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FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
Sydney Hofer  
[sydney@kanecommgroup.com](mailto:sydney@kanecommgroup.com) or [news@lsswis.org](mailto:news@lsswis.org)  
262.305.1695

JoAnna Bautch  
[jbautch@unitedcc.org](mailto:jbautch@unitedcc.org)  
414.649.2842

**Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan to Launch Pilot Program for School-Centered Mental Health in Partnership with United Community Center**

*School-Centered Mental Health program developed to create comprehensive solutions to mental health issues in and out of the classroom.*

MILWAUKEE (September 5, 2018) — [Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan](#) (LSS) announces the launch of its School-Centered Mental Health model, a community-based program that utilizes schools as a hub to provide services to students and their families both at school and in the home. The pilot program with [United Community Center](#) (UCC), which begins this school year, stands to help students and their families focus on mental health and empower them to stay in control of their mental wellness through intentional engagement of the entire family and the school system.

“As a country, we have fallen short meeting the mental health needs of our children. Lutheran Social Services’ school-centered mental health model addresses this need and helps remove barriers families face in getting access to the care they need,” said Héctor Colón, President and CEO of LSS. “Through our pilot with United Community Center, we hope to close the gap and give children the resources they need to grow into successful and thriving young adults by building healthy communities, beginning with a strong foundation of mental wellness.”

LSS’s comprehensive school-centered mental health model focuses on improving health equity of the children and families in communities throughout Wisconsin. LSS’ pilot program will build on the current success of its school-based mental health programs by expanding beyond therapy in the school setting to providing supports and services in the home and community. The model features a coaching approach to empowering the child, the family, their school and community at large.

“The United Community Center understands the importance of preparing our staff to help meet the challenges our students face with stress and anxiety. Too often these challenges impede their learning,” said Ricardo Diaz, Executive Director of United Community Center. “LSS brings a great deal of expertise in this area, and know this will benefit students in Milwaukee. This partnership will hopefully be just the start of a long-term relationship to best serve the families of our community.”

The pilot programs will be housed at UCC’s Bruce Guadalupe School and Acosta Middle School, 1028 South 9th Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53204.

The pilot program is expected to result in reductions in the need for foster care and youth justice programs, lower truancy rates, improved school attendance, improved academic achievement and improved safety with reduced school violence.

In order to address policy change needed to sustain and scale the comprehensive model, and remove silos for all those working on improving the mental health of children in Wisconsin, LSS has formed a Partners of Change Committee to meet in September. The committee will be made up of county and state government representatives, mental health advocacy groups, local health systems, community organizations, committed funders and community members with lived experience.

#### **About Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan**

Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan strives to build healthy communities filled with people using their God-given gifts to serve. For more than 100 years, this has been our goal. At LSS we value compassion, co-creation, change and courage, instilling these core values in every community and residential program we offer, serving more than 37,000 individuals each year. We believe in the infinite worth of every individual and because of this we are committed to the growth and empowerment of others. To learn more about how LSS acts compassionately, serves humbly and leads courageously, visit [www.LSSwis.org](http://www.LSSwis.org).

#### **About United Community Center**

The United Community Center (UCC) provides programs to Hispanics and near South side residents of all races and ages in education, cultural arts, recreation, community development and health and human services in an effort to help individuals achieve their potential by focusing on cultural heritage as a means of personal development.

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