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ARCW Applauds Governor, Wisconsin Legislature on Enactment of HOPE Legislative Package

Legislation will save lives from opiate overdose

MILWAUKEE... The AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin (ARCW) is hailing Governor Walker and the Wisconsin Legislature for its adoption of the Heroin and Opiate Prevention and Education (HOPE) legislative package. The package of seven bills introduced by Representative John Nygren (R-Marquette) and Senator Shelia Harsdorf (R-River Falls) were each adopted unanimously by both the Wisconsin State Senate and State Assembly.

“Our HIV and opiate overdose prevention programs are smart, evidenced-based interventions that are reaching difficult to reach individuals,” said Mike Gifford, ARCW President and Chief Executive Officer. “The HOPE legislation will strengthen our programs and enable us to continue to save lives across Wisconsin. We thank Governor Walker, Representative Nygren and Senator Harsdorf for their leadership as Wisconsin tackles the heroin epidemic.”

Because injection drug use remains one of the primary ways that HIV and hepatitis C are spread, ARCW has conducted aggressive prevention programs targeting injection drug users since 1994. The prevention programs carried out by ARCW are based on the belief there is value in all human life and that every day presents a new opportunity to help someone battling addiction find the treatment they need to find sobriety.

Since 2005, ARCW has been on the frontlines of Wisconsin's response to the heroin and opiate epidemic by training injection drug users on how to safely use naloxone. Naloxone is an opioid antagonist that can save the life of an individual experiencing an overdose by immediately counteracting the ability of the opiate to shut down the central nervous system. Since the program began, ARCW has trained more than 2,500 injection drug users to use naloxone safely and more than 2,100 of them have indicated they used the naloxone and training provided by ARCW to save the life of someone from an overdose.

The bills comprising the HOPE package will increase access to AODA treatment, ensure Nalxone is widely available, remove barriers that cause reluctance in activating emergency medical services by people witnessing an overdose, and help reduce the diversion of opiate-based prescription medications.