

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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# SECU Foundation

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## **SECU Foundation Helps Advance UNC Health Foundation Pilot for NC Public School Students**

**Raleigh, N.C.** – SECU Foundation is pleased to join the collaborative efforts of UNC Health Foundation and other key organizations for a new telemedicine pilot addressing child and adolescent behavioral health issues for North Carolina public school students. A \$1.97 million grant from SECU Foundation will assist the non-profit with the three-year development and implementation of a school-based virtual health program to reduce barriers for psychiatric care through telehealth services. UNC will pilot the program at two sites representing rural and urban regions of the state to identify best practices and the potential expansion for a statewide model.



L to R: Dr. Samantha Meltzer-Brody-Chair, Department of Psychiatry at UNC Chapel Hill; Dr. Nate Sowa-Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry at UNC Chapel Hill; Damian Carter-Regional SVP, SECU; Jama Campbell-Executive Director, SECU Foundation.

Statistics provided by UNC Health Foundation show that North Carolina ranks 50<sup>th</sup> in the United States for access to behavioral healthcare for children and adolescents, with only 200 child psychiatrists clustered in 31 counties and no current telemedicine services in the public school system. The UNC school-based virtual program will create an opportunity to expand virtual behavioral health services to reach families that historically have not had access to care, as well as improve the emotional and physical health of students.

“Education and healthcare leaders are seeing firsthand the increase in behavioral health issues among North Carolina students and the critical need for innovative mental health programs,” said Jama Campbell, SECU Foundation Executive Director. “While COVID-19 has had devastating impacts in our communities and state, it has also been a catalyst for positive change and creative ways to address healthcare. We are proud to support a pilot program of this magnitude and applaud UNC Health Foundation and all those involved in making sure North Carolina’s school system has the tools to provide children with the help and care they need.”

Wesley Burks, MD, CEO of UNC Health and Dean of the UNC School of Medicine, remarked, “This innovative project increases access to high quality care and promotes greater health equity – two primary goals of UNC Health. We are proud to work with SECU Foundation and grateful for their investment in the mental and behavioral health of children in our state.”

“The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a mental health crisis. There is an enormous need to respond with innovative approaches to serve the people of North Carolina who are suffering with mental health concerns,” commented Dr. Samantha Meltzer-Brody, Chair, Department of Psychiatry at UNC Chapel Hill. “We are truly grateful for the incredible support from the SECU Foundation to help us serve the mental health needs of our children and adolescents – they are our future.”

Dr. Nate Sowa, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry at UNC Chapel Hill, shared, “The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted children’s mental health. North Carolina ranks near the bottom of the country in behavioral health treatment access for children, with the greatest limitations seen in more rural parts of the state. Project funding from SECU Foundation will allow us to provide telehealth care by child psychiatry specialists in partnership with school-based health services that can be scaled to deliver much-needed care broadly in North Carolina.”

### **About SECU and the SECU Foundation**

A not-for-profit financial cooperative owned by its members, SECU has been providing employees of the state of North Carolina and their families with consumer financial services for 84 years. The Credit Union also offers a diversified line of financial advisory services including retirement and education planning, tax preparation, insurance, trust and estate planning services, and investments through its partners and affiliated entities. SECU serves over 2.6 million members through 273 branch offices, 1,100 ATMs, 24/7 Member Services via phone, a website, [www.ncsecu.org](http://www.ncsecu.org) and a Mobile App. Members can also follow and subscribe to SECU on Facebook and YouTube. The SECU Foundation, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization funded by the contributions of SECU members, promotes local community development in North Carolina primarily through high impact projects in the areas of housing, education, healthcare and human services. Since 2004, [SECU Foundation](#) has made a collective financial commitment of over \$216 million for initiatives to benefit North Carolinians statewide. In addition to the website, highlights are also available on the SECU Foundation Instagram page.