

June 27, 2023
For Immediate Release

Contact: Jeff Leieritz
(803) 898-2580
Communications@scdhhs.gov

SCDHHS Awards Behavioral Health Crisis Stabilization Grants to 13 South Carolina Hospitals

COLUMBIA, S.C. – The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) today announced it has awarded 13 South Carolina hospitals a total of \$45.5 million to build specialized hospital-based emergency department units dedicated to behavioral health crises. The grants were awarded through the agency’s new behavioral health crisis stabilization grant program that was [announced in March 2023](#).

“SCDHHS is proud to partner with and invest in the hospitals who applied for grant funding to improve access to much-needed crisis stabilization services for South Carolinians who are experiencing behavioral health episodes,” said SCDHHS Director Robby Kerr. “Awarding these grant funds and building these units across the state are important steps in continuing to address gaps in South Carolina’s behavioral health delivery system. Once operational, these units will make a meaningful impact in their regions and across the state in reducing overcrowding in general emergency departments and reducing the wait time for initiating urgent psychiatric treatment for those in need.”

The 13 behavioral health crisis stabilization grant awardees are listed below.

- AnMed Health Medical Center
- Beaufort Memorial Hospital
- Grand Strand Medical Center
- Hampton Regional Medical Center
- Lexington Medical Center
- McLeod Regional Medical Center
- MUSC Health, Kershaw Medical Center
- MUSC Health, Orangeburg Medical Center
- MUSC Health, University Hospital
- MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children’s Hospital
- Prisma Health Oconee Memorial Hospital
- Prisma Health Tuomey Hospital
- Trident Medical Center

Crisis stabilization services grant funds must be used as one-time infrastructure funds to build specialized hospital-based emergency department units dedicated to behavioral health. These dedicated units will operate with a philosophy of “no exclusion”—they will be designed and staffed to treat all emergency psychiatric patients. These units, built to be distinct from the traditional medical emergency department structure by creating a calm, safe, and healing environment, will provide

immediate evaluation and treatment by a multidisciplinary team that is available 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. The agency's goals through the establishment of this grant program are to ease overcrowding in the general emergency department, initiate needed urgent psychiatric treatment and reduce unnecessary hospital inpatient admissions through the addition of therapeutic patient spaces for stabilization.

Background on the Grant Program and SCDHHS' Behavioral Health Initiatives

In his State of the State Address in January 2022, Governor Henry McMaster directed SCDHHS to "initiate an immediate review of our State's behavioral health funding and delivery system." In addition, the South Carolina General Assembly directed SCDHHS to "undertake an effort to assess existing gaps in coverage for or the supply of inpatient psychiatric care, crisis stabilization, and other inpatient or outpatient behavioral health services" in its 2022-2023 General Appropriations Bill (117.153).

The investment in crisis stabilization services for South Carolinians who are experiencing behavioral health episodes, such as mental health and/or substance use emergencies, is part of the agency's broader emphasis on improving access to and coordination of behavioral health services in South Carolina.

In July 2022, SCDHHS' launched its [school-based mental health services initiative](#), through which the agency recently announced it has seen a [65% increase in school-based mental health counselors](#) in the first six months of the program.

In August 2022, SCDHHS established an advisory committee to identify and address additional behavioral needs and opportunities to improve coordination throughout the state's mental health delivery system. The committee includes stakeholders from across the health care field including clinicians, physicians, payors, instructors and public health professionals. The committee's efforts are coordinated between SCDHHS and CaroNova, a bi-state innovation incubator committed to creating lasting solutions to shared healthcare challenges facing both Carolinas. The advisory committee's efforts helped guide SCDHHS' behavioral health crisis stabilization grant program and contributed to the state's collaborative investment in a new behavioral health hub in Florence, S.C., which was [announced last week](#).

Key Behavioral Health Statistics

- Approximately 80% of youth in South Carolina with a major depressive episode do not receive mental health services.
- According to a June 2023, CDC report, national suicide rates for people aged 10–24 increased from 2007 through 2021 (from 6.8 deaths per 100,000 to 11.0)
- Nationally, mental health-related emergency department visits among adolescents increased by 31% in 2020 compared to 2019.
- Emergency department visits for suspected suicide attempts among girls between the ages of 12 and 17 were 51% higher in February and March 2021 than during the same period in 2019.
- High school students with depression are more than twice as likely to drop out than their peers.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for South Carolinians between ages 10-14.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death for South Carolinians between ages 15-17.

- Nationally, between 12% - 15% of all emergency department visits nationwide are mental-health related.
- Nationally, behavioral health emergency department stays often average over 30 hours.
- Psychiatric patients spend three times longer than other patients in the emergency department, this prevents 2.2 bed turnovers on average.
- Typically, 70-80% of psychiatric emergencies can be stabilized in less than 24 hours.
- Nationally, at least 7 million emergency psychiatric assessments are made each year.

About the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services provides health care benefits to nearly 1.2 million South Carolinians. Its mission is to be boldly innovative in improving the health and quality of life for South Carolinians.

###