

# NEWS RELEASE

October 11, 2010

For more information: Virginia Elliott, Vice President for Programs, 800-369-7191 or [velliott@healthfund.org](mailto:velliott@healthfund.org):

## **Health Fund targets young children's mental health RFPs invited for pilot program with \$600,000 grant pool**

Wanting to help promote mental health and prevent, or at least minimize, the impacts of social and emotional issues on a child's development, the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund is introducing a new initiative and inviting requests for proposals (RFP).

The pilot program -- backed by an initial \$600,000 in grant funds -- is aimed at encouraging coordinated early identification and early intervention for the mental health of young children in Kansas communities. According to Kim Moore, president of the Hutchinson-based philanthropy, the Health Fund is particularly interested in community-level approaches to early screening of pregnant women, new mothers, and children from birth to age six, and the timely referral to effective early interventions when the need is indicated.

"Defining healthy social and emotional development can be difficult," said Virginia Elliott, the Health Fund's Vice President for Programs, "but we all know how vitally important mental health is. When constructive skills and abilities for relating with others and dealing with adversity is lacking, the behavior problems increase." Noting those problems are becoming more of an issue in child care programs and preschools, Elliott cited recent national studies that revealed the rate of expulsion for preschool exceeds the rate of expulsion from kindergarten through high school.

### Potential Replication

Moore said the proposed projects for funding are expected to develop positive aspects of a comprehensive, coordinated approach to children's mental health and overcome common barriers to early identification and intervention. The RFP outlines components of a program which strategies should address. In this pilot phase, the Health Fund anticipates funding two or three programs, and Moore said they are looking for proposals that include "meaningful evaluation" based on evidenced-based standards to support potential replication in other Kansas communities.

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Qualified organizations may apply for a grant of up to \$250,000. Moore explained that applicants for the grants do not have to be affiliated with the United Methodist church, and described eligible grantees as 501(c)(3) public charities or governmental entities serving a Kansas community.

However, he emphasized the Health Fund expects certain stakeholder groups to be represented in the proposal. Moore said examples of these stakeholders include Mental Health Centers or mental health providers; early childhood education; family physicians, pediatricians, and/or other primary medical care providers; and consumers represented by parents or other primary caregivers of at-risk children or children receiving services. He added that projects with even broader representation -- such as faith communities, social service agencies, government, and K-12 public schools -- are preferred.

The deadline for submitting proposal for a young children's mental health grant is January 10, 2011.

#### Webinars Offered

Two informational webinars/teleconferences for interested parties are scheduled for Wednesday, October 20, at 1:30 pm and for Friday, October 29, at 10:30 am. Reservations are required and can be made at [www.healthfund.org](http://www.healthfund.org). Those wanting to discuss a project idea and its relevance to this RFP may call Moore or Elliott at 800-369-7191.

Elliott said the decisions on the grant recipients will be made by March 11, 2011. The projects selected for funding are to start by June 1, 2011, and can extend for a period of up to three years.

The United Methodist Health Ministry Fund makes health-related grants totaling \$2.5 to \$3 million each year. Since it was founded in 1986, endowed by the Kansas West Conference of the United Methodist Church, the Health Fund has invested more than \$53 million in health, healing, and wholeness for Kansans. Additional information about its activities, as well as more details on the RFP, is available online at [www.healthfund.org](http://www.healthfund.org).

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