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St. Louis County Children's Service Fund and Community Health Commission of Missouri Launch Youth Advisory Council for Mental Health Investment in St. Louis County

St. Louis, Missouri — [Dec. 4, 2025] — The St. Louis County Children's Service Fund (CSF) and the Community Health Commission of Missouri (CHCM) have launched a new Youth Advisory Council (YAC) to ensure young people have a real voice in shaping mental and behavioral health investments across St. Louis County.

The YAC brings together students from several St. Louis County school districts. Over a two-year term, youth will identify priority needs, offer recommendations on funding decisions, and elevate perspectives that reflect the diverse experiences of young people across the county.

"As the ultimate recipients of our funding, young people deserve a say in where that funding goes. Through the YAC, we're creating a clear pathway for youth to be meaningfully engaged in our work and directly inform our investment strategy," said Emily Koenig, Executive Director at CSF. "We partnered with CHCM because of their experience elevating and advancing participatory budgeting across the region, and because they bring the facilitation and implementation capacity needed to support youth voice in a meaningful, structured way."

CHCM serves as both strategic partner and program facilitator for the YAC. The organization has been a regional champion for participatory budgeting, helping to advance a model that centers community voice, increases transparency, and strengthens trust in decision-making processes. Through its work with community, philanthropic, and systems

partners, CHCM has adapted this approach across a range of initiatives and now brings that experience to support youth engagement.

By applying this framework to the YAC, CHCM will facilitate the Council's sessions, guide youth through a collaborative decision-making process, and support coordination across CSF, district leaders, educators, and students.

"This collaboration reflects a shared belief that the people closest to the challenges should help guide the solutions," said Riisa Rawlins, CEO of CHCM. "We're honored to bring our expertise in participatory budgeting to the table and work alongside CSF and our district partners to help young people shape the mental health supports they say they need."

The YAC was conceived following recommendations from CSF's Community Advisory Committee to find new ways to center youth voice in its work and was approved for funding by CSF's Board of Directors earlier this year. The initiative is co-designed by CSF and CHCM, built with input from district leaders, educators, and youth. As partners, we aim to strengthen youth leadership pathways, deepen cross-district collaboration, and ensure that mental health investments align with the priorities young people identify.

For more information about the Youth Advisory Council, visit <https://stlcsf.org/youth-advisory-council/>.

About St. Louis County Children's Service Fund

Created by St. Louis County voters in 2008, St. Louis County Children's Service Fund (CSF) invests in nonprofit and governmental entities to provide mental and behavioral health services to children and families throughout St. Louis County. As the largest children's service fund in Missouri, CSF has invested more than \$550 million in organizations throughout the community using the "Putting Kids First" sales tax, which allocates a quarter-cent of every dollar spent in St. Louis County to its funding for services falling within its core focus areas. These core focus areas include crisis intervention, counseling, child advocacy, education, prevention and more. For more information on CSF, partner organizations and the funding process, visit stlcsf.org or call them at 314-615-5850.

About the Community Health Commission of Missouri

The Community Health Commission of Missouri (CHCM) is a statewide organization dedicated to achieving zero health disparities through community and health system partnerships. CHCM powers the connection of community and systems to co-create

innovative solutions that yield health equity in all policy and outcomes. For more information about our mission to eliminate health disparities, visit chcmissouri.org.