

United Way of Southwestern Indiana

Mental Health Pathway

Request for Proposals

March 2026



United Way of Southwestern Indiana requests proposals to improve access to mental health services, increase mental health awareness, and provide opportunities to develop mental health wellness and resiliency skills for low-income people living in Spencer, Vanderburgh, and/or Warrick Counties.

United Way of Southwestern Indiana (UWSWI) is dedicated to increasing economic upward mobility for residents of Spencer, Vanderburgh, and Warrick Counties. We invest in high quality, non-profit programs; we support direct services to low-income individuals and families; we facilitate dialogue across sectors; and we advocate for equitable public policy. All our efforts are driven by a desire to see our neighbors reach economic self-sufficiency and break cycles of generational poverty.

Poverty is a complex issue with multiple contributing factors. To address the multidimensional nature of poverty, UWSWI prioritizes the following Pathways towards upward mobility:

Empowering Employment
Social Stability & Growth

Mental Health
Thriving NextGen

The current request for proposals aligns with UWSWI's Mental Health Pathway. The link between low-income status and mental health challenges are deeply intertwined in a bidirectional, causal relationship. Financial hardship increases the risk of experiencing mental health challenges due to factors relating to elevated levels of stress, increased trauma, and poor nutrition. Concurrently, people living with a mental health challenge are at higher risk for living in poverty due to reduced employment opportunities and challenges related to maintaining employment. Individuals in poverty experience higher levels of chronic stress, stigma, and a lack of resources, leading to poorer mental health outcomes. Simultaneously, they face barriers like cost, transportation, and lack of insurance. Furthermore, poor mental health may prevent individuals from becoming upwardly mobile, cementing their economic position and entrenching cycles of generational poverty.

Access to appropriate levels of mental health care is key to upward mobility. Both informal support services and formal treatment for mental health concerns are needed. Research related to mental health identifies many, complex challenges related to mental health and the availability of mental health care. The 2025 edition of [*The State of Mental Health in America*](#) published by Mental Health America reports that 23.4% of

American adults experienced some form of mental illness over the past year. This is equivalent to over sixty million people. Additionally, one-quarter of adults (25%) with a mental illness reported an unmet need for mental health treatment in the past year. Approximately 230,000 adults (25.9%) in Indiana report fourteen or more mentally unhealthy poor mental health days a month and were not able see a doctor due to cost. Furthermore, Indiana ranks 44th in mental health worker availability, with an estimated ratio of one mental health professional to serve every 500 people needing care.

For the three-county area served by UWSWI, approximately 41,000 adults (20% of the population) experience mental illness each year. Adults report an average of 5 to 6 days a month when they are mentally unhealthy. In a 2023 survey, over 10,000 middle and high school students (47%) reported experiencing depression in the past year. ([2025 Mental Health Index](#) published by the Indiana Mental Health Roundtable).

Both the Community Health Needs Assessments published for [Vanderburgh](#) and [Warrick](#) Counties identified Mental Health as the top priority health issue. Vanderburgh County has seen a 35% increase in suicide deaths since 2020. Twenty-six percent (26%) of residents' report having had a medical professional diagnosing a depressive disorder. Similarly, 35% have been diagnosed with an anxiety related disorder. These rates are somewhat lower for Warrick County with 14% reporting a depressive disorder and 22% reporting anxiety related disorder.

According to the 2026 [Greater Evansville Health Survey](#), the top five reasons low-income adults delay or do not receive mental health care services are:

1. Health insurance does not cover mental health care (30%)
2. The cost was too high (28%)
3. Inability to get an appointment soon enough (21%)
4. No provider care options were available (18%)
5. Does not have health insurance (15%)

Considering this landscape, there is not one solution to increasing access to mental health support for people with a limited income. Individualized services with a licensed mental health provider are essential for those struggling with acute mental illness. Additionally, access to evidence-based, preventative programs provide opportunity for the public to build awareness, knowledge, and skills related to promoting mental and emotional well-being for themselves and others. Through lay person training, the community can increase the capacity of informal systems, creating networks of support for those who are waiting for care or may have cultural barriers related to western mental health care practices. This expansion of a preventative workforce is also necessary for reducing the demand on our already overburdened mental health care providers.

Grant Details

For UWSWI's 2026 Mental Health Pathway Grant cycle, we are seeking proposals which address the following needs:

- Mental health intervention serving individuals without mental healthcare insurance, who are underinsured, and/or who utilize public benefits (i.e., Medicare/Medicaid).
- Programs and services which increase awareness of mental health services, provide mental health education or skill-building programs, and/or increase the availability of informal support networks.
- Programs addressing barriers to accessing mental health care such as racial/ethnic disparities, non-English language, or services for pre-school aged children,

The minimum request is \$50,000.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. Be either:
 - an IRS registered 501(c) 3 organization in good standing, or
 - a community group with a 501(c)3 organization in good standing serving as its fiscal agent/sponsor.
2. Provide services in Spencer, Vanderburgh, and/or Warrick Counties. *Funds awarded by UWSWI are restricted for use which benefits residents of Spencer, Vanderburgh, and/or Warrick Counties.*
3. Serve a majority (50% or more) low-income clients. *UWSWI defines "low-income" as households living within or below [minimum ALICE \(Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed\) household survival budget](#).*
4. Have strong organizational leadership supportive of community impact principles and the internal capacity to manage fiscal and performance expectations.

Grant Priorities

Priority consideration will be given to:

- Proposals which support evidence-based mental health service provided by a licensed mental health practitioner.
- Services designed for or exclusively offered to low-income populations.
- Programs serving populations who experience barriers to accessing mental health care. Examples may include addressing racial/ ethnic disparities relating to access to mental health care, services for pre-school age children, or services addressing language and/or cultural barriers related to mental health intervention.

Application Review Process

All grant proposals are reviewed and scored by an Expert Task Force consisting of community volunteers with knowledge and experience in the field of mental health. Any information in the proposal which would identify the applicant organization will be redacted to support a blind review process. Applications are scored in the following areas with scores weighted as noted below:

- Program Model and Services (25%)
- Client Profiles (25%)
- Theory of Change (15%)
- Evaluation (15%)
- Current Spending and Funding Request (10%)
- Service History and Goals (10%)

Questions should be directed to:

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