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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Rock River Community Clinic Becomes Federally Funded FQHC**

**Johnson Creek, WI – September 1, 2026**– Rock River Community Clinic (RRCC) has been awarded a New Access Point designation by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), officially transitioning RRCC from a Federally Qualified Health Center Look-Alike (FQHC-LAL) to a federally funded Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC).

The award is part of \$102 million in New Access Point funding announced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to expand access to primary care for nearly 1 million people nationwide. RRCC is one of three new Access Points awarded in Wisconsin, and one of 158 nationwide.

This designation marks years of work to establish RRCC as a federally recognized community clinic. Back in 2019, the area free clinics (Watertown Area Cares Clinic, Community Dental Clinic, and Rock River Free Clinic) merged together to form Rock River Community Clinic and began the process of applying to become a Federally Qualified Community Health Center (FQHC) under HRSA.

In 2022, after a successful application and site visit, RRCC was awarded an FQHC designation by HRSA under the [Look Alike \(LAL\) designation](#). FQHC-LALs meet the annual requirements of HRSA for health centers but do not receive federal funds to support clinic operations. While the FQHC-LAL was an important step, the FQHC designation was always the end goal.

“Dropping the “look-alike” status will allow us to serve more patients while reducing strain on our community partners,” said Dr. Olivia Nichols, CEO/Executive Director of Rock River Community

Clinic. “This designation could not have happened without the collaboration and care from our hospital, county, and community partners.”

HealthWorks was formed in 2020 through a HRSA network grant to increase health equity in the greater Jefferson County area, with a specific focus on improving access to primary care for low-income individuals. HealthWorks is comprised of eight local organizations that have a long history of collaboration: Rock River Community Clinic, Fort HealthCare, Watertown Regional Medical Center, Jefferson County Health Department, Jefferson County Human Services Department, Greater Watertown Community Health Foundation, Madison Area Technical College, and Rainbow Community Care. Together, these organizations have worked to strengthen connections between health care and community services and expand resources available to individuals who face barriers to care.

RRCC’s transition from an FQHC-LAL to a federally funded FQHC is an important step in that broader community effort. “The new designation is a terrific win for all of us working to improve the health and well-being of our community. Reducing disparities in health outcomes benefits us all,” said Michael Anderson, MD, President and CEO of Fort HealthCare.

“This designation is a reflection of what can happen when community organizations come together around a shared goal,” adds Ben Wehmeier, President and CEO of Greater Watertown Community Health Foundation. “RRCC’s transition to a federally funded FQHC is an important milestone in that work.”

To learn more about Rock River Community Clinic, visit [RockRiverCommunityClinic.com/](https://RockRiverCommunityClinic.com/), or contact Dr. Nichols at [director@rockrivercommunityclinic.org](mailto:director@rockrivercommunityclinic.org) or 262.472.6839.

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*Rock River Community Clinic (RRCC) is a community health center that provides comprehensive and cost-effective health care services to ensure all community members have access to the care they need.*

*At RRCC, all community members are welcome and accepted, regardless of ability to pay, with discounted prices for patients who are uninsured or underinsured (high deductible plans). RRCC also provides care coordination services to help patients overcome barriers to accessing healthcare (e.g., transportation), and helps to coordinate referrals. Bilingual staff (Spanish &*

*English) are available to support patients and their families. By increasing access to health care services, offering care at affordable costs, and assisting with healthcare navigation, RRCC works to create a healthier, more equitable, community. For clinic hours and directions, visit [www.rockrivercommunityclinic.org](http://www.rockrivercommunityclinic.org)*

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