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Community Collaboration Award presented to Youth Services program

PATHS pilot program partnership chosen as 2015 honoree

(MADISON) – A pilot partnership project to help reduce homelessness among current and former foster youth is being honored with the 2015 Community Collaboration Award from the Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP).

The PATHS initiative, administered by the Office of Youth Services in the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF), will be presented with the award at the Home for Everyone Conference reception on July 15th at the Jefferson Street Inn in Wausau. The PATHS program was designed to achieve better outcomes for vulnerable youth in five areas: Permanent Connections, Academics, Training and Employment, Housing, and Social and Emotional Well-Being.

The DCF is working in partnership with local communities to pilot effective interventions to help support youth and young adults who are transitioning out of foster care and at-risk of homelessness. In January 2013, the Office of Youth Services (OYS) was created within DCF to bring a stronger and coordinated focus on the needs of vulnerable youth.

“Current and former foster youth can face a difficult transition to adulthood since they often don’t have the support system that only a permanent family can provide,” said DCF Secretary Eloise Anderson. “By working together as a community and making sure they don’t end up homeless, we help give them a fighting chance as they age-out of foster care or become independent adults.”

In October 2013, DCF was awarded a 2-year, \$700,000 planning grant from the federal Administration on Children and Families (ACF) to assist at-risk youths and adults aged 14 to 21 who are in or have been in foster care. Nationally, between 25% and 40% of youth who age out of foster care become homeless within two years of aging out. With funding under the grant, the PATHS Pilot Project provides a home for homeless youth, along with comprehensive and targeted services, and community partnerships.

OYS initiated a broad-based public-private workgroup, including current and former foster youth, working to expand housing options, services and partnerships. Pilot sites were established with collaborators in Dane County, Rock County, and the Lakeshore Consortium of: Door, Sheboygan, Manitowoc and Kewaunee Counties as well as the

Lakeshore Community Action Program and LSS Youth Rays program. The workgroup, comprised of state, county, non-profit and community action agencies, has provided direction and oversight for grant activities and developed a plan based on the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness Intervention model.

Each year the Wisconsin Affordable Housing Collaborative honor a joint effort by two or more non-profit, for-profit, coalition, government or other housing agencies for making a statewide or local impact on affordable housing or homeless programs.

For more information about the PATHS program or DCF's Office of Youth Services, go to www.dcf.wisconsin.gov/youth.

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