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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Jenna Pierce
Phone: 605-772-4525
Email: jpierce@horizonhealthcare.org

Horizon Health Care, Inc. Receives \$300,000 Three-Year Rural Health Information Technology Workforce Development Grant

Grant will fund Horizon and other members of the Prairie Health Information Technology (Prairie Health IT) Network Project to address the shortage in the rural Health Information Technology workforce

(HOWARD, SD) – Horizon Health Care, Inc. (Horizon), a Federally Qualified Community Health Center (FQHC) providing affordable, high-quality primary healthcare throughout 18 medical and dental clinics in South Dakota, was recently awarded a Rural Health Information Technology Workforce Program Grant of \$300,000 annually for three years through the Health Resources and Services Administration’s (HRSA) Office of Rural Health Policy (ORHP).

The grant will fund the “It’s a HIT!” –*Health IT Training for Rural Healthcare Providers* initiative which includes Prairie Health IT Network Members including Horizon’s 14 medical clinic locations and two additional rural FQHC organizations, Prairie Community Health with five clinics in central and northwest South Dakota and allPOINTS Health Services, with two clinics in southeast South Dakota, for a total of 21 primary care clinics across the state.

“Through the “It’s a HIT!” project, a health IT training program for incumbent rural South Dakota workers will be developed. The training will include skills enhancement in areas such as technology adoption and meaningful use of electronic medical records,” said Scott Weatherill, CIO of Horizon.

The ‘It’s a HIT!’ project will include the creation of an online HIT curriculum as well as a certified electronic health record training and apprenticeship program for its participants. As part of the “It’s a HIT!” program, Prairie Health IT Network members will partner with Dakota State University (DSU) in Madison, SD.

DSU will provide a key role in the success of the “It’s a HIT!” program through curriculum design and development as well as publishing the HIT training online. The training will incorporate adult learning styles and be delivered across the state using various technologies used by the Prairie Health IT Network.

“DSU will play a pivotal role in the “It’s a HIT!” project. The curriculum must be relevant, engaging and accessible for rural health workers in order for it to be a success. Having access to DSU’s staff and student expertise will ensure the curriculum achieves the project goal,” says Lindsey Karlson, Network Director of the Prairie Health IT Network.

ORHP announced the release of the Rural Health Information Technology Workforce Development Program in the spring of 2013. The purpose of the program is to support formal rural health networks that focus on activities relating to the recruitment, education, training and retention of HIT specialists. This program also provides support to rural health networks that can leverage and enhance existing HIT training materials to develop formal training programs, which will provide instructional opportunities to current health care staff, local displaced workers, rural residents, veterans and other potential students. Ten to fifteen grant awards were given across the nation for an estimated \$4.5 million of program funding.

For over 35 years, Horizon Health Care, Inc. has been providing personalized, affordable, high-quality medical, dental and mental health care through a rural, community-based network in South Dakota. Horizon is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) that serves the medical, dental and mental health care needs of South Dakotans in rural, medically underserved areas through 78,000 patient visits annually in 18 community health centers in: Aberdeen, Bryant, De Smet, Howard, Huron, Lake Preston, Martin, Mission, Plankinton, Springfield, Wessington Springs, White River and Woonsocket. For more information please visit www.horizonhealthcare.org

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