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SCDHHS Awarded \$7.2 Million to Improve Integration of Behavioral Health Services

COLUMBIA, S.C. – The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) today announced it has been awarded a grant from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to implement the Innovation in Behavioral Health Model. This care model is designed to deliver integrated care to those with moderate to severe mental health conditions or substance use disorders, or both. Through the grant, CMS will award SCDHHS \$7.2 million in grant funding over eight years.

The Innovation in Behavioral Health Model provides a framework to integrate physical and behavioral health care, including those who have mental health and/or substance use disorders, in community-based practices. This type of healthcare delivery system has been demonstrated to reduce not only healthcare spending but improve clinical outcomes for both medical and behavioral health issues.

“This grant is another important step to addressing the behavioral health challenges that many South Carolinians face,” said SCDHHS Chief of Quality Jordan Desai. “The fragmented structure of South Carolina’s public health delivery system has led to many individuals with dual diagnoses of mental illness and substance use disorders being unable to receive adequate care for both diagnoses in one treatment setting. Implementing this care model presents an opportunity to meet members where they are and bring vital preventive care to their treatment locations.”

According to the South Carolina Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services (DAODAS), approximately 451,000 individuals in South Carolina are experiencing substance-related problems that require immediate intervention and treatment. In a 2023 report published by DAODAS, there was a 24% year-over-year increase in deaths that resulted from opioid overdoses.

According to the [2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#), 35% of adults aged 18 and over in the U.S. who have another mental disorder also have a substance use disorder. However, data collected by SCDHHS from 2020-2022 reveals that less than 1% of individuals who received care for a substance use disorder were dually diagnosed with mental illness and a substance use

disorder. This discrepancy between national and state data indicates a likely undercounting of those who should be dually diagnosed in South Carolina. The state's lack of a health care delivery model to streamline services for those with dual diagnoses poses a great risk as those receiving substance use treatment and mental health treatment separately may elect to continue a course of treatment that only addresses one condition. Further, the lack of integration between treatment for mental illness or substance use disorders and primary care poses an additional risk for individuals who also have physical health concerns.

The grant funding announced today is a continuation of SCDHHS' multiyear effort designed to improve access to community-based behavioral health services. This effort was directed by Governor Henry McMaster through his [2022 State of the State address](#) and [Executive Order 2022-02](#). Since that time, SCDHHS' focus on improving the availability of coordinated and integrated behavioral health services throughout the continuum of care have included:

- Adding coverage of more than 10 new community-based behavioral health services;
- Creating a pathway for more integrated care by establishing enrollment for county substance use authorities to deliver physician services;
- Issuing 13 grants totaling \$45.5 million to South Carolina hospitals to build specialized hospital-based emergency department units dedicated to those experiencing mental health and/or substance use emergencies;
- Adding additional case management and intensive case management options for individuals who are enrolled in a managed care plan who have a serious mental illness; and
- Doubling the number of school-based mental health counselors available to serve South Carolina children.

The award of the Innovation in Behavioral Health Model grant is in addition to the award of the [Transforming Maternal Health \(TMaH\) Model grant announced last week](#). Michigan, New York and Oklahoma are the other states that were awarded the Innovation in Behavioral Health Model grant. South Carolina is the only state to receive both grants. All (100%) of the costs of implementing the Innovation in Behavioral Health Model will be funded with Federal money.

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 1.1 million South Carolinians. Its mission is to be boldly innovative in improving the health and quality of life for South Carolinians.

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