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**Washtenaw Community Health Organization and the University of Michigan Department of Psychiatry Receive \$2 Million Grant from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to Help Prevent Psychotic Illness Among Local Youth**

*April 10, 2007 – Ann Arbor, Michigan*

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) today announced that the Washtenaw Community Health Organization (WCHO) and the University of Michigan (U-M) have been selected to participate in a pioneering national program to reduce the terrible toll of psychotic illnesses on young people and their families through prevention. The *Early Detection and Intervention for the Prevention of Psychosis Program* (EDIPPP) will provide WCHO and U-M's Department's of Psychiatry up to \$2 million over four years to launch a community-wide research initiative aimed at identifying young people who show early signs of psychosis and preventing the onset of serious mental illness.

The WCHO/U-M Department of Psychiatry partnership was one of only four candidates selected from a small number of organizations across the country that are qualified to do this type of work.

“We are excited and honored to have been chosen to implement this innovative program in Washtenaw County,” said Project Director Karen Milner, M.D. and Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the U-M Medical School. “It has the potential to prevent the onset of psychotic illness in our youth and children.”

EDIPPP seeks to replicate an innovative and highly promising approach to psychosis prevention that's been developed in Portland, Maine. Approximately 86 percent of young people who enrolled in the Portland program – called Portland Identification and Early Referral (PIER) – had not experienced a full-blown psychotic episode a year later. According to EDIPPP National Program Director William R. McFarlane, M.D., the expected rate would be 50 to 60 percent for that group of young people.

“The Washtenaw Community Health Organization and the University of Michigan are now partners in an exciting endeavor to protect young people from the tremendous anguish and devastation of psychotic illness,” said Jane Lowe, senior program officer at RWJF. “In selecting WCHO and the University of Michigan's Department of Psychiatry to participate in this program, we were particularly impressed by the high level of community involvement in the project. That will be a key element to the project's success.”

EDIPPP is essentially a research program with a public health mission: to prevent psychotic illnesses, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. The critical foundation for carrying out this mission is the community in which young people live. The program will reach out to teachers, social workers, doctors, nurses, students, parents, clergy, police officers and others who interact regularly with young people and educate them on the early signs of psychotic illness so that they can identify teens and young adults who are at risk.

The program works with young people ages 12 to 25 who show early symptoms of psychotic illness but do not yet have the disease.

Based on the level of need, young people and their families will receive one of two treatment plans. The experimental plan offers ongoing evidenced-based, psychosocial support and education, treatment, and medication for young people and their families. The comparison plan is for those young people and families at much lower risk of illness. They will receive careful monitoring, support, and referral for further treatment, as needed.

Washtenaw County Community Support and Treatment Services (CSTS) is the primary implementation site in Washtenaw County. Other partners in the project include: The public school system of Washtenaw County, University of Michigan, Eastern Michigan University, Washtenaw Community College, Student Advocacy Center, University of Michigan Medical Center, Chelsea Community Hospital, Community Family Health Center, North Campus Family Health Center, HelpSource, Ozone House, **Services to Enhance Potential**, Washtenaw County Department of Human Services, Washtenaw County Public Health, Washtenaw County Youth Services, Washtenaw County Family Court, Washtenaw County Veterans Services, the National Alliance of the Mentally Ill of Washtenaw County, and the Michigan Department of Community Health.

Approximately 2 to 3 percent of youth and young adults develop schizophrenia or a severe, psychotic mood disorder, with most cases developing after age 12. Psychotic illness is crippling: 75 percent of people who have schizophrenia go on to develop a disability and only a small percentage are gainfully employed. An estimated 12 to 15 percent of people who suffer from psychosis commit suicide.

“Psychotic illness destroys lives, but we hope to save many of those lives through prevention,” said McFarlane, a psychiatric researcher at Maine Medical Center who developed the PIER program there. “Through this new program, the entire community of Washtenaw County will play an active role helping vulnerable young people stay healthy and lead productive lives.”

The Washtenaw Community Health Organization is a public, non-profit organization (501©(1)) created in August 2000 by the University of Michigan (U-M) Regents and the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners to provide integrated, community-based health care to Medicaid and indigent specialty populations in Washtenaw County. The WCHO brings together the local, public mental health and substance abuse system with targeted primary care services at the University of Michigan Health System to provide a core integrated system of care.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with diverse groups of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 30 years, the Foundation has brought experience, commitment and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime.