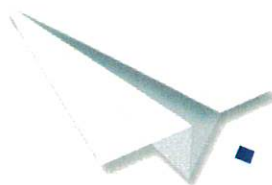




Student Profile  
JaNorre Jones: Pee Dee  
Dillon County School District 4  
8th Grade  
*(received 78 services since 2017)*



## BACKGROUND

- *Referred for ADHD & behavior issues in 2017*
- *Since initial referral, has also been seen for dental & vision needs*
- *HL has coordinated 14 dental fillings, 1 tooth extraction, and 4 cleanings for JaNorre & transported him to the eye doctor for an annual vision exam and new glasses*
- *HL delivered ADHD medication consistently to school nurse during the last 6 years*
- *JaNorre lives in a multiple adult household with his 2 siblings (also being seen by Healthy Learners)*

## JaNorre's Future

- *JaNorre will need quarterly appointments for ADHD, annual vision exams and dental cleanings*

# Healthy Children Better Students Thriving Communities



## Healthy Learners Funding Proposal to the South Carolina State Legislature February 8, 2023

**Request:** \$100,000 non-recurring dollars

**Statewide Strategic Objective:** Education, Training and Human Development

**Objective Detail:** Removing Health Barriers to Learning for children in poverty in SC

**Scope:** Providing 2,910 low-income children in SC with 14,670 essential health care services

**I. Introduction & Summary:** For 30 years, Healthy Learners has been on a mission to transform the futures of children in poverty in South Carolina. We support the research that shows that education is the key for children to go further in life, empowering them to obtain higher-wage jobs, make positive life choices, and learn to invest in their future communities to make them stronger, healthier, and vibrant.

For thousands of children in poverty in South Carolina, their educational success is at risk because of fixable health care challenges that have not been addressed – known as health barriers to learning. Healthy Learners was created to address these challenges head on, serving as the catalyst to ensure every child receives the health care they need to thrive in school. In the spirit of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, we are devoted to removing children's health barriers to learning with love and compassion.

Healthy Learners partners with schools and health care providers to directly improve both health and educational outcomes by providing coordination and access to much needed medical services for low-income children throughout the state of SC. ***HL is respectfully requesting \$100,000 in state funding to support its efforts to provide 2,910 children (an increase of 26% over 2022) with access to 14,670 services in 2023, ensuring that South Carolina has healthier children, better students and thriving communities.***

**II. The Need for Healthy Learners:** Research shows that Health Barriers to Learning (HBLs) such as uncorrected vision, dental pain, hearing loss, untreated asthma, and unaddressed mental health problems lead to negative educational outcomes. While all of these HBLs are preventable and treatable health problems, access to essential health care has become an increasing challenge in South Carolina due to various barriers including inability to afford co-pays and deductibles, lack of accessible and reliable transportation, language barriers, ineligibility for Medicaid, and other personal obstacles.

Learning loss is a very real threat to SC's children that has worsened with the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, but learning loss encompasses more than just providing more instruction to remediate the issue. Many of South Carolina's low-income children cannot overcome learning loss because they are not at their optimum health due to delayed or forwent care brought about by the COVID crisis. Healthy Learners can help these children improve their educational outcomes by providing access to health care services needed to prepare them to recover academically.

For example, it is critically important for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students to be reading on grade level, as it is increasingly difficult to catch up. About 80% of learning occurs through visual tasks such as reading, writing and using computers; studies conclude that uncorrected vision problems impede a child's ability to read, and that correction of the problem improved performance. (Source: *Missed opportunities: Do states require screening of children for health conditions that interfere with learning?*

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0190254.2018>)

**III. Healthy Learners Services:** HL partners with 19 school districts in 4 regions of the state (Low Country, Midlands, Pee Dee and Upstate), more than 200 health care providers and multiple community-based organizations to provide children who are in need and without resources with the following services: Vision Care; Dental Care; Hearing Evaluation/Care; Asthma Care; Health Care; Mental/Behavioral Health Care; Care Coordination; Transportation to Appointments; Payment of Medical Fees; Health Screenings (dental, vision and hearing); Youth Mental Health First Aid (TMHFA) Training; Assistance with Medicaid Applications.

