FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE **Contact: Katie Sullivan**

Alabama's Community Mental Health Centers Among Top Recipients under the Alabama Rural Health Transformation Program

New Alabama School Mental Health Network and six Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics among first-round grants under the Alabama Rural Health Transformation Program

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — September 4, 2026 — Alabama's community mental health centers (CMHCs) will receive 11 grants totaling over $8 million in new funding to expand school-based mental health crisis response and strengthen behavioral health access and integrated care in rural communities, as part of the more than $144 million in grants Governor Kay Ivey announced under the Alabama Rural Health Transformation Program (ARHTP). The Alabama Council for Behavioral Healthcare (ACBH), the statewide association representing 21 of Alabama's community mental health providers, applauds the awards. Members of ACBH employ more than 5,200 people and assist more than 115,000 individuals a year with counseling, day treatment, outpatient, inpatient and residential service across Alabama.

One of the largest ARHTP grants awarded will launch the Alabama School Mental Health Network (ASMHN), a new collaborative of 17 CMHCs that will give rural K-12 public schools in Alabama a single access point for connecting students in crisis with a mental health professional using a specialized iPad-based telehealth platform. This network will create connectivity that is long overdue for rural communities, ensuring no student goes without support.

"The Alabama School Mental Health Network represents an innovative collaboration among community mental health centers to ensure students can access help when they need it most," said Tuerk Schlesinger, CEO of AltaPointe Health Systems. "By using telehealth to create a unified point of access, we can quickly connect students in crisis with qualified mental health professionals, regardless of where they live. We are grateful for this investment and the opportunity to work alongside our partners to strengthen mental health care for children."

The ARHTP Mental Health Initiative also invested more than $4.3 million to help six Alabama CMHCs build the infrastructure needed to become Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs). This federal model requires clinics to serve anyone seeking help for a mental health or substance use condition, regardless of ability to pay. ACBH awardees include:

- Carastar Health ($1.04 million) in Elmore and Lowndes counties
- Central Alabama Wellness ($589,096) in Chilton and Shelby counties
- Integrea Community Mental Health System ($867,545) in Chambers and Tallapoosa counties
- Jefferson-Blount-St. Clair Mental Health Authority ($542,965) in Blount and St. Clair counties

"Alabama's community mental health centers see every day what happens when children and families in rural counties can't get timely care, and these grants are a direct investment in closing that gap," said

Holly McCorkle, executive director of the Alabama Council for Behavioral Healthcare. “From putting crisis support directly in rural classrooms to helping more of our members become Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics, these grants strengthen the local, community-based system of care Alabamians already know and trust.”

Lindsey Stephenson, executive director of Central Alabama Wellness, said, “We are grateful for this meaningful investment in our agency and the community we serve. This funding will enable us to launch a Mobile Crisis Team, strengthen the infrastructure needed to pursue CCBHC certification, and expand access to comprehensive, coordinated behavioral healthcare.”

The investment in CCBHCs is directly tied to the success of the ASMHN and workforce development opportunities. CCBHCs that provide school-based services are better positioned to deliver coordinated are that follows the student beyond the school building and into their home and community.

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About the Alabama Council for Behavioral Healthcare

The Alabama Council for Behavioral Healthcare (ACBH) represents 21 community mental health providers located across Alabama, employing more than 5,200 people and assisting more than 115,000 Alabamians a year with counseling, day treatment, outpatient, inpatient and residential services. ACBH advocates for those who provide mental health services and those who receive care. If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, call the 988 Lifeline. To learn more about ACBH, visit https://www.alabamacouncil.org/ and follow on LinkedIn, Instagram, and X.