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**United Way of the Black Hills**

## **United Way of the Black Hills taking first steps to big changes**

**RAPID CITY** - Grant applications for 2021 funding for current funded agencies is now available. United Way of the Black Hills (UWBH) currently funds 50 agencies throughout the Black Hills doing work in the areas of education, financial stability, and health.

UWBH will continue to serve as a fundraiser for the community to raise over \$2 million dollars every year. However, the allocations of the funds will transition over a three-year period, from a “traditional model” of funding agencies to a “community impact model” — funding programs and resources provided by agencies that are serving the communities greatest needs.

“We recognize we must be strategic in this transition period, especially for our funded agencies—which is why only one-third of our allocations for 2021 funding will go towards our community impact model,” said Barry Hoogland, Board President of UWBH.

The funding structure is a three-year process beginning in 2021, a third of the funds will be allocated to the community impact model, strategically being granted to the greatest needs and root causes within our area. By 2023, 100 percent of the funds will be allocated towards the new community impact model.

“Our funded agencies are essential to the collaborative process of determining how we can solve our community’s most complex issues to ensure long-lasting change,” said Jamie Toennies, Executive Director of UWBH. “We are not trying to reinvent the wheel, and we want to invest in the programs and resources that are making an impact in the community.”

The community impact model was adopted following the UWBH 2019 Community Needs Assessment conducted by Black Hills Knowledge Network (BHKNN)<sup>i</sup> that determined the seven priority needs in the Black Hills area. The top three priority needs included: 1.) Mental Health, 2.) Substance Abuse, and 3.) Birth-to-Five Childcare services. With the concluded information, UWBH recognized a need for a convener in the area of mental health.

“[Mental Health] is the number one need in our community across the Black Hills. As stewards to our community’s dollars, we recognized that we needed to fulfill this need,” said Toennies.

As a result, UWBH has launched a Mental Health Initiative. The John T. Vucurevich Foundation presented a check in the amount of \$200,000 to launch the new initiative. The first step in the process is hiring a Mental Health Initiative Director to serve as the convener to host

collaborative meetings with non-profit agencies and community leaders to determine the most effective process to solve these complex mental health issues.



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The new Mental Health Initiative Director position will be posted on Friday, Jan. 31<sup>st</sup>. Those interested in applying for the position may visit: [www.unitedwayblackhills.org/employment](http://www.unitedwayblackhills.org/employment).

For more information regarding UWBH's new direction and community impact model, please visit <https://www.unitedwayblackhills.org/2020-new-direction>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unitedwayblackhills.org/community-needs-assessment>