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State grant to improve services for opioid addiction in the Northwoods

Formal announcement of a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services will
be made Friday, June 19, in Minocqua to provide just under $700,000 a year with
anticipated funding over five years, totaling $3.4 million.

This grant is being awarded to the Family Health Center of Marshfield, Inc. (FHC), on
behalf of the North Central Region Opioid Consortium (NCROC) for a comprehensive
program to provide services to individuals addicted to opioid drugs.

A formal announcement of the grant will be made June 19 in Minocqua.

The consortium is a partnership of 18 organizations, including Human Service agencies
from Iron, Price, Oneida, Vilas and Forest counties; behavioral health agencies of the Lac
du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Forest County Potawatomi and
Sokaogon Chippewa communities; FHC; Marshfield Clinic; Ministry Health Care;
Options Treatment Program/Koinonia Residential Treatment Center; and law
enforcement agencies of the five-county consortium region.

According to Greg Nycz, FHC executive director. “Consortium members will unite to
focus on detoxification and treatment, improving quality of life for individuals addicted
to opioids. Special focus areas will be on services for women of child-bearing age and
reducing the number of deaths associated with opioid addiction. It is also incredibly
important to include affected family members since the pain of addiction is often shared
by others.

“The consortium would like to thank Rep. John Nygren for his leadership, as well as Sen.
Sheila Harsdorf and Sen. Alberta Darling, who have taken the time to understand this
problem and support solutions for the people of Wisconsin.”
Today, people in the U.S. make up 4.6 percent of the world’s population but consume 80 percent of the global supply of opioids. This includes 99 percent of hydrocodone produced, with Vicodin being the most prescribed medication in the U.S. According to the Wisconsin Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, some of the highest numbers of controlled substance prescriptions are in this local region.

“For many prescription opioid users, the shift to illegal and highly addictive heroin use is swift and of growing concern. Heroin is a cheaper, more readily available option when prescription supplies dwindle or when cost of medication is prohibitive,” said Bob Kovar, program manager, Tribal Services, Marshfield Clinic Center for Community Outreach.

While people ages 25-34 remain the largest group of opioid abusers, people ages 18-24 are in the fastest growing group of opioid users. Wisconsin sample data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health shows 4.3 percent of Wisconsin adults report using heroin or another opioid for nonmedical purposes in the past year. This represents 163,300 adults. Among Wisconsinites ages 18-25, the rate of past year use of opioids is 11 percent, or 68,600 people.

“Opioid dependence is a complex health condition often requiring long-term treatment and care. NCROC’s primary purpose is to reduce health and social consequences and improve well-being and social functioning of people affected by opioid dependence,” Kovar said.

“This grant offers an opportunity to improve the quality of care for those addicted to opioids while reducing incidence of relapses and overdoses. We look forward to developing a more comprehensive array of evidence-based treatment options as well as developing individualized treatment plans for every participant.”

For more information, contact Kovar, 715-358-7308.

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*The Marshfield Clinic system provides patient care, research and education with more than 50 locations in northern, central and western Wisconsin, making it one of the largest comprehensive medical systems in the United States.*

*Family Health Center of Marshfield, Inc., (FHC), a community health center program, improves access to high quality health care services for the underserved and enhances community health. Community health centers are federally funded grant programs helping people with limited income who have trouble getting medical and dental care because they cannot afford health insurance. FHC partners with Marshfield Clinic and Security Health Plan of Wisconsin, Inc., and also has a network of doctors, hospitals and dentists to help provide care.*