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**NIKKI R. HALEY**

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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For immediate release

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## **Gov. Nikki Haley, Mental Health Celebrate Telepsychiatry Consultation Program**

**COLUMBIA, S.C.** – Governor Nikki Haley and South Carolina Department of Mental Health (SCDHM) Director John H. Magill today recognized the Trustees of The Duke Endowment for their support of the SCDMH's successful Telepsychiatry Emergency Department Consultation Program.

In an effort to meet the critical shortage of psychiatrists in South Carolina's underserved areas, SCDMH utilizes real-time, state-of-the-art video-and-voice technology that connects qualified psychiatrists to participating hospitals throughout the state. These consultations have increased the quality and timeliness of assessment and initial treatment of patients, reduced the length of stay in emergency departments for many patients, and allowed participating hospitals to direct critical personnel and financial resources to other needs.

"From the very beginning, we made it clear that South Carolina had a moral responsibility to correct longstanding issues and restore the public's confidence in the Department of Mental Health. The department lacked the appropriate funding and it was clear that our citizens were needlessly suffering," said Gov. Nikki Haley. "With partners like Duke Endowment and cutting edge advancements like the Telepsychiatry Consultation Program, we are now delivering mental health care where it's needed, when it's needed, while improving overall patient care and reducing costs and that is exactly the way it should be."

"The program saves money, but it's biggest benefit is that it helps patients. Not only are many patients able to leave the emergency room sooner and return to their families, but even those patients who remain hospitalized are benefiting from the treatment recommendations of an experienced psychiatrist," said SCDMH Director John H. Magill.

"We are proud to be part of developing this national model and bringing it to fruition," said Minor Shaw, Chairman of the Board of The Duke Endowment. "The Duke Endowment recognizes the value of new technologies that will improve lives and strengthen communities just as DMH's telepsychiatry program does."

An ongoing study of the program's impact on medical costs by the University of South Carolina School of Medicine has determined that there is an overall medical cost savings of over \$1,700 per episode of care for patients receiving treatment via telepsychiatry. The study has also found that patients discharged following an SCDMH telepsychiatry consultation have a significantly higher rate of accessing mental health aftercare in the community, thereby reducing their risk of readmission to an emergency department.

Since March 29, 2009, SCDMH has completed approximately 16,800 telepsychiatry consultations with hospital emergency departments. The SCDMH Telepsychiatry Consultation Program currently provides comprehensive consultations to 18 South Carolina hospital emergency departments (July 2013).

This innovative statewide program is made possible through a series of grants from The Duke Endowment, headquartered in Charlotte, NC. In addition to the support of The Duke Endowment, SCDMH is assisted in the program by the SC Department of Health and Human Services and the USC School of Medicine. With the support of Governor Nikki Haley, SCDMH also received funding to support the program from the South Carolina General Assembly. Participating hospitals also pay a modest user fee for the service.

*About The South Carolina Department of Mental Health:*

*The South Carolina Department of Mental Health's mission is to support the recovery of people with mental illnesses, giving priority to adults with serious and persistent mental illness and to children and adolescents with serious emotional disturbances. The Agency serves approximately 100,000 citizens with mental illnesses, approximately 30,000 of whom are children and adolescents, and provides outpatient services through a network of seventeen community mental health centers and numerous clinics. It also operates four hospitals, one community nursing care center, and three veterans' nursing homes.*

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