

# SCDHHS Update:

## *Focus on Behavioral Health*

**Kevin O. Wessinger MD, FAAP**  
*Chief Medical Officer, SCDHHS*



**South Carolina Chapter**

INCORPORATED IN SOUTH CAROLINA

American Academy of Pediatrics  
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



2024 SCAAP CATCH MEETING

# Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, learners will be able to:

Be informed about the current and upcoming initiatives by SCDHHS impacting behavioral health in South Carolina.

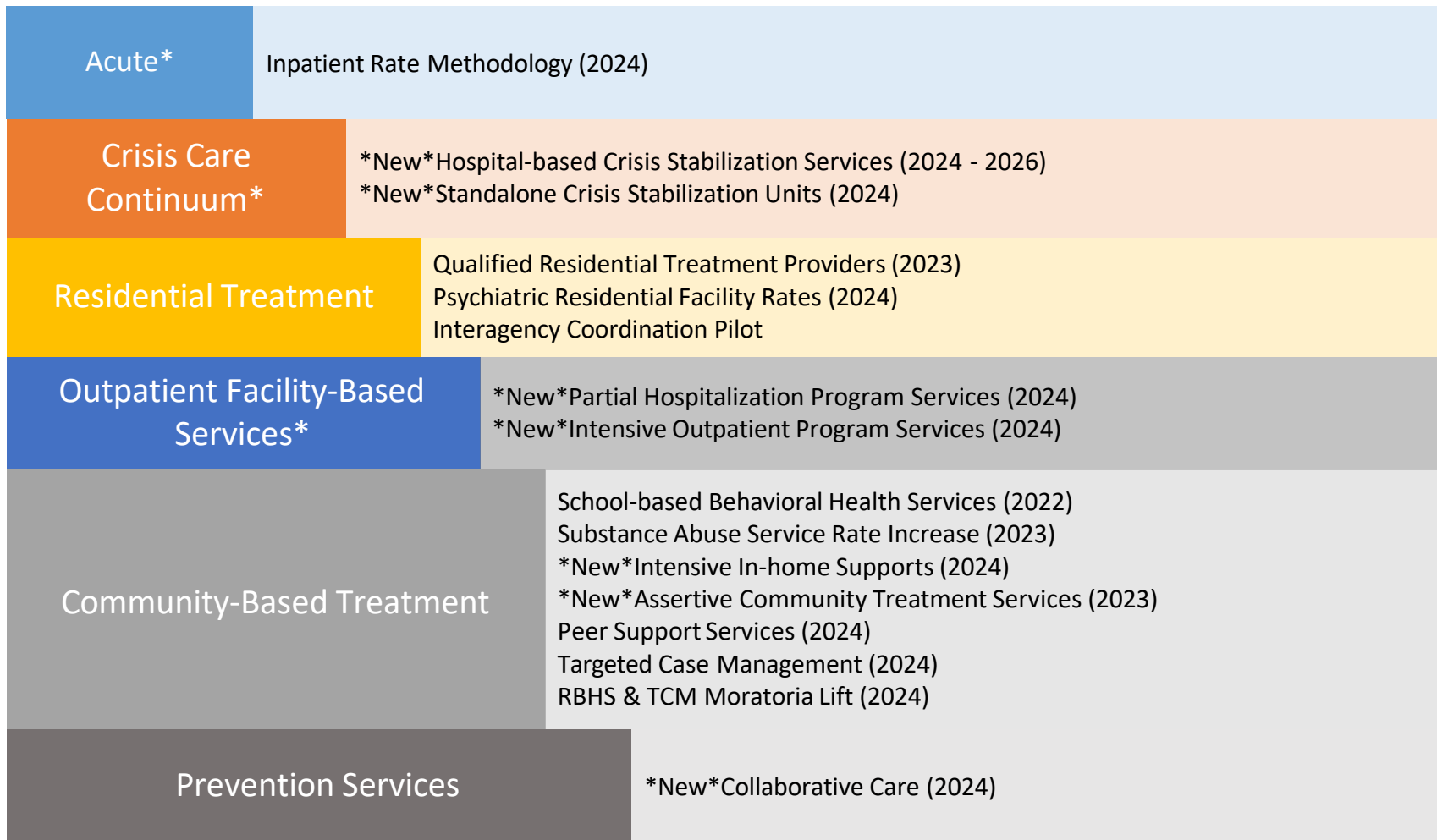
**South Carolina Chapter**

INCORPORATED IN SOUTH CAROLINA

American Academy of Pediatrics  
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



