



# NEWS RELEASE

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## For Immediate Release

## Blue & You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas awards grants to address the mental health needs of Arkansans

**LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (November 25, 2024)** – The American Academy of Pediatrics declared it a national emergency. The Centers for Disease Control says it’s reached a crisis point around the nation. One in five Americans will experience a mental challenge this year – Arkansans included. Nearly a quarter of Arkansans have a mental or behavioral health illness, 23.8%, ranking the state 23<sup>rd</sup> in the nation.

“We cannot have complete health and well-being without good physical and mental health. We must do everything we can to remove the stigma and make our well-being, our whole health, a priority,” said Rebecca Pittillo, president of the Blue & You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas.

In an effort to remove the stigma surrounding mental health and connect Arkansans with care, the Blue & You Foundation is awarding grants to 12 nonprofit organizations around the state. The grants will fund programs providing services such as counseling to foster and adopted children and their families, programs educating primary care doctors and pediatricians on how to better spot signs of mental health and substance use challenges, and a mobile peer recovery support program.

“It’s amazing to see how groups around the state are coming together to improve the mental well-being of Arkansans, build stronger families and promote thriving communities. We all have struggles, and not a single one of us has to go through it alone,” Pittillo added.

Organizations receiving grants include:

**Arkansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (\$130,000)** — The Arkansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics Foundation will educate pediatricians on how to better recognize and care for patients with substance use disorders, thoughts of suicide, and diagnoses such as eating disorders.

**Boys & Girls Club of Benton County** (\$100,000) — Project Mindful Matters will expand access to critical mental health services to every member of the Benton County Boys & Girls Club after school and in the summer.

**The CALL** (\$45,700) — The CALL will expand its Mental Health Program to provide therapeutic services and support to foster and adoptive families across Arkansas.

**Cooper-Anthony Mercy Child Advocacy Center** (\$75,000) — The Cooper-Anthony Mercy Child Advocacy Center in Hot Springs and Benton will provide access to no-cost mental health services in five counties for children ages 3-18 who have been victims of child abuse and neglect.

**El Dorado School District** (\$66,300) — The Behavioral Intervention Enhancement Program will use advanced technology to address student behavioral challenges through personalized, evidence-based interventions and foster a positive school environment.

**Life Skills for Youth** (\$200,000) — The Life Skills for Youth afterschool and summer academy will expand its ATM (Anger, Time and Money Management) program to include Otter Creek Elementary, Mabelvale Middle, and Southwest High School in Little Rock.

**Lyon College** (\$117,450) — Caring Campuses will launch the Belonging and Connection initiative to address the national epidemic of loneliness and isolation. Caring Campuses, a collaboration between Lyon College and the University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville, will increase community connection and social support through relationship building.

**Ouachita Regional Counseling and Mental Health Center, Inc.** (\$150,808) — The Ouachita Regional Counseling and Mental Health Center will place two mental health professionals in the emergency room at CHI St. Vincent to assist with patients in a behavioral health crisis, ensuring a seamless handoff from discharge to their follow-up appointment with a mental health professional.

**The REACH Institute Resource for Advancing Children's Health** (\$43,512) — The REACH Institute will deliver the Adult Behavioral Health in Primary Care (ABH) program to 30 Arkansas primary care providers, with a focus on clinicians serving high-need populations. This intensive, four-month program will equip primary care physicians with skills to effectively diagnose, manage and treat mental health challenges.

**St. Bernards Development Foundation** (\$187,000) — The St. Bernards Development Foundation will maintain and expand its addiction treatment services, ensuring accessibility to individuals in a 23-county primary service area. This program provides face-to-face, regular and intensive treatment for

substance abuse along with psychiatric/medication management services for patients in a largely rural area.

**University of Central Arkansas Foundation, Inc. (\$40,000)** — The University of Central Arkansas will work with students to build awareness of mental health challenges, promoting positive mental health outcomes and suicide prevention. UCA will actively engage faculty and student-facing staff to complete Mental Health First Aid training so they may better support students in distress.

**Wolfe Street Foundation, Inc. (\$198,663)** — The Wolfe Street Foundation will deploy Peer Recovery Support Specialists alongside a mobile health clinic to bring recovery resources to rural communities in Arkansas, including medications for opioid use disorders.

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#### **About the Blue & You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas**

The Blue & You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, serves the state of Arkansas and is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. In its 23 years of operation, the Blue & You Foundation has awarded more than \$65 million for health improvement programs in Arkansas. To achieve the goal of better health for all Arkansans, the Blue & You Foundation seeks to harness the power of partnership. By strategically focusing its grant funding on community-based solutions, the Foundation hopes to nurture community health leadership, foster collaboration and innovation, and leverage financial, human and community resources to produce a measurable, positive impact. To learn more about the Foundation's investments, visit [blueandyoufoundationarkansas.org](http://blueandyoufoundationarkansas.org).

