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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**SYSTEM OF CARE GRANT CONCLUDES; STARKMHAR & LOCAL PARTNERS  
PREPARED TO SUSTAIN ITS BENEFITS**

***Local partners include Stark County Family Court, Stark DD, Stark DJFS & Stark County  
Educational Service Center***

*Stark County, OH (May 30, 2025)* – Eight years after the nearly \$8 million federal System of Care (SOC) grant was first awarded, Stark County Mental Health & Addiction Recovery (StarkMHAR) is pleased to report that many aspects of the behavioral healthcare system in the county, particularly those that serve youth and families, are poised to self-sustain as the grant period concludes.

“The System of Care grant was able to help jumpstart many things, and we always gravitated toward strategies that could be continued,” said John Aller, executive director of StarkMHAR. “A large grant like this can provide many benefits to residents, and everything we did we did with the mindset that these should be long-lasting advancements that live on when the grant is over,” he said.

While funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) will wrap up as planned in June 2025, the focus on sustainable and attainable strategies means that the infrastructure and services made possible by the grant will continue. Trainings, partnerships, and models put in place over the past eight years leave many programs and agencies stronger than before and better prepared to care for Stark County residents.

Community benefits include:

- Improved access to behavioral health services and supports – examples include behavioral health services being embedded at local pediatric offices and the Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities;
- A better designed youth and family care coordination network – examples include the Youth Mobile Response Team, where trained crisis counselors travel to people out in the community; Intensive Home-Based Therapy Teams; and Co-Located Services, where youth can access behavioral health support in places they’re already going;
- New Family and Youth Engagement strategies – examples include the Families Supporting Families Connect Group; Parent Cafes; the Family Leadership Committee; a Youth and Family Needs Assessment; Collaborative Focus Groups; Breathe Into Change; and YouthMOVE Stark County;
- Strengthened cultural and linguistic competency, family and youth involvement, and Trauma-Informed Care in the Stark County System of Care – examples of trainings offered include Population Focus Learning Series and Family Engagement Training; other initiatives in this area include the Cultural Ally program, CLAS Standards being introduced, and the Pastor’s Roundtable;
- The launch and continuation of StarkHelpCentrtal.com, an online resource directory connecting people to basic needs and more – in 2023, a partnership was formed with United Way of Greater Stark County that allowed the website to connect people with information previously obtained by calling 211, increasing its value and reach;

- Public awareness and social marketing campaigns addressing stigma; connecting with youth through an age-appropriate comic book; promoting “anchor boxes,” (a suicide prevention tool), and more.

“While all these programs and services will continue to have an impact, the thing I’m most proud of are the interpersonal and organizational relationships that have been built,” said Donna Edwards, Resiliency Program Manager at StarkMHAR and lead on grant activities. “So many more key people are just a phone call away from each other now, where before they may not have known one another. And it’s all in the name of serving people better,” she continued.

A celebratory meeting will be held on June 4, where all partners involved in this work will reflect on the progress made and honor each other’s achievements.

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***About Stark County Mental Health & Addiction Recovery***

Stark County Mental Health & Addiction Recovery (StarkMHAR) is the county “Board.” The role of county boards is to plan, evaluate, and fund mental health and addiction services locally by contracting with a wide range of providers for prevention, treatment and recovery support for their community members. Additionally, StarkMHAR regularly looks for areas that need special attention, and makes plans to address those. Learn more about what’s happening now at [www.StarkMHAR.org](http://www.StarkMHAR.org).