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FORGE and Froedtert & MCW Inclusion Health Clinic Launch Online Trans/Non-binary COVID-19 Support Programming

Milwaukee, WI – FORGE, Inc. and Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin Inclusion Health Clinic are proud to announce the launch of a multi-part online and phone/text-based suite of services designed to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and its negative health, psychological, and financial consequences among Wisconsin's transgender and non-binary community members and their partners, loved ones, friends, allies, and contacts.

The new 6-month effort is funded in part by the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment at the Medical College of Wisconsin. PACT NOW (Preventing and Assisting with COVID-19 among Trans and Non-binary Wisconsinites) has five primary programmatic components, described in more detail at www.forge-wi.org/pact-now:

Support: Warm line for individual advice and support: 414-559-2123 (voice and secure text)

Connect: Online drop-in, three times a week (various topics and open discussion)

Ask: Ask the expert online forums, twice a week (experts: physicians, social workers, advocates, nurses, and more)

Learn: Information about COVID-19 and issues specific to the trans/non-binary community, disseminated by social media and website

Empower: For those needing more intensive support, two 8-week, closed clinical groups will be facilitated by a trained counselor and will focus on coping skills.

michael munson, FORGE's Executive Director, noted, "FORGE has had a long history of working with Dr. Andy Petroll in his work at CAIR and Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin (and now his work at the Inclusion Health Clinic). This opportunity is one that brings so much promise and hope, directly serving the community we care so deeply about."

Dr. Petroll, founder and Medical Director of the Froedtert & Medical College of Wisconsin Inclusion Health Clinic was likewise very proud of the new effort. "To our knowledge, this is the first transgender-focused grant that the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment has funded. We are so proud to be quickly, flexibly, and agilely responding to community medical and mental health needs during this challenging health crisis."

Joanna Woodbury, the Inclusion Health Clinic's Social Services Program Manager, observed, "COVID-19 has changed our lives. At the Inclusion Health Clinic, we care deeply about the

totality of peoples' lives -- their physical health, mental health, and access to critical public benefits and social services. This project is a logical extension of that work, in a time when so many people need added layers of care and compassion."

American Sign Language interpreters and/or closed captions are available on request. Contact FORGE for availability of Spanish interpreters.

Those interested in participating in the open, drop-in events (Connect and Ask) can find out how and when to get online at FORGE in Wisconsin's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/forge.wi/>) and at <https://forge-wi.org/pact-now/>. These sites will also be where information on new Learning resources and how to apply for the Empower groups will be posted. The Warm Line (414-559-2123) is open now to receive your calls and texts.

About FORGE:

FORGE is the nation's leading transgender anti-violence organization, working to prevent and address the violence and trauma that lead to the many health disparities (including suicidality) that affect the trans/nonbinary population. FORGE was founded in 1994 and is headquartered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. FORGE provides services and resources to both transgender survivors and to the service providers who serve them across the country. FORGE maintains an extensive archive of free, online trainings and publications at www.forgeforward.org; resources for trans survivors at www.trans-survivors.com, and disseminates new products and policy developments through the social media platforms of Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/FORGE.trans>, <https://www.facebook.com/forge.wi/>, and <https://www.facebook.com/transsurvivors/>), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/FORGEforward>), and Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/FORGE_forward/).

About the Inclusion Health Clinic:

The Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin Inclusion Health Clinic sponsors two clinics staffed by health care providers with expertise and a passion for caring for LGBTQ patients in a welcoming, affirming environment. The Clinic offers comprehensive primary care and prevention care for members of the LGBTQ community and their family and friends. Specialty care includes OB/GYN care, HIV specialty care, care for transgender patients (including hormone therapy) and psychiatric care. The Inclusion Health Clinic can be reached at 414-804-2018 or at their website <http://www.froedtert.com/lgbtq>.

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