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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rock River Community Clinic Receives Recommendation for Federally Qualified Health Center Look-Alike (FQHC-LAL) Status

Whitewater, WI, September 21, 2022 - Rock River Community Clinic has officially been recommended for designation as a Federally Qualified Health Center Look-Alike (FQHC-LAL) by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

“We are proud and honored to reach this crucial step in our process of becoming federally qualified. This designation will change access to healthcare in our region and expand the services we are able to provide for families in need,” states Olivia Nichols, CEO/Executive Director of Rock River Community Clinic.

Becoming a FQHC will allow RRCC to ensure long-term sustainability of their services and provide more affordable care options for families throughout the region. The benefits of the status include, but are not limited to, sustainable reimbursement for services for Medicare and Medicaid recipients, access to a federal 340B Drug Discount Program, and access to tuition reimbursement through National Healthcare Service Corps programs to recruit and retain providers.

“The benefits to our communities with RRCC becoming federally qualified cannot be overstated,” states Dr. Donald Williams, Medical Director of Rock River Community Clinic. “The FQHC status will equip our staff with the increased tools & resources to help care for our patients and help eliminate barriers that prevent too many community members from accessing needed medical and dental care.”

Rock River Community Clinic was formed through the merging of the Community Dental Clinic (Fort Atkinson), Watertown Area Cares Clinic and Rock River Free Clinic (Jefferson) in 2019. With support from the Rock River Health Care Network (HealthWorks), RRCC began the process to become a FQHC-LAL in January of 2020. HealthWorks is a coalition of local healthcare organizations working collectively to increase health equity in Jefferson and Dodge Counties by specifically focusing on low-income individuals' access to primary care. HealthWorks partners include Fort Healthcare, Greater Watertown Community Health Foundation, Watertown Regional Medical Center, Rainbow Hospice Care, Jefferson County

Health Department, Jefferson County Human Services, Rock River Community Clinic, and the City of Watertown Health Department.

“The first area of focus for HealthWorks has been aimed at supporting patient care at the Rock River Community Clinic and providing needed resources and support towards their effort of attaining FQHC-LAL status,” states Kristin Wallace, HealthWorks Network Director. “We look forward to continuing to support these tremendous efforts towards achieving health equity in our communities.”

To be eligible for FQHC-LAL designation, RRCC was required to meet 19 core program standards, as well as 98 operational site visit elements. Those requirements include, but are not limited to, offering services to all persons regardless of ability to pay; establishing a sliding fee discount program; establishing a community-based governing board of directors including patient board members; serving in a medically underserved area; providing quality comprehensive primary care services for patients of all age groups—including medical, dental, behavioral health, and pharmacy services; providing enabling or supportive services that support access to healthcare including patient and community health education, transportation, and translation; and having an ongoing quality assurance program.

“Our entire team and full network of partners have worked tirelessly to reach this point,” Nichols adds. “There are countless people to thank who have made this step possible. As we complete our minor revisions, I am confident that we will achieve FQHC-LAL status by year-end, allowing us to start 2023 with new support and resources that further our effort of getting more families access to quality health services.”

For more information about Rock River Community Clinic, please contact 262.472.6839.

Rock River Community Clinic (RRCC) provides comprehensive and cost-effective health care services to ensure all community members have access to the care they need. Serving families in Jefferson, Dodge, and parts of Walworth County, RRCC includes three medical clinics located in Whitewater, Watertown, and Jefferson, and one dental clinic located in Fort Atkinson. Referrals for behavioral health care services will be available in Whitewater and Watertown locations soon.

At RRCC, all community members are welcome and accepted, regardless of ability to pay, with discounted prices for patients who are uninsured or underinsured (high deductible plans). RRCC also provides care coordination services to help patients overcome barriers to accessing healthcare (e.g., transportation), and helps to coordinate referrals. Bilingual staff (Spanish & English) are available to support patients and their families. By increasing access to health care services, offering care at affordable costs, and assisting with healthcare navigation, RRCC works to create a healthier, more equitable, community. For clinic hours and directions, visit www.rockrivercommunityclinic.org

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