



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CONTACT: Linda A. Hall, lhall@wafca.org

October 24, 2017

608.257.5939

WAFCA Applauds Expansion of Access to Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment

This morning, Department of Health Services Secretary Linda Seemeyer announced significant new investments in Wisconsin's behavioral health system by committing over \$16 million in new state and federal funding to support Medical Assistance mental health and substance abuse treatment services through increased reimbursement rates for providers.

"This is a major advance for the well-being of Wisconsin's children and families," stated Linda Hall, WAFCA Executive Director. "It comes at a critical time as struggles with drug dependency are growing and the expansion of Wisconsin's mental health and substance abuse treatment workforce is falling behind."

For decades, child and family serving agencies across the state have filled the gap in behavioral health service needs for families, as payment rates through Medical Assistance failed to fully compensate providers for care. Historically, Wisconsin Medical Assistance (BadgerCare) has paid about 40% of costs for mental health and substance use services. This low reimbursement coupled with higher than average mental health needs among Wisconsin's BadgerCare eligible population generates significant strain on provider agencies. One in six Wisconsinites, and one in three of Wisconsin's children, rely on the BadgerCare program for their mental health needs.

"These payment increases coupled with recent policy changes reducing prior authorization barriers for mental health treatment will have an immediate impact on access," emphasized Hall. "As partners in the state's continuum of care, WAFCA members are committed to continuing to provide quality, effective treatment services, helping all individuals achieve their full potential."

"We appreciate the continued focus of the Governor and the Legislature on behavioral health as a critical component of healthy Wisconsin communities. Our state is moving in the right direction as we grow treatment options through school-based services, expand community-based offerings through Comprehensive Community Services and strongly commit to trauma-sensitive communities. Treatment works and these efforts to expand access to treatment are key to building a thriving future for our state."

– END –

WAFCA is a member association that works to improve the lives of families and children in Wisconsin. Our member agencies provide a wide array of prevention and supportive services such as foster care, in-home support, counseling, and mental health treatment. WAFCA represents over 50 child and family serving agencies and leaders in the field and advocates for the more than 250,000 individuals and families that they serve each year.