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## **UCare Foundation honors Maternal Health Awareness Day with grant-giving across Minnesota**

***Nearly \$500,000 provided to initiatives supporting healthy mothers, pregnancies and births in diverse communities***

MINNEAPOLIS, Jan. 23, 2024 — [The UCare Foundation](#) is improving health outcomes, resources and mental health services for new mothers across the state through grants to nine community organizations serving diverse populations in urban and rural regions of the state. Individual grants range from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

Maternal health is a key indicator of overall health in Minnesota. When the state released its first-ever Minnesota Maternal Mortality Report, it noted stark disparities in mortality, especially among Black and American Indian Minnesotans. Of all pregnancy-associated deaths from 2017-2018, 23% were among Black Minnesotans and 8% among American Indian Minnesotans. Injury was the leading cause, followed by substance use. Systemic racism and generational inequities also contributed to poor health outcomes.

UCare took these findings as a call to action. “The theme of this year’s Maternal Health Awareness Day on January 23 is Access in Crisis. UCare has stepped up to ensure Minnesota’s vital programs supporting healthy pregnancies, births and post-partum care have the resources they need to have an impact,” said Amy Wickman, UCare Vice President of Clinical Services. “From prisons to tribal nations, UCare and our community partners are working to keep our most vulnerable Minnesotans healthy.”

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

#### **American Indian populations**

[Division of Indian Work](#), *Women of Traditional Birthing (WTB) Program* to help low-income pregnant American Indian women ages 16+ in the [Twin Cities](#) refrain from drinking and using substances while pregnant. UCare is funding the addition of an aftercare component to the education, information, support and accountability tools to provide additional support to mothers requiring more follow-up services.

[Mewinzha Ondaadiziike Wiigaming](#), *Expanding and Evaluating Integrated Holistic Health Services for American Indian Birthing People* program to increase access to culturally responsive perinatal health care services for American Indian birthing people in [Northwest Minnesota](#). UCare funding supports creation of a perinatal nutrition education program, partnerships with local traditional health practitioners, and using indigenous ways of learning to evaluate the effectiveness of the integrated model.

### **Mental health**

[Bellis](#), *Always a Mother: Support after Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)*. UCare's grant funds *Our Bellis™ Stronger Together Peer Support* model to address emotional isolation and shame experienced by mothers with a TPR order. The project helps women build resiliency by addressing the trauma of a TPR order and helping develop a greater sense of power over their own lives.

[Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester](#), *Supporting Confident Pregnancies and Stable Beginnings*. UCare is funding this [Southern Minnesota](#) program aimed to reduce maternal mortality and increase family well-being by providing individualized education on perinatal mood disorders and post-partum care. Expectant parents will work with social workers to identify their own strengths, resources, warning signs, and interventions available throughout pregnancy and after birth.

[Ostara Initiative](#), *MN Prison Doula Project*. A UCare grant supports healthy outcomes through pregnancy and birth support, research, prenatal and parenting education, and mental health services promoting healthy outcomes for incarcerated parents and their children. Funding advances this comprehensive approach to addressing the carceral state's systemic failures, reclaiming dignity, and advancing equitable access to health care for parents and birthing people in prison.

### **Health equity**

[Annex Teen Clinic](#), *Healthy Pregnancy for Young People through Early Identification and Increased Sexual Health Access*. UCare funding helps the Annex ensure [Twin Cities](#) metro youth at disproportionate risk for unintentional pregnancy can identify a pregnancy earlier in their first trimester, and experience a healthy and safe pregnancy, as well as postpartum transition.

[Epiphany Caring for Life](#), *Baby and Maternity Closet*. Through a grant from UCare, Epiphany Caring for Life's baby and maternity closet will increase its supply of maternity clothes, and baby clothes and baby items (e.g., diapers, baby wipes, formula highchairs, pack n' plays, and infant car seats). In partnership with [Anoka County](#) Public Health Nursing, Epiphany Caring for Life offers resources to reduce barriers to services and increase self-efficacy for pregnant women and women with infants up to age 2.

[The National Service Office for Nurse-Family Partnership & Child First](#), *Improving Maternal and Infant Health and Wellness from Pregnancy to Age 2 in Minnesota*. UCare funding supports implementation of the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) in Minnesota which serves 1,079 first-time birthing individuals/families experiencing significant economic and racial inequality across [32 counties](#) and [two Tribal Nations](#) in Minnesota – specifically benefiting nursing quality, education, and practice for the 50 NFP MN nurses who implement the program.

[Together for Life Northland DBA Star of the North Maternity Home](#) *Care Management Program*. In support of safe homes and programming for pregnant women and women with young children experiencing housing instability in [Duluth](#) and [Hibbing](#), UCare is funding two part-time licensed social workers to serve as Care Managers, one at each home; for a contracted Life Coach; and for resident transportation expenses.

### **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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