



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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The Foundation for Health Leadership & Innovation Secures Funding to Improve and Advocate for Behavioral Health Needs of North Carolina’s Children and Adolescents

The new program, funded by The Duke Endowment, will be led by FHLI’s Center for Excellence for Integrated Care team

CARY— The Center of Excellence for Integrated Care (COE) — a program of the Foundation for Health Leadership & Innovation (FHLI) — has received a grant from The Duke Endowment to lead a three-year program focused on child and adolescent behavioral health. The emphasis of the project is on advocacy for mental health check-ups for children, as well as on training for behavioral health professionals to provide pediatric and family assessments and interventions.

“North Carolina’s health care workforce is doing amazing work every day with well-child exams and preventative services for children and adolescents,” said Dr. Amelia Muse, COE’s Program Director. “However, after the hardships of the past year, it’s time to answer the call for more support for providers, families, and communities on preventative and interventive behavioral health care.”

With a dual emphasis on advocacy and workforce development, The Duke Endowment has provided support for this program that will include partners from the i2i Center for Integrative Health and the North Carolina Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Program.

The COE team will partner with i2i to convene a workgroup of family members, advocates in children’s welfare, and representatives of practitioners to develop a sustainability plan to embed annual behavioral health well-child checks into medical protocols and practices, with a focus on the need for insurance coverage. This additional focus on behavioral health during or in conjunction with the well-child check will bring North Carolina alongside other leadership states, who have worked to support pediatricians, children, and families with additional behavioral health emphasis.

“With our more than 34 years of collaboration and advocacy experience addressing behavioral, I-DD, SUD, and primary healthcare, i2i is well-suited to lead this advocacy



effort,” said i2i Executive Director Ann Rodriguez. “We are thrilled to partner with FHLI, COE and NC AHEC on this critical initiative. The pandemic and North Carolina’s Medicaid transformation efforts have created an opportunity to ramp up integrated, preventative care practices across the state and strengthen whole-child care.”

Simultaneously, the COE team will partner with North Carolina AHEC to address workforce development issues by offering a continuing education opportunity for a cohort of 45 licensed behavioral health providers and ten graduate student interns currently working with youth and families. The one-year specialized training program will focus on mental health and substance use prevention, assessment, and intervention for children and adolescents and their families.

The second year of the program will train a second cohort of behavioral health professionals, with the first cohort of graduates acting as peer supervisors to assist with oversight and case consultation. The training curriculum will be informed by evidence-based literature, as well as by information collected from regularly held workgroup meetings of child and family advocates, youth, family members and providers advising on policy to support child and adolescent behavioral health wellness.

“At the Foundation for Health Leadership & Innovation, we are committed to cultivating a culture of innovation, experimentation, and risk-taking,” said Kelly Calabria, FHLI’s President and Chief Executive Officer. “Given how COVID-19 has exacerbated an already-dire need for behavioral health services for all North Carolinians, we believe this work — led by our team behavioral health experts — is the type of innovative thinking that is needed. We thank the Duke Endowment for recognizing this need and for trusting FHLI to drive a solution.”

About FHLI’s Center of Excellence for Integrated Care

The Center of Excellence for Integrated Care (COE) — a program of the Foundation for Health Leadership & Innovation — supports the clinical, operational, and financial transformation of health systems to provide whole-person care. COE’s integrated care experts support communities in providing whole-person care and reducing the stigma of behavioral health for patients and providers. Learn more at www.coeintegratedcare.org.

About the Foundation for Health Leadership & Innovation

The Foundation for Health Leadership & Innovation (FHLI) is a nonprofit organization that envisions healthy communities across North Carolina where everyone can flourish. FHLI develops and supports innovative partnerships that build a healthier North Carolina through collaboration and respect. With a long history in the state — and a



deep understanding of its health care needs — FHLI scales solutions that benefit the entire state. FHLI staff are thought leaders and experts who bring communities together for a better, healthier North Carolina. Learn more at www.foundationhli.org.

About i2i Center for Integrative Health

The i2i Center for Integrative Health is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization whose mission it is to foster collaborative and evidence-based initiatives for improving the quality and efficacy of the behavioral health, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and substance use care and support service systems within a comprehensive system of whole-person care. Learn more at <https://i2icenter.org>.

About North Carolina AHEC

The North Carolina AHEC Program provides and supports educational activities and services with a focus on primary care in rural communities and those with less access to resources to recruit, train, and retain the workforce needed to create a healthy North Carolina. Learn more at <https://www.ncahec.net>.

About The Duke Endowment

Based in Charlotte and established in 1924 by industrialist and philanthropist James B. Duke, The Duke Endowment is a private foundation that strengthens communities in North Carolina and South Carolina by nurturing children, promoting health, educating minds and enriching spirits. Since its founding, it has distributed more than \$4 billion in grants. The Endowment shares a name with Duke University and Duke Energy, but all are separate organizations.

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