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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 2, 2010

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REGIONAL AGING AND DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER PLANNED

The Vilas County Commission on Aging is currently working with several other counties and the Great Lakes Intertribal Council to organize a partnership to develop a regional Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC). Involved are Florence, Forest, Oneida, Taylor and Vilas Counties and the Sokaogon Chippewa, Lac Du Flambeau Chippewa and Forest County Potawatomi tribes.

While Wisconsin's population of older adults and people with disabilities is growing, funding to pay for those services is limited. Family Care, authorized by the legislature in 1998, is designed to optimize the health and independence of older adults with long-term needs through the provision of a flexible benefit package. The Family Care benefit combines funding and services from a variety of existing programs into one flexible long-term care benefit.

"The ADRC will be an important component of Family Care and provide a doorway for consumers to enter the process." stated Joe Fortmann, Director of the Vilas County Commission on Aging. "Any older adult, person with disabilities or a family member will be able to contact the ADRC to get information on services, resources and programs that are available and get help connecting with those services."

ADRC staff will assist in determining long term support eligibility based on physical need and income/assets. Once eligibility is determined, a team of specialists will conduct a comprehensive assessment so that the benefit package would be tailored to the individual. The benefit package would include traditional Medicaid services such as nursing home care, durable medical equipment and physical therapy and also home and community based "waiver" services such as supportive home care and respite. Analysis of Family Care programs now in place has shown not only cost-savings in the state's Medicaid budget, but an improved consumer outcome as a result of more effective case management.

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Fortmann noted that each county would continue to operate current aging programs on the local level. Popular Vilas County Commission on Aging programs such as the senior dining sites, home delivered meals, and the escort program would continue much as in the past.

The planning group is on target to submit an application to the Department of Human Services in January of 2011. Watch for further developments. For questions regarding the ADRC or other Commission on Aging programs, contact the Vilas County Commission on Aging at (715) 479-3625 or visit their offices at the County Courthouse, 330 Court Street, Eagle River WI 54521.

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