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UCare launches \$260,000 grant program for Community Mental Health Centers in Kansas to support value-based health care efforts

***Funds to increase access to mental health services
throughout Kansas***

TOPEKA, Kan., Sept. 14, 2023 – [UCare](#), a leading independent, nonprofit health plan, today announces a \$260,000 grant program in partnership with [Wheat State Healthcare](#), a behavioral health management organization that works with 26 nonprofit Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) that provide a range of behavioral health services in all 105 counties across Kansas.

UCare will provide grants to Wheat State-affiliated CMHCs to support value-based health care initiatives that will assist with increasing access to behavioral health services in Kansas. Grants may support programs and initiatives such as enhancing the availability and quality of peer support services, expanding access to telehealth services, or developing community-specific solutions to address homelessness, among others.

“We view this grant program as an impactful opportunity to improve lives, address urgent community health needs and build capacity for value-based care,” said Marie Zimmerman, UCare’s Executive Vice President of Public Affairs and Chief Strategy Officer. “We’re proud to partner with Wheat State Healthcare to advance crucial mental health services for vulnerable populations and underserved communities.”

According to the [Kansas Behavioral & Mental Health Profile](#) published in 2022, the percentage of Kansans reporting mental illness has increased over the past five years, and the rate of individuals per 1,000 in Kansas served in community mental health programs remains more than double the national average. Additionally, Kansans are

disproportionately affected by mental health challenges, including higher than national average rates for:

- Adults reporting at least one depressive episode in the last year
- Adults reporting having suicidal thoughts in the past year
- Suicide death rates
- Adults reporting a mental illness diagnosis in the last year

“We’re grateful for UCare’s investment in our network of innovative behavioral health organizations,” said Colin Thomasset, Chief Executive Officer for Wheat State Healthcare. “These grants will further empower our CMHCs in their efforts to provide high-quality behavioral health services for Kansans who need our support.”

About UCare

[UCare](#) is an independent, nonprofit health plan providing health care and administrative services to more than 600,000 members throughout Minnesota and parts of western Wisconsin. UCare partners with health care providers, counties and community organizations to create and deliver Medicaid, Medicare and Individual & Family health plans. The health plan addresses health care disparities and care access issues through a broad array of community initiatives, including provider improvement projects. UCare has received Top Workplaces honors from the Star Tribune for 14 consecutive years since the rankings began in 2010.

About Wheat State Healthcare

Formed in 2017, [Wheat State Healthcare](#) is a behavioral health management organization that works in collaboration with Community Mental Health Centers and other stakeholders to continually improve access to affordable, high quality, and effective behavioral health services. Through its network of highly trained and innovative leaders in behavioral health – including psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric nurses, social workers, addiction counselors, marriage and family therapists, other mental health and addiction treatment professionals – Wheat State Healthcare serves as an independent provider association of 26 nonprofit Community Mental Health Centers that provide a range of behavioral health services in all 105 counties across Kansas.