroom and office/community curriculum that covers the South Carolina recognized core competencies. This training will specifically cover working in the community, health coaching and basic medical knowledge. The curriculum will include classroom-style learning and actual practice experience. All CHWs will become certified after passing a competency test. The program will be evaluated to determine if it lowers costs and improves outcomes for Medicaid beneficiaries. If so, it will be expanded.

This initiative falls under SCDHHS' three-pillar strategy of payment reform, clinical integration and targeting hotspots of poor health and disparities.

About the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services provides health care benefits to more than 1.1 million South Carolinians. Its mission is to purchase the most health for our citizens in need at the least possible cost to the taxpayer.

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