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FRANCISCAN OUTREACH AWARDED FUNDING FOR MEDICAL RESPITE PROGRAM

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS – Franciscan Outreach is thrilled to announce being one of 17 Illinois agencies awarded funding from the Illinois Public Health Institute (IPHI) for increasing access to medical respite care services for people experiencing homelessness. This initiative is funded by IDHS as part of *Home Illinois: Illinois' Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, which identified medical respite care as a key activity. *Medical respite care is acute and post-acute care for people experiencing homelessness who are too ill or frail to recover from illness or injury on the streets or in a shelter, but who do not require hospital-level care. It combines short-term housing with health services that allow individuals experiencing homelessness the opportunity to rest, recover, and heal in a safe and secure environment while accessing medical care and other supportive services. With this funding, Franciscan Outreach is pleased to share that we will begin offering medical respite care services in Chicago in 2024.*

Also known as recuperative care, **medical respite care offers compassionate outreach to members of the homeless community as efforts to stamp housing as a human right increase across the country.** Medical respite programs are designed and delivered by community-based organizations, health systems, impacted people, and community leaders who are invested in the community. By prioritizing medical respite programs across the state, Illinois is among a handful of states leading the way in offering medical respite care programs statewide to unhoused people who need to recover from illnesses or injuries.

“We are thrilled to support and partner with 17 medical respite programs across the state. **All of our neighbors across Illinois deserve housing, and as we continue to work for that, medical respite programs provide essential recovery care for people experiencing homelessness and support to connect with housing and supportive services,**” said Elissa Bassler, CEO of IPHI. “A spectrum of services exist in each individual medical respite program, and each supports the community by providing life-saving care, moving folks to the appropriate resources and saving time and money. Rather than a longer hospital stay, patients are able to access the care and support they need in an appropriate, comfortable, and high-quality setting which also saves resources and funding in our healthcare safety net system.”

In addition to receiving funding for planning and expansion, Franciscan Outreach will also receive technical assistance and join a learning collaborative cohort that will further build capacity with peer sharing and learning. This assistance is provided by IPHI and The National Institute for Medical Respite Care (NIMRC). NIMRC, a program of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, has been supporting medical respite programs since medical respite began in the 1980s. A core component of NIMRC’s vision is to expand the network of medical respite providers nationwide. *“NIMRC’s expertise is medical respite best practice, and we provide technical assistance to dozens of programs and communities every year. Every medical respite program is unique – each community has their own resources, partnerships, strengths, and challenges. One-on-one technical assistance gives communities the opportunity to connect with medical respite expertise that is tailored to their specific needs and setting. The Learning Collaborative is a space for communities across the state to share with each other their struggles and strategies for providing care to some of Illinois’ most vulnerable,”* said Julia Dobbins, Director of Medical Respite at the National Healthcare for the Homeless Council.

Franciscan Outreach will build capacity to implement a new medical respite program in Chicago’s west side, where the largest concentration of the city’s unhoused population resides. This is particularly exciting given the medical respite benefit in the State of Illinois’ proposed 1115 Medicaid Healthcare Transformation Waiver which would greatly contribute to sustainable funding for these necessary services. In this moment of growth in medical respite

care services across the state, this initiative will also include a Cook County Medical Respite Network to support regional coordination in the Chicagoland area, as well as a statewide gap analysis and awareness campaign to build support for medical respite care in Illinois communities.

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Franciscan Outreach is a leading 501c3 nonprofit provider of homelessness services in Chicago. With 60 years of experience, we operate a system of support for vulnerable and marginalized individuals experiencing homelessness. Our programs provide basic immediate needs and access to comprehensive services, resources, and support that empower our guests with the resolve of transformation while championing and advocating for housing, healthcare, and employment. To learn more about Franciscan Outreach, visit us at www.franoutreach.org.

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