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MEDIA CONTACT:  
Wendy Wicks  
612-306-3698  
[wwicks@ucare.org](mailto:wwicks@ucare.org)

## **UCare Foundation awards grants to ensure a healthier new year for youth across Minnesota**

***More than \$400,000 provided to initiatives addressing mental health, infant health and dental care***

MINNEAPOLIS, Jan. 11, 2024 — [The UCare Foundation](#) is improving health outcomes for newborns and youth of all ages through grants to 12 community organizations serving diverse populations in urban and rural regions of the state. Individual grants range from \$6,500 to \$50,000.

UCare always steps up where need is greatest. The 2022 Minnesota Student Survey shows unprecedented numbers of young people struggling with their mental health. In 2021, Children’s Minnesota reported a 30% rise in children contemplating suicide. In response, a significant number of the Foundation grants are directed to improve access to mental health services for young people including neurodiverse, LGBTQIA+ and youth with complex needs.

Other grants support the health and safety of vulnerable newborns and access to dental care for youth and families. “Many young Minnesotans suffered mental health setbacks during the pandemic, and through these UCare Foundation grants, we are giving them a fresh start and better outlook in 2024,” says Tenbit Emiru, MD, MBA, PhD, UCare Executive Vice President and Chief Medical Officer. “The range of infant and youth programs funded by UCare have strong potential to address health disparities for Minnesota’s diverse populations – starting at birth.”

### **[Snapshot of UCare-sponsored programs across Minnesota](#)**

#### **Mental health**

[Change the Outcome](#), an opioid impact awareness initiative for young people in middle schools and high schools throughout Minnesota. UCare’s grant supports educational content to increase understanding of substance use disorder, fentanyl, xylazine and pressed pills – while counteracting stigma, shame and judgment.

[Connection to Independence](#) *Circle of Support* individual and group therapy for foster youth who need additional support for mental health challenges and multiple diagnoses – a partnership with [Kente Circle](#).

[CornerHouse Rapid Response to Trauma](#) project providing mental health care to children who have experienced abuse. Funding will support the use of a trauma screening tool to identify the severity of trauma and *Accelerated Resolution Therapy*, an evidence-based therapy that can be effective in just a few sessions.

[Franklin Center](#) *Open the Door* – a culturally responsive initiative aimed at providing behavior therapy to neurodiverse children in the Somali community.

[Nexus Family Healing](#) resources for a new *Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility* that will address unmet mental health needs of youth in Minnesota. UCare funding enables the purchase of sensory items, recreational equipment, games and art supplies in addition to covering the costs of trauma-informed training and resources.

[RECLAIM](#) mental health care for queer and trans youth in Greater Minnesota. This pilot project will fund the hiring of local therapists to expand access to affirming mental health care where resources do not currently exist.

### **Infant health**

[Life Connections](#) *Community Connections: Safe from the Start*, a partnership with public health staff and other community agencies to provide families in Central Minnesota with formula, safe sleep and travel equipment/education. Some of these counties rank among the poorest in the state.

[New Beginnings](#) *Safe Sleep Program* to help reduce the number of infant deaths due to SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). Parents or primary caregivers participate in free education, and receive a safe crib and sleep sacks, as well as personal support and follow up.

[Nurse-Family Partnership \(NFP\)](#) support of 1,079 first-time birthing individuals/families experiencing significant economic and racial inequality across 32 counties and two Tribal Nations in Minnesota. The funding benefits nursing quality, education and practice for 50 NFP nurses providing preventive health care for infants to age 2.

[Proof Alliance](#) *Our Children are Sacred* program to reduce the impact of prenatal exposure to alcohol in Indian Country. Funds go to leveraging the wisdom of tribal leaders and elders and building on the success of current and past programs.

[Way to Grow](#) *Great by Eight* program supporting children ages 0-8 from 600 of the most disadvantaged families in Minneapolis and surrounding suburbs. Great by Eight includes home visits, health screenings and health education to improve birth weights and vaccination rates.

### **Dental care**

[Children's Dental Services](#) expanding culturally targeted, comprehensive oral health care and education to 1,500 Native American and Asian community members across Minnesota, specifically for children, young adults, pregnant women and family members.

### **About UCare**

[UCare](#) is an independent, nonprofit health plan providing health care and administrative services to more than 640,000 members throughout Minnesota and parts of western Wisconsin. UCare partners with health care providers, counties, and community organizations to create and deliver Medicare, Medicaid and Individual & Family health plans. The health plan addresses health care disparities and care access issues through a broad array of community initiatives. UCare has received Top Workplaces honors from the Star Tribune for 14 consecutive years since the rankings began in 2010.

### **About the UCare Foundation**

Since 1998, the [UCare Foundation](#) has improved the lives of UCare members and their communities through grants that address urgent community health needs. We focus grant-making on initiatives that improve the health of underserved individuals across Minnesota. The UCare Foundation funds high-impact services, education, community outreach and research addressing health equity, social drivers and access barriers.

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