

Telehealth Services to Expand for Children in Rural North Carolina Schools

A \$100,000 grant from the Baxter International Foundation will address pandemic-related needs and improve access to evaluation and treatment

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Verónica Arroyave, the Baxter International Foundation

[International Foundation](#) has awarded Children’s Health Fund (CHF) a \$100,000 grant to continue and expand telehealth and COVID-19 response services for students in North Carolina’s rural McDowell and Avery Counties. The funds will enable CHF affiliate, [Center for Rural Health Innovation](#)’s Health-e-Schools program to provide Pre-K through 12th grade students and school staff with access to primary care and mental health services through telehealth.

The Health-e-Schools program administers telehealth care through high-definition video conferencing using specially equipped stethoscopes and cameras. Teams work in conjunction with school nurses and primary care

physicians to ensure that students’ care is personal and coordinated. Medical issues, including earaches, sore throats, colds, allergies, and asthma can be addressed through telehealth, as well as management of chronic disease, sports physicals, and mental health visits and more.

“Telehealth has been proven effective at expanding healthcare in rural communities, and Health-e-Schools’ nationally recognized model is unique because it allows students and staff to consult a medical professional during the school day,” said Amanda Martin, executive director of the Center for Rural Health Innovation. “This helps to reduce missed workdays for parents and caretakers as well as classroom time for students.”

Children in low-income families and children lacking adequate medical insurance coverage have the most difficulty accessing care. As a result, they often miss medical checkups, screenings, critical vaccinations, and treatment for illness or injury. The economic devastation and lockdowns resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic have only exacerbated this situation.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has created substantial barriers to quality care for many students and

their families in the region, including financial constraints, transportation barriers, and a shortage of healthcare providers,” said Martin. “This funding from the Baxter International Foundation will help to sustain critical medical care in this time of heightened needs.”

“Expanding mental health services and continuing remote access to care demonstrates how the Health-e-Schools program has been able to adapt to evolving needs for healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic to help families in McDowell and Avery Counties,” said Verónica Arroyave, executive director of the Baxter International Foundation. “We are proud to continue to contribute to these important efforts as we work to support communities where our employees live and work and as part of Baxter’s overarching 2030 Corporate Responsibility Commitment to empower patients.”

Health-e-Schools’ decade of experience in school telehealth has allowed the program to seamlessly adapt to both remote and in-person learning during the pandemic. With funding from the Baxter International Foundation in 2021, the program distributed more than 1,000 thermometers, personal protective equipment, hand sanitizer, and more to students and school staff. Given students’ heightened mental health vulnerabilities during the pandemic, the program has also strengthened its behavioral healthcare services, referring many students to counselors and therapists for telehealth appointments at home or at school.

The \$100,000 grant will be administered by Children’s Health Fund.

About Children’s Health Fund

Children’s Health Fund is the nation’s foremost nonprofit dedicated to providing comprehensive healthcare to America’s neediest children. Founded in 1987 by singer/songwriter Paul Simon, pediatrician/child advocate Dr. Irwin Redlener, and program designer Karen Redlener, CHF partners with 25 programs in 15 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico to deliver comprehensive primary care services, along with mental health, dental care, and health-related social services. To date, CHF has mobilized and deployed more than \$230 million to support the programs. Working with Children’s Health Fund National Network partners, CHF has provided more than 6 million health visits for children over the last 35 years, including almost half a million in 2021 alone. For more information, please visit <https://www.childrenshealthfund.org/>

About the Baxter International Foundation

Every day, Baxter and the Baxter International Foundation strive to make a meaningful difference in the lives of people who depend on the company’s products, and in the communities where employees live and work. The Foundation has helped advance Baxter’s mission to save and sustain lives through global partnerships across the same three pillars for

40 years: increase access to healthcare for the underserved, bolster STEM education to develop the next generation of healthcare innovators, and promote overall community resilience. For more information, please visit Baxter's Corporate Responsibility page.

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