

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 14, 2020

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SC Department of Mental Health receives grant funding for Mobile Response Program

Columbia, SC — The South Carolina Department of Mental Health (SCDMH) has been awarded a federal grant in the amount of \$6,403,686 to provide support to South Carolinians in rural areas who are experiencing mental health and substance use crises or have unmet treatment needs. The primary focus of the initiative will be a Mobile Response Program that will serve nine South Carolina counties beginning in early 2021.

The *Highway to Hope Mobile Response Program (H2H)* will serve both adults and children in some of the most rural areas of South Carolina. H2H will utilize nine RVs operated by SCDMH staff from three SCDMH mental health centers that serve these areas: Pee Dee Mental Health Center (Florence, Darlington, and Marion counties), Tri-county Mental Health Center (Chesterfield, Dillon, and Marlboro counties), and Waccamaw Center for Mental Health (Horry, Georgetown, and Williamsburg counties).

The program will offer both mental health treatment and some basic primary care services directly to those in need who may not have transportation to services otherwise. It is based on a long-running and highly successful mental health mobile model for rural patients operated by the Agency's Charleston Dorchester Mental Health Center. H2H will offer assessment, crisis services, psychiatric services, individual therapy, basic primary care, nursing care, and suicide prevention strategies. Based on the patient's assessment, the professional care staff will also make referrals to other community resources for employment assistance, deaf services, and services for non-English speakers. The RVs will be equipped with telehealth equipment, and the services available will be delivered both in-person and virtually.

"Highway to Hope will be a *game-changer* for healthcare in the identified rural areas of South Carolina," said SCDMH Deputy Director of Community Mental Health Services Deborah Blalock. "Instead of expecting citizens to travel to facilities to receive care, SCDMH will do the traveling to provide mental health care and basic primary care to people in need."

Six of the new RVs will be staffed with a registered nurse, an adult services mental health professional, and a child services mental health professional. Each RV will be designated for the area's most rural communities. The remaining three RVs will be staffed with a registered nurse, a school mental health clinician, and an adult services clinician. They will be deployed to rural areas where schools do not currently offer on-site mental health services.

The South Carolina Department of Mental Health's mission is to support the recovery of people with mental illnesses, giving priority to adults with serious and persistent mental illness and children and adolescents with serious emotional disturbances. As South Carolina's public mental health system, it provides outpatient mental health services through a network of 16 community mental health centers and associated clinics, serving all 46 counties, and psychiatric hospital services via three State hospitals, including one for substance use treatment. In addition to mental health services, the Agency provides long-term care services in one community nursing care center and three State veterans' nursing homes.

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