

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Long Term Care Planning Grant Awarded to Northwest Wisconsin

A Planning Grant has been awarded to Northwest Wisconsin Long Term Care Options (NW-LTCO) to design a regional system of care in a nine county area in northwestern Wisconsin. The Northwest Wisconsin Long Term Care Options group is a public-private partnership comprised of nine counties (Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, and Washburn), Community Health Partnership, Inc., Group Health Cooperative of Eau Claire, and The Management Group, Inc.

The Department of Health and Family Services, under Governor Doyle's direction, is looking to create an improved system of long-term care with statewide implementation within 5 years. Although Wisconsin has a long and rich history of providing community-based care options for seniors and people with disabilities, many of the existing programs have waiting lists for care and services. With no new funding in sight, those waiting lists will continue to get longer. Currently, in the nine-county area, there are over 738 people on waiting lists for community-based care.

Family Care—one model of reformed care implemented in several areas of the state—has proven to eliminate waiting lists as well as be cost-effective. A large contributor to Family Care's cost-effectiveness is through helping people stay healthy and more independent in their homes and communities while relying less on what are called "deep-end" services such as hospitalization, nursing home placement and restorative care.

The NW-LTCO will be using the planning grant in the coming year to design a regional long-term care model, which will integrate community services and acute and primary health care services. The grant will support an active planning process. NW-LTCO partners will spend the coming months developing plans and a proposal for all components of a reformed system. NW-LTCO partners will be soliciting input from consumers, advocates, service providers and other stakeholders throughout the planning process. Implementation of the regional care model is not expected before mid-2007.

The NW-LTCO partners are excited about the opportunity to create a public-private partnership that will fit the needs of northwestern Wisconsin. Implementation of the reformed system would require State approval and additional funding.

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