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UCare and the University of Minnesota announce steps to improve health equity and access in underserved communities

Renewed collaboration settles a recent lawsuit over governance

MINNEAPOLIS, Sept. 1, 2023 – Today [UCare](#) – a leading independent, nonprofit health plan – and the [University of Minnesota](#) announced a new collaboration that strengthens their shared commitment and service to underserved Minnesotans.

The move brings an end to the University's lawsuit over governance and includes a funding commitment from UCare that will significantly advance a number of University of Minnesota Medical School community and health wellness initiatives over the next three years.

UCare and the University mutually view this moment as an opportunity to redesign their long-standing strategic relationship to underscore the University's mission to serve the health care needs of all Minnesotans. It will also allow UCare to better compete in a challenging healthcare marketplace while continuing to serve its members. To address its interests to expand services, UCare will be enhancing its board with more consumer representation, diversity, and business expertise to better serve its members and mission.

At the same time, UCare is reaffirming its commitment to the service mission of the University that led to the formation of UCare nearly 40 years ago. UCare has committed to four, \$25-million payments to the University over the next three years that the University will invest to reduce disparities in underserved communities through the U of M programs listed below.

The UCare investments will address:

- **Priorities around health equity and access**, such as expansion of services at Broadway Family Medicine Clinic in North Minneapolis, Community University Health Center in South Minneapolis and the mobile health initiative;

- **Rural health and outreach**, such as telehealth training, community education and developing new clinics in underserved areas;
- **Mental health and aging**, such as expanding training and services to improve access to mental health services and developing new clinics for the aging; and
- **Programs in family medicine**, such as increasing access to primary care services and meeting needs of family medicine trainees.

“This next chapter of our work with the University of Minnesota to advance excellent patient care in marginalized communities – as well as primary care education and training – is extremely meaningful,” said Hilary Marden-Resnik, UCare President and CEO. “UCare’s three-year community investment propels the University of Minnesota Medical School’s mission to increase access to high-quality health care and improve wellness in underserved communities throughout urban and rural Minnesota. UCare’s support will improve care for Minnesota’s aging population, help combat the mental health crisis and foster medical innovation for clinic patients and UCare members.”

This wide-ranging agreement builds on the two organizations’ shared history of removing obstacles to care in pursuit of improved health equity and outcomes for some of Minnesota’s most vulnerable residents. UCare’s investment also reinforces a shared commitment to primary care and training the next generation of health care professionals, especially considering the workforce shortage.

“Our long history with UCare, which started as a pilot program in our Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, has allowed us to reach Minnesota’s underserved communities in important ways. It is one of many vital benefits of the University’s academic health mission — combining health sciences education and training, research and discovery, and service to improve the health and vitality of our state,” said Dr. Jakub Tolar, Dean of the University of Minnesota Medical School. “UCare’s renewed support of the University’s community clinics and expanded health and wellness initiatives across the state have the potential to change the lives of underserved Minnesotans, particularly those who face barriers to care.”

“This agreement represents a strategic opportunity for our organizations to reshape our relationship in constructive ways, but more important, puts Minnesotans first,” said Myron Frans, Senior Vice President for Finance and Operations at the University.

“I want to congratulate everyone involved in collaborating on this approach and coming to a resolution that will honor and advance the legacy our two organizations have built in our service to Minnesota,” said Jay Kiedrowski, UCare board member.

In 1999, UCare became an independent health plan and remains so today – providing Medicaid, Medicare and Individual & Family plans to more than 600,000 members.

UCare was founded in 1984 as a Department of Family Medicine and Community Health demonstration project.

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 the University of Minnesota

The University of Minnesota System, with campuses in Crookston, Duluth, Morris, Rochester, and the Twin Cities, is driven by a singular vision of excellence. We are proud of our land-grant mission of world-class education, groundbreaking research, and community-engaged outreach, and we are unified in our drive to serve Minnesota. Visit system.umn.edu.

Click [here](#) to read the news release on the U of M's website.

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