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Portico Healthnet Assumes Operation of 489-CARE Information and Referral Service

Statewide resource will continue to help Minnesotans find affordable medical, dental, and behavioral health care, regardless of insurance status.

ST. PAUL, MN (July 1, 2009) – Portico Healthnet, a non-profit agency working to reduce the number of people without coverage for health care services, today announced the assumption of operations for 489-CARE, a statewide health care information and referral service, from the non-profit Neighborhood Health Care Network (NHCN). The transfer in program operation and oversight will be seamless to 489-CARE callers, and the services provided by program specialists will continue unchanged.

Since the 1990s, the 489-CARE information and referral line has helped thousands of Minnesotans find affordable health care services in their local communities, regardless of insurance status. Initially established as a referral source for community clinics in the Twin Cities, NHCN oversaw the growth of the 489-CARE program in recent years into a centralized resource for information on low-cost and sliding-fee medical, dental, and behavioral health services available in local communities across the state. NHCN routinely referred callers to Portico for assistance in identifying health care coverage options, and earlier this year NHCN approached Portico to explore a potential operational transfer of the program due to its own shifting priorities and strategic goals.

“We’re proud to be taking the reins of the 489-CARE program from our colleagues at Neighborhood Health Care Network,” said Debra Holmgren, executive director of Portico Healthnet. “We’ve worked closely with NHCN and callers to the referral service for a number of years now, and we look forward to continuing this important initiative.” Walt Cooney, NHCN executive director, expressed his pleasure with the transfer as well. “We have been pleased by the results of our successful partnership with Portico Healthnet over the years, and we’re confident that future operation of the 489-CARE service will be in good hands under Portico’s management and staff.”

For information on accessing affordable medical, dental, and behavioral health care services, regardless of insurance status, please call 651-489-CARE. Callers outside the Twin Cities dial toll free 866-489-4899.

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About Portico Healthnet

Portico Healthnet is a nonprofit health and human services organization that helps uninsured Minnesotans access affordable health care coverage and services. During 2008, Portico outreach staff screened over 13,000 uninsured and underinsured individuals for eligibility under various health care coverage options. For those ineligible for public coverage, Portico offers its own need-based primary and preventive health care access program funded by grants and financial commitments from hospitals and health plans located in Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington counties. Portico Healthnet infused approximately \$8 million into Minnesota’s health care delivery system during 2008.

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