



Milwaukee LGBT Community Center

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For Immediate Release

Milwaukee LGBT Community Center awarded Johnson Family Foundation Grant

October 22, 2010-Milwaukee, WI-The Milwaukee LGBT Community Center has received an award from the Johnson Family Foundation to address the mental health needs of LGBT people in the greater Milwaukee area. Formed in 1998, the Center has established itself as a leader in community building, health promotion, advocacy, and communications for LGBT people in Milwaukee. In addition to an array of direct service programs, the Center provides a home and meeting space for numerous LGBT groups in Milwaukee (e.g. FORGE, PFlag, PrideFest, etc.) Expanding our capacity to provide culturally competent mental health services to LGBT individuals and allies will not only address an urgent need, it will advance our mission to improve the quality of life for LGBT people in Milwaukee County.

The Center's Executive Director, Maggi Cage, holds a PhD in Counseling Psychology and is a licensed professional counselor and licensed clinical social worker, with more than 17 years experience providing or administering mental health services. Dr. Cage oversees all mental health services provided by the Center.

The immediate gap in services that resulted from the mission-shift of the Counseling Center has mobilized the MLGBTCC Board of Directors to assume a leadership role in addressing the mental health needs of low-income, uninsured and underinsured LGBT people and their allies. The Community Center understands that we cannot expand to address the immediate need without support from a strong mental health partner. In response, discussions with Jewish Family Services have already produced an informal agreement to address the gap in services. Mental health referrals to JFS have commenced and planning is underway to provide onsite mental health services at the new location of the Community Center. The Center is moving in late October 2010 to a new building (located 3 blocks from JFS) that will provide increased space and private access to counseling offices and group rooms. The Center will also leverage existing linkages with 15+ local LGBT organizations to promote the expansion of mental health services.

The Community Center is partnering with Jewish Family Services to develop and implement a three-year plan to establish and administer a fully-functioning, independent, licensed outpatient mental health clinic for LGBT people and allies in greater Milwaukee. This will include development of clinical services policies and procedures, supervision and record management systems, quality assurance and billing mechanisms needed to maintain state licensure as an outpatient mental health clinic and secure both public (T19) and insurance reimbursement. Together, we will implement a plan to recruit, hire and train professional counselors, therapists, psychologists and psychiatrists to provide culturally competent mental health services to LGBT people. Work will include updating clinical forms so they are culturally sensitive to the LGBT population.

At the end of the three year grant period, we envision that low-income, uninsured and underinsured LGBT people in Milwaukee will have access to an array of professional mental health services that include individual and group treatment, family counseling, specialized support groups, and psychiatric evaluation. Services will be provided by a staff of licensed professionals and volunteers who have received advanced training on how to provide culturally competent treatment to LGBT people. The program will be highly visible and widely recognized within the LGBT community as a safe and trusted community resource. Strong linkages with mainstream mental health providers (e.g. Pathfinders, the Healing Center, Aurora Family Service, and United Community Center) will ensure a steady flow of referrals to the program. Increased availability of services will have a positive impact on reducing mental health disparities for LGBT people in Milwaukee.