**IV. Service Population:** HL serves low-income children attending one of 236 schools (ages 5 – 18) in 19 of SC's School Districts who are without the resources to address unmet health care needs. The majority of children meet the income eligibility guidelines for Medicaid benefits. Most of the parents of the children HL serves are hard-working and caring, but simply cannot afford insurance deductibles, co-pays, health care appointments and expensive prescription medications. For many of these parents, taking time from work to attend a child's medical appointment means a lower paycheck that may lead to a financial crisis. ***The target population is low-income, with poverty rates that are higher than the state average. According to the SC Department of Education's 2021 Pupils in Poverty Index, 78% of the students in the school districts served by HL are considered low-income. The rate of uninsured residents is also higher than state average in HL's service regions (Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 2022 County Health Rankings).*** The most common services provided include dental, vision and medications. Demographically, the children served are half male and half female with 56% identifying as Black/African-American, 25% Hispanic/Latinx, 11% White, 5% Other and 3% Preferred Not To Answer. Of note is a 25% increase in the number of Hispanic/Latinx students that HL served last year.

**V. The process:** The Healthy Learners process begins with either a self-referral from a parent or a referral from a school nurse, community-based organization or physician's office. The regional Community Manager processes the referrals, establishing eligibility, making appointments with appropriate health care providers, and arranging for the Student Services Coordinator to provide transportation to appointments. The Student Services Coordinator is responsible for transporting and accompanying children from school to medical appointment(s). A major responsibility of the Student Services Coordinator is to support children during this process. ***This individual time with the child often reveals additional health care needs. Because all HL staff are trained in Youth Mental First Aid, this time can also be spent screening children for unaddressed mental health needs.*** If there is a need for medication, follow up visits, glasses, etc., the Community Manager coordinates care to ensure that children receive the necessary supplies or services. Transportation to appointments is a major component of the HL model. Many South Carolina parents lack transportation or are unable to take paid-leave from their jobs to take their children to medical appointments.

**VI. Program Outcomes:** The following outcomes are projected to be achieved in 2023:

**Outcome #1:** HL will provide 2,910 low-income children with access to 14,670 health care services, to include care coordination. *Measurement:* Database counts of children served, and services provided.

**Outcome #2:** HL will conduct at least 21,700 dental, hearing and vision screenings.

*Measurement:* Database counts of screenings provided.

**Outcome #3:** HL will positively impact the general health and quality of life in children that are provided health care services. *Measurement:* Parent Survey data

**Outcome #4:** HL will provide transportation support (100,000 miles) and financial assistance (\$225,000) to children to meet health care needs. *Measurement:* Database reports

**Outcome #5:** HL will partner with at least three school districts to link student's PowerSchool data with HL services (Apricot database) to demonstrate a positive impact on academic performance, attendance, and behavioral outcomes. *Measurement:* Apricot database reports linking HL services to improvements in academic performance, behavior, and absenteeism

**Outcome #6:** HL will conduct at least 10 YMHFA courses, training 200 youth-serving participants.

*Measurement:* Apricot database reports

**VII. Community Impact/Results:** In 2022, HL achieved historic results, demonstrating an impressive positive impact on South Carolina's low-income children in response to the growing need for increased access to health care. HL provided a total of *2,362 children* (the most children ever served in a year) with *12,629 services* that they may not have otherwise received. To address transportation barriers, HL staff logged 86,217 miles in taking children to and from medical appointments, transporting 97% of the total children served. In addition, HL conducted 20,148 health screenings (vision, dental and health), an essential service that is not currently required to be done by the state's school districts. HL filled this service gap for a total of 12,736 of South Carolina's students. HL's positive impact on educational outcomes (e.g., improvement in school performance, decreased absences, etc.) can be demonstrated by the results of parent surveys which indicate that ***94% of parents who felt attendance was a problem believe that HL's services resulted in improved attendance and that 95% of parents who felt that academics were an issue believe that HL's services resulted in improved academic performance.***

**VIII. Budget:** To achieve the results outlined above, HL projects to expend a total of \$2,891,205 in 2023. HL is requesting consideration of funding in the amount of \$100,000 to support direct service staff (\$50,000), vehicle costs/transportation (\$30,000), and medical fees that are not covered by other resources for uninsured/underinsured children (\$20,000). This funding will serve as valuable leverage for securing other funding to support HL's mission to create healthy children, better students and thriving communities for the state of South Carolina.