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Media Contact:

Greg Turner, Ball Consulting Group, LLC

Phone: 617-243-9950; Email: greg@ballcg.com

The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts Awards \$1 Million in New Synergy Initiative Grants

Projects Will Support Transformational Behavioral Health, Child Care and Nutrition Efforts

WORCESTER, Mass. – [The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts](#) today announced a sixth round of funding through its Synergy Initiative in support of collaborative projects in the region that address health issues with integrated, comprehensive strategies focused on systems change.

The [Synergy Initiative](#) provides projects with multiple years of funding, typically totaling approximately \$2 million in funding for each project over roughly five years. For the first-year funding in Round Six, The Health Foundation has awarded grants of around \$250,000 to each of the following projects:

Southbridge CARES

Clark University's Mosakowski Institute and the Southbridge Public Schools will partner to implement Southbridge CARES, a multi-tiered school-based mental health program that leverages tech-enabled products and services to address students' academic, social-emotional, and college and career needs. Key outcomes include improved social-emotional skills and behavioral health outcomes that will promote students' increased educational engagement, decreased disciplinary incidents, increased high school graduation rates, and increased college enrollment rates and first-year college retention rates.

North Central MA Coalition for Employer-Supported Childcare

This diverse coalition – which is fiscally sponsored by the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts and receiving administrative support from the United Way of North Central Massachusetts – aims to develop and implement a workable funding model that will break through the multiple barriers to affordable, accessible quality child care for low- and moderate-income working families in the North Central region. It will also offer a path to a child care sector that provides livable wages and an opportunity for employers to access and support a currently untapped workforce.

Food is Medicine for Central MA

Led by Community Servings, this project aims to strengthen and support Central Massachusetts regional Food is Medicine providers and expand access to the home-delivered medically tailored meal intervention across the region. Project goals include building new health care contract relationships to expand access to medically tailored meals and leveraging regional, state and national networks to identify opportunities for expanded government funding.

Family Childcare Success Project

The Family Childcare Success Project will support the creation of much-needed economic opportunities and increased child care capacity through a novel approach to recruitment, training, education and support for primarily bilingual families to start high-quality, culturally-competent family child care businesses in their communities. The project is led by Family Services of Central Massachusetts, an affiliate of Seven Hills Foundation.

“This latest round of Synergy Initiative grant funding supports an impressive cohort of collaborative projects seeking to advance innovative strategies to address persistent health challenges in our region and beyond,” said Dr. Amie Shei, President and CEO of The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts. “These grants aim to strengthen promising ideas and augment them with several years of funding, evaluation, and advocacy support in order to achieve transformative results and advance health equity.”

Since 2000, The Health Foundation has provided nearly \$39 million in funding for 25 projects through the Synergy Initiative. Projects generally progress from planning to pilot to full implementation over the course of three to five years, with requests for continuation grants considered on an annual basis at various levels depending on project needs. These grants have achieved significant, lasting policy and systems changes that continue to this day.

Several **Round Five** projects that launched in 2020 are continuing in 2024, including **Encompass**, a foster parent supports initiative led by the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children designed to improve recruitment and retention of foster parents and outcomes for children in foster care; the **Private Well Program to Protect Public Health**, an effort led by RCAP Solutions to promote safe drinking water for households relying on unregulated private wells; and the **Quaboag Connector**, a project led by the Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation to develop a sustainable, scalable model for rural transportation to increase access to health and community resources.

The Health Foundation also recently announced the opening of its 2024 Activation Fund grant program, which provides capacity-building support for organizations working to address community-identified health issues. With grants typically ranging between \$60,000 and \$125,000, the Activation Fund supports discrete, one-year projects in Central Massachusetts aimed at helping organizations advance to their next level of capacity and effectiveness that can be sustained over time. Additional details about the grant opportunity, including upcoming information sessions and submission deadlines, can be found [here](#).

About the Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts

Now in its 25th year, The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts is dedicated to improving the health of those who live or work in Central Massachusetts, with particular emphasis on vulnerable populations and unmet needs. Through its unique and impactful approach to

grantmaking, the Foundation supports community-identified health issues, with health defined broadly to include social determinants of health and with a focus on promoting health equity. As a health conversion foundation launched in 1999 following the sale of the not-for-profit HMO Central Massachusetts Health Care Inc., The Health Foundation's grants have totaled over \$56 million to more than 230 unique organizations over its history. For more information, visit www.thfcm.org.

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