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South Carolina Observes Telehealth Awareness Week

Columbia, SC – In order to raise awareness of telehealth activities throughout the State, the SC Department of Mental Health (SCDMH) joins its SC Telehealth Alliance partners in observing Telehealth Awareness Week, October 16-20, 2017.

The Alliance, a collaborative of academic medical centers, community hospitals and providers, existing telemedicine systems, and government leaders, aims to increase delivery of health care to all South Carolinians, with an emphasis on underserved and rural communities, via telemedicine.

The SCDMH is a leader in the area of telemedicine in South Carolina, via its Telepsychiatry Program, which comprises Emergency Department (ED) Consultations, Community Mental Health Services, Inpatient Psychiatric Services, and Psychiatric Services for the Hearing Impaired.

“In a collaboration of historic significance, the SCDMH partnered with The Duke Endowment in December 2007 to create an innovative solution to the overcrowding of psychiatric patients in local hospital emergency departments,” explained State Director John H. Magill. “In fact, South Carolina was the first state to successfully connect patients in EDs statewide with psychiatrists through telehealth technology. With the support of the University of South Carolina School of Medicine, the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the South Carolina Hospital Association, and substantial State support, the Program has grown significantly.”

Built on the success of its ED Telepsychiatry program, the Agency equipped its mental health centers, clinics, and inpatient hospitals to provide psychiatric treatment services to its patients via telepsychiatry as well. “Our Telepsychiatry system provides approximately 1,550 psychiatric services each month,” said SCDMH Medical Director Robert Bank, MD. “The Program as a whole has provided more than 71,000 psychiatric services since its inception to patients across South Carolina, making SCDMH the largest provider of telepsychiatry services in South Carolina.”

The [South Carolina Department of Mental Health's](#) mission is to support the recovery of people with mental illnesses, giving priority to adults with serious and persistent mental illness and to children and adolescents with serious emotional disturbances. The Agency serves approximately 100,000 citizens with mental illnesses, approximately 30,000 of whom are children and adolescents, and provides outpatient services through a network of 17 community mental health centers and numerous clinics. It also operates multiple hospitals, one community nursing care center, and three veterans' nursing homes.

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