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THE VNA FOUNDATION AWARDS THE LARGEST GRANT IN ITS HISTORY
Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition Receives \$125,000
To Support *Covering Kids and Families Illinois Program*

CHICAGO – December, 2001 – As part of its ongoing commitment to serve the underprivileged in the Chicagoland area, the VNA Foundation has awarded the largest single grant in its six-year history. The Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition (IMCHC) has been awarded a \$125,000 grant to support the *Covering Kids and Families Illinois Program* that was created to increase enrollment in the KidCare Initiative. KidCare is the Illinois health insurance program for children 18 and under and pregnant women.

“We are very pleased to be supporting the *Covering Kids and Families Illinois Program*,” said Robert DiLeonardi, Executive Director of the VNA Foundation. “The \$125,000 grant will go towards helping enroll thousands of uninsured children in Illinois that are in need of comprehensive health coverage. Our Board of Directors recognized that this program was very worthy of our Foundation’s support and unanimously agreed to award a sizeable grant.”

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Recognizing that healthy infants, children, mothers and families constitute the basis of our society, the IMCHC is dedicated to promoting and improving their health and well being through advocacy, education, community empowerment and policy development. It is the statewide lead organization to support the *Covering Kids and Families Illinois Program* that was created to reduce the racial disparities among the uninsured and to increase the number of low income uninsured children enrolled in the KidCare program.

Covering Kids and Families Illinois Program has three primary goals: first, to conduct and coordinate outreach programs; second, to simplify enrollment and renewal processes and third, to coordinate existing health care coverage programs. Currently there are more than 170,000 children and pregnant women participating in KidCare, with an estimated 25,000 to 50,000 additional children eligible but not currently enrolled.

“The VNA Foundation’s generous grant will help make a significant difference in the lives of expectant mothers and children from low-income working families right here in Illinois,” said Robyn Gabel, Executive Director of the IMCHC. “With this additional funding, we hope to be able to raise awareness and enroll thousands more children in the KidCare program.”

Since 1995, The VNA Foundation has operated exclusively as a grant making foundation, giving financial support to nonprofit organizations offering home- and community-based care to the underserved. In fiscal year 2001, the VNA Foundation awarded 52 grants amounting to more than \$2 million. The average VNA Foundation grantee receives \$44,274. Recipients of the grants include a variety of agencies providing health care and health services to the homeless, the working poor and the disenfranchised.

The Foundation also tries to maximize the impact of those dollars by providing assistance beyond just handing over the check – by listening to its grantees, requiring written reports on the progress of funded programs and projects and sharing with grantees successful techniques and strategies implemented by other grant recipients.

“The VNA Foundation is rooted in the belief that health services to the disenfranchised are often most effective when delivered in their own homes and communities,” explains DiLeonardi. “Our ultimate hope is to prevent the medically underserved from waiting until health problems become a health crises, at which point they often visit hospital emergency rooms – a practice both less effective and more expensive than community-based care.”

From 1890 to 1995, the Visiting Nurse Association of Chicago employed its own nurses and other health care professionals to provide health care to the underprivileged. The VNA Foundation continues the original mission of supporting home- and community-based healthcare for the medically underserved in the Chicago metropolitan area. Since 1995, it has awarded \$9,961,570 to 225 different nonprofit agencies serving the Chicagoland area.

For more information on the VNA Foundation, its grants and application guidelines, visit www.vnafoundation.net. For more information on the KidCare program, call 1-866-4-OUR-KIDS.

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