# Behavioral Health Continuum of Care



*\*Pee Dee Behavioral Health Hub Development (MUSC + McLeod) 2025*

# Collaborative Care Model (CoCM)

- The CoCM is a patient-centered, evidence-based approach to integrate physical and behavioral health services in primary care settings.
- The CoCM leverages a team-based, interdisciplinary and systematic approach to screen, diagnose, treat and provide behavioral health care.
- Primary care provider (PCP)-led teams of qualified professionals are eligible to receive reimbursement for CoCM services.
  - These teams must include a PCP, a behavioral health care manager, and a psychiatric consultant.

**South Carolina Chapter**

INCORPORATED IN SOUTH CAROLINA

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



# Collaborative Care Model (CoCM)

- The CoCM includes:
  - Care coordination and management between your PCP and your behavioral health provider;
  - Regular, systematic monitoring and treatment using a validated clinical rating scale; and
  - Regular, systematic psychiatric caseload reviews and consultation for patients who do not show clinical improvement.
- SCDHHS will be modeling the SC CoCM after the Maryland CoCM.
  - <https://health.maryland.gov/mmcp/Pages/Collaborative-Care-Providers.aspx>

**South Carolina Chapter**

INCORPORATED IN SOUTH CAROLINA

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



# School-based Behavioral Health Services

- Effective date for SCDHHS' initiative was July 1, 2022
- Goal was a counselor in every school
  - Partnership with USC's Department of Psychology created the SC School Behavioral Health Academy
  - Identified three pathways for school district flexibility in increasing available provider options with Medicaid reimbursement—direct hire, contract with DMH, contract with private providers
  - Created a specialized rate structure to incentivize school-based services

**South Carolina Chapter**

INCORPORATED IN SOUTH CAROLINA

American Academy of Pediatrics  
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



# School-based Behavioral Health Services

- Significant progress in one-year
  - South Carolina saw a 65% increase in school-based mental health counselors
  - School-based mental health counselor-to-student ratio improved from 1:1,300 to 1:829
  - 118 schools gained access to a mental health counselor
  - There is now at least one counselor in every school district and in nearly all schools

**South Carolina Chapter**

INCORPORATED IN SOUTH CAROLINA

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



# Hospital-based Crisis Stabilization

- Managing behavioral health crises in hospital emergency departments (EDs) is a serious issue across our state.
- Placing these patients in the chaotic environment of the ED often exacerbates psychiatric and/or substance use issues and long waits for inpatient bedspaces result in extended ED stays, thus increasing instability in the patient and placing additional burdens on ED staff.
- For this reason, SCDHHS offered and awarded 13 South Carolina hospitals across the state a total of \$45.5 million to build specialized hospital-based ED units dedicated to behavioral health crises.
- Units are already open at two hospitals with a third opening soon and all 13 scheduled to open by 2026.

**South Carolina Chapter**

INCORPORATED IN SOUTH CAROLINA

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™





# Hospital-based Crisis Stabilization

- These units will provide care in an environment which is tailored to behavioral health needs and de-escalation of the presenting crisis, thus reducing need for inpatient psychiatric admissions
  - Comprehensive services provided from a multidisciplinary behavioral health team with a warm hand-off to community-based resources for continued treatment
  - Units will serve both children and adults, depending on population needs determined by each hospital
  - Current rates have been identified based on psychiatric inpatient costs

**South Carolina Chapter**

INCORPORATED IN SOUTH CAROLINA

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



# Q & A

**Kevin O. Wessinger MD, FAAP**  
*Chief Medical Officer, SC DHHS*  
[kevin.wessinger@scdhhs.gov](mailto:kevin.wessinger@scdhhs.gov)



# THANK YOU!

**South Carolina Chapter**

INCORPORATED IN SOUTH CAROLINA

American Academy of Pediatrics  
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



2024 SCAAP CATCH MEETING