

United Health Foundation and East Carolina University: *Expanding Youth Mental Health Services in Rural and Underserved Areas of North Carolina*

East Carolina University (ECU) is a public university located in Greenville, North Carolina. The university's school of medicine is recognized nationally for producing primary care physicians, cardiovascular research and advanced robotic surgery, as well as obesity and diabetes breakthroughs.

In North Carolina, youth experience significant challenges accessing mental health services due to lack of providers in many parts of the state. To address this challenge, the United Health Foundation, the philanthropic foundation of UnitedHealth Group, announced a three-year, \$3.2 million grant partnership with ECU in 2023. The grant expands the North Carolina Statewide Telepsychiatry Program (NC-STeP) to six community-based pediatric care clinics in rural and underserved parts of the state. Additionally, behavioral health providers are embedded in the six community-based pediatric care clinics to connect young people to a psychiatrist for case consultation and care planning via telepsychiatry as well as partner with the pediatricians. Lastly, the grant supports the development of a new virtual reality game that provides anonymous peer-to-peer engagement.



COMMUNITY IMPACT*

9,725

children and adolescents screened for mental health needs

11%

of children and adolescents demonstrated an increased likelihood of a behavioral health disorder being present

~200

children and adolescents are receiving integrated behavioral and primary care services as part of the program to date

19%

of children and adolescents demonstrated at least a "mild to moderate" level of anxiety being present

92%

satisfaction rating by parents/guardians of children and adolescents receiving mental health services

*as of 3/31/24

WHY IS THIS WORK CRITICAL?



Mental health — including psychological, emotional and social well-being — is a vital part of a child's overall health. This expanded program will provide access to mental health services for children in their established pediatric or primary care setting, removing stigma sometimes associated with mental health care, and, through telemedicine, will offer expert consultation support for clinicians."

DR. SY SAEED

ECU Center for Telepsychiatry and Founding Executive Director of NC-STeP



3-D Virtual Community House