

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Bill Gray
651-603-5109
bgray@porticohealthnet.org



Portico Healthnet Awarded \$988K to Launch MN Coalition for Kids Health Coverage
U.S. Health and Human Services Grant to Fund Medical Assistance / MinnesotaCare Outreach and Enrollment Effort Aimed at Uninsured Children

ST. PAUL, MN (October 13, 2009) – Portico Healthnet, a non-profit agency working to reduce the number of people without coverage for health care services, has been awarded more than \$988,000 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to launch the Minnesota Coalition for Kids Health Coverage, a partnership of community agencies from around the state, to identify and enroll uninsured children into the Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare state health coverage safety net programs. The funding will be awarded over a two-year period, and will nearly double the amount currently being spent by Coalition partners in working with uninsured children and their families.

“The barriers to enrollment in public health coverage programs faced by uninsured children and their families are formidable,” said Portico Healthnet executive director Debra Holmgren. “Most stem from lack of awareness or understanding of the programs, and the complexity of the various application processes. Each partner in the Minnesota Coalition for Kids Health Coverage has unique expertise in surmounting these barriers, and this grant will allow us to coordinate our various efforts, leverage our combined strengths, and develop enhanced solutions that are scalable and replicable.”

In addition to Coalition lead Portico Healthnet, based in St. Paul, other agencies within the Coalition include Duluth-based Generations Health Care Initiatives, Rochester-based Olmsted Community Action Program, and St. Cloud Area Legal Services.

The grant awarded to the Minnesota Coalition for Kids Health Coverage is one of 69 grants recently announced by U.S. HHS. In a September 30 media release, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius commented that the funds would help fulfill President Barak Obama’s pledge to assure the health and well-being of our nation’s children. “With millions of Americans either out of work or otherwise struggling to make ends meet during this recession,” she said, “there is an even greater urgency to bring steady, reliable health care to children in these families who may have lost their coverage.”

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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.

MAIN OFFICE

2610 University Ave West – Suite 550 • Saint Paul, Minnesota 55114
Tel: (651) 603-5100 • Fax: (651) 603-5101

Health Education

c/o Stillwater Medical Group
1500 Curve Crest Boulevard • Stillwater, Minnesota 55082
Tel: (651) 275-8270 • Fax: (651) 275-8271



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