

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

## **GROUNDBREAKING PARTNERSHIP TRANSFORMS CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORAL AND MENTAL HEALTH**

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JACKSON, Miss. – ***The Children's Collaborative***, a transformative partnership announced today between the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) and Mississippi Children's Home Services (MCHS), envisions a state-wide, integrated behavioral and mental health-care system that will ultimately reduce costs and improve quality of care.

Supported by a \$5 million grant awarded by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Mississippi Division of Medicaid, this unique public/private partnership is the first of its kind in the nation and will transform and integrate the primary and behavioral health delivery systems to reduce costs and improve quality of care.

"Mississippi's healthcare community has set the standard in medical fields for years-- firsts such as the first human lung transplant in 1963, the first heart transplant in 1964, and recent groundbreaking HIV treatment for newborns. The partnership announced today is another first in the nation," Governor Phil Bryant said. "Through this new collaborative, more children will gain access to the care they need in a streamlined manner that eases the burden on families and uses the state's telehealth network to deliver collaborative, coordinated care that can make a difference in these children's lives."

According to Dr. Susan Buttross, UMMC professor of pediatrics and chief of the Division of Child Development and Behavioral Pediatrics, one in five children suffer from a mental or behavioral health problem, and less than 20 percent receive treatment. That low percentage is reflective of a system that is fragmented and difficult to access. The result is frustrated and overwhelmed families.

"Our medical and behavioral health professionals recognize the frustration felt by parents and other caregivers when navigating our too-often fragmented and backlogged health-care system when their only goal is to get much-needed help for their children," stated Buttross.

Over the next 18 months, ***The Children's Collaborative*** will be working to ease the burden placed on the caregiver with this collaboration of two very pioneering health-care systems.

Dr. John Damon, CEO of MCHS, stated, "The Children's Collaborative represents a watershed moment for children and families of Mississippi. Quality of care can be dramatically improved through collaboration. To that end, we will employ care navigators who will come alongside the families to assure they experience a seamless health-care system."

Recognizing that the child's pediatrician is often the first point of contact for the family when seeking behavioral health services, ***The Children's Collaborative*** looks to serve in a consultative role to help their doctor make an informed decision about the behavioral health needs of the child.

UMMC's Center for the Advancement of Youth will serve as a gateway for families to enter **The Children's Collaborative's** system of coordinated care.

Commenting on the challenges facing families negotiating a complex healthcare environment, Buttross noted, "Many youth have medical concerns that are complicated by emotional and behavioral issues. It's difficult to know when to call psychiatry or psychology or developmental pediatrics. Even something as simple as 'my child has attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder'-- does that go to psychiatry? Does it go to developmental pediatrics? We wanted something where there is one track. We help families navigate a pathway."

Following a comprehensive assessment at the Center for the Advancement of Youth, children served through **The Children's Collaborative** are then seamlessly directed to various UMMC pediatric specialists and/or to community-based behavioral health services provided by MCHS.

MCHS will offer behavioral health care in the home and community of the child in one of the 11 outpatient offices located within a 75-mile radius around the state. This community presence spares families the burden of traveling to Jackson to get the help they need and long waits for appointments should be significantly shortened.

Over the course of the project, **The Children's Collaborative** also plans to develop a telehealth network within the 11 offices to help these children and families access other UMMC pediatric sub-specialty services, such as endocrinology and pulmonology.

"We envision a partnership where a child with a medical condition who is also in need of behavioral health services will soon have an alternative to the burdensome drive to Jackson for routine meetings with their specialist(s). The statewide telehealth network will facilitate access to specialty care in the child's home community while supporting the child's physician, thereby allowing the child to remain in school and the parent to remain at work," said Damon.

"Joining forces like this allows us to cover the entire state for developmental and behavioral issues for kids," said Dr. David Elkin, UMMC professor of psychiatry and executive director of the Center for the Advancement of Youth.

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Please forward this message to interested colleagues. If you wish to be removed from this list or know of a colleague to add, send an e-mail message to: [jhospodor@umc.edu](mailto:jhospodor@umc.edu).

#### **About The University of Mississippi Medical Center**

The University of Mississippi Medical Center, located in Jackson, is the state's only academic medical center. UMMC encompasses five health science schools, including medicine, nursing, health-related professions, dentistry and graduate studies, as well as the site where University of Mississippi pharmacy

students do their clinical training. The Medical Center's health-care enterprise includes five hospitals in the University Hospitals and Health System, and University Physicians, the faculty group practice. The Medical Center's threefold mission is to educate tomorrow's health-care professionals, conduct innovative research to improve human health, and to provide the highest quality care available to the state's population. A major goal of the Medical Center is the improvement of the health of Mississippians and the elimination of health disparities. For more information, contact the Division of Public Affairs at 601-984-1100 or visit us on the Web at [umc.edu/publicaffairs](http://umc.edu/publicaffairs)

### **About Mississippi Children's Home Services**

Mississippi Children's Home Services (MCHS) is Mississippi's largest and most comprehensive provider of children's behavioral health, educational and social services. Founded in 1912, MCHS offers a full array of integrated, community-based services in all 82 counties as well as intensive campus-based and educational programming. For more information, please contact 601-352-7784 or visit us on the web at [www.mchscares.org](http://www.mchscares.org).