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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Release

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ABC for Health introduces HealthWatch-Wisconsin Planning session scheduled for Milwaukee on June 20, 2005

Madison, WI ABC for Health, Inc. on behalf of Covering Kids with Special Needs and Covering Kids and Families-Wisconsin, was awarded a grant from the Wisconsin Partnership Fund for a Healthy Future Collaboration to plan the creation of a statewide group, HealthWatch Wisconsin. The purpose of the HealthWatch Wisconsin strategic planning session is to plan for the development of a new statewide organization that will focus and amplify the voices of healthcare consumers and advocates in order to improve access to healthcare services and coverage in Wisconsin

ABC for Health staff has been active in developing HealthWatch groups since 1988. The first community based HealthWatch group, organized in Milwaukee, monitored the expansion of managed care. Today HealthWatch groups exist in Madison, Milwaukee, Eau Claire, Polk County, Brown County, Chippewa Falls, and Rhinelander. There are also CKF related coalitions in Marathon and LaCrosse Counties. The existing groups will provide the foundation for a statewide alliance that will develop strategies to make health care more available and accessible to Wisconsin residents.

Strategic planning meetings will be held across state over the next several months. The South East Division of Public Health Region will be having a meeting on June 20 at 10:00 am at the Aurora Family Service Building at 3200 W. Highland Blvd. in Milwaukee, hosted by ABC for Health Inc, Community Advocates and Children's Hospital of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Healthcare consumers, advocates, and professionals are invited and encouraged to attend to voice their concerns and ideas for shaping this exciting new organization.

HealthWatch will be modeled on successful senior coalition. The Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups (CWAG), which effectively connected diverse advocacy groups for the aging across our state, will serve as a model and a mentor for our organization.

HealthWatch Wisconsin will undertake initiatives to assist consumers, resolve problems of access and quality of health care, and monitor the impact of welfare reform upon the access to quality health care for low-income families. The organization will also monitor legislative action and health care reform at both the state and federal level.
