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WI Department of Corrections Partners with WI Department of Health Services to Launch Youth Trauma Initiative

Federal Grant Awarded to Identify and Treat Youth Who Have Experienced Childhood Trauma

MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) in partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services announced Thursday it is launching a major initiative within the state juvenile correctional system to improve treatment for youth who have experienced traumatic life events. The stress of trauma or life altering events such as abandonment or abuse can have adverse effects on the development of youth and their relationships with others, but a recently awarded federal grant will allow the DOC to improve and strengthen the treatment of these youth.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has awarded DHS a \$221,000 Transformation Transfer Initiative grant. The vast majority of the grant will be used by the DOC Division of Juvenile Corrections to implement Trauma Informed Care (TIC) practices, trauma-specific interventions and peer-to-peer family support and involvement.

The DOC will partner with Wisconsin Family Ties, a non profit agency that supports and works with youth who have emotional, behavioral and/or mental disorders and their families. The overall goal of the youth trauma initiative is to increase awareness of the serious effects of childhood trauma and improve how the state juvenile correctional system interacts with affected youth and provides treatment.

Many of the youth who are under the custody or supervision of the state juvenile correctional system have experienced neglect, abandonment, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and varying degrees of family involvement in their lives. As a result, they enter the juvenile correctional system with mental health issues and unresolved trauma which can cause emotional, social and other developmental difficulties which prevent them from succeeding in life. According to research and national surveys on the issue:

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- Between 75 and 93 percent of youth entering the juvenile justice system annually in the U.S. are estimated to have experienced some degree of trauma
- The national juvenile arrest rate is more than 10 percent higher for child maltreatment victims than non-victims
- The national adult criminal arrest rate is more than 9 percent higher for child maltreatment victims than non-victims
- 50 to 79 percent of males who experienced maltreatment before the age of 12 became involved in serious juvenile delinquency

“The research and statistics are clear that childhood trauma constitutes both a serious public health issue and a serious juvenile justice issue that needs to be addressed with effective strategies and treatment,” said DOC Secretary Gary Hamblin. “We are confident that through this grant and assistance from the Department of Health Services and Wisconsin Family Ties our Juvenile Corrections Division can begin to do that and get positive results.”

To address these critical issues, Division of Juvenile Corrections (DJC) staff will be trained on the principles of TIC and how to implement them in their interactions with youth. The grant will also allow the implementation of a trauma-informed Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse treatment (AODA) curriculum called Seeking Safety and a Parent Peer Specialist pilot program. Wisconsin Family Ties will work with DJC to introduce Parent Peer Specialists into a juvenile’s family to increase family involvement and support. DJC policies and procedures also will be reviewed to make sure they are consistent with the research on the effects of trauma on youth and effective, evidence-based treatment.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration awarded DHS the \$221,000 grant with the understanding that it would help DOC implement TIC across the Wisconsin juvenile corrections system. DOC is receiving \$140,685, Wisconsin Family Ties \$72,785 and DHS \$7,557. The DOC grant agreement with DHS runs through September 30, 2013.