

## 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, 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 community-based pediatric care clinics in rural and underserved parts of the state. Additionally, behavioral health providers are embedded in the community-based pediatric care clinics to help connect young people and their pediatrician to a psychiatrist for case consultation and care planning via telepsychiatry. The grant also supports the development of a new virtual reality game that provides anonymous peer-to-peer engagement.



### COMMUNITY IMPACT\*

**27,000+**

children and adolescents  
screened for mental health  
concerns

**15%**

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

**18%**

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

**620**

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

**88%**

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

\*as of 12/31/24

### 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. SAEED**

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



3-D Virtual Community House