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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STATE BUDGET WOES DELAY FAMILY CARE IN NORTHWEST WISCONSIN

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) has notified NorthernBridges of a two-month delay in the expansion of Family Care to the 11 counties of the Northwest Long-Term Care District due to the state budget deficit.

The March 1, 2009 target date to begin enrolling elderly and disabled adults into Family Care, a long-term care program to foster quality of life through independence and living in the community instead of in nursing homes, has been pushed back to May 1, 2009.

The state faces a projected \$346.2 million deficit in the current fiscal year and a potential \$5.4 billion deficit on June 30, 2011. Revenue collections are expected to continue to decline until fiscal year 2010-11, according to Department of Administration Secretary Michael Morgan.

Due to the sober financial situation, state officials are slowing down the process of Family Care expansion and taking a prudent approach to make this important initiative sustainable. The delay will allow for some financial savings for the state. It also will give more time for NorthernBridges, the managed care organization delivering Family Services in northwest Wisconsin, to prepare to open doors for business May 1.

“It’s unfortunate that those waiting for Family Care services will have to wait another two months,” said John McMahan, NorthernBridges CEO. “For NorthernBridges and providers

that we contract with to serve our members, it will just mean adjustments to our planning schedules. We will continue to hire and train staff and we'll use the extra time to fine tune our care management, financial, and IT systems.”

State officials indicated their high regard for the work NorthernBridges has done so far in preparing to provide Family Care. The state has made a significant investment to the expansion of Family Care in northwest Wisconsin and is, “Absolutely committed and prepared to continue planning with NorthernBridges to begin Family Care enrollment starting May 1st,” according to Sinikka Santala, DHS Long-Term Care Administrator, when addressing the NorthernBridges Board of Directors by telephone on Tuesday, January 6, 2009.

Governor Jim Doyle also continues to strongly express his support for Family Care expansion throughout the state.

Maintaining the planning and implementation momentum created by NorthernBridges is extremely important to the state and to the NorthernBridges Board of Directors. Both parties agree it is imperative to keep planning on track with the goal of Family Care enrollment starting May 1, 2009.

More information on NorthernBridges and Family Care in northwest Wisconsin can be found at www.nwfamilycare.com. The public is also welcome to all board meetings held the first Monday of every month at the Ramada Inn in Hayward at 9:00 a.m.