



Media Contact: Melissa Becker
Marketing Director
952-484-0518
mbecker@gesmn.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES HONORS
GOODWILL-EASTER SEALS MINNESOTA'S EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**
GESMN identified as a national model for increasing employment in underserved communities

ST. PAUL, Minn. – Aug. 16, 2017 – The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Family Assistance named Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota (GESMN) in its first-ever designation of Employment Excellence Programs. GESMN is one of just seven programs nationwide to receive the designation and is the only organization from Minnesota to be recognized.

The Employment Excellence Program designation is given to organizations with exceptional success increasing employment for underserved communities. GESMN receives the honor for its programs serving individuals returning to the community after incarceration, low-income fathers and participants in the Minnesota Family Investment Program.

HHS will not make additional designations until its next Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) convention in 2019. The other organizations receiving the first-ever designation in 2017 are Center for Urban Families (Baltimore), DC Central Kitchen (Washington, DC), KIRSA (Dunbar, WV), National Center for Families Learning (Louisville), RecycleForce (Indianapolis) and Solutions for Change (San Diego).

"The power of work does more than change the life of individuals and families; its positive ripple effects are felt throughout our community," said Michael Wirth-Davis, GESMN President and CEO. "It's an honor to be recognized by HHS for the work we do in Minnesota to eliminate barriers to work and independence."

GESMN's Director of Community Programs, Andrew Freeberg, will accept the designation on behalf of the organization. "We're excited to be recognized for our innovative approaches to increasing employment for underserved populations," said Freeberg. The designation is given during the Linking TANF Families to Employment and Economic Opportunities meeting in Arlington, VA, where Freeberg will exchange ideas with other policy and program experts from across the nation.

###

About Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota

Serving Minnesota for nearly 100 years as a leader in employment services, Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota (GESMN) provides education, job training and placement services to eliminate barriers to work and independence. Revenue from 45+ retail stores — along with grants and fees and other financial contributions — supports programs throughout Minnesota. Our "donate-shop-reuse-educate-employ" model diverts over 50 million pounds from local landfills annually and brings us one step closer to a world where everyone experiences the power of work. www.gesmn.org

Assets

- **Photo 1:** Andrew Freeberg, GESMN Director of Community Programs, and Clarence H. Carter, Director of the Office of Family Assistance on stage at the *Linking TANF Families to Employment and Economic Opportunities* meeting
- **Photo 2:** Andrew Freeberg, GESMN Director of Community Programs, at the *Linking TANF Families to Employment and Economic Opportunities* meeting