

Jim Doyle
Governor

Roberta Gassman
Secretary



State of Wisconsin

Department of Workforce Development

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

201 East Washington Avenue
P.O. Box 7946
Madison, WI 53707-7946
Telephone: (608) 266-7552
Fax: (608) 266-1784
<http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/>
e-mail: dwdsec@dwd.state.wi.us

Thursday, October 5, 2006

Contact: Rose Lynch, DWD Director of Communications, 608-266-6753

**Secretary Gassman Awards Injury Prevention Grant to
Aurora Sinai Medical Center and Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare
Governor Doyle's *Safe Lifting Initiative* will help health care workers avoid back injuries**

Milwaukee – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced that Aurora Sinai Medical Center and Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare in Milwaukee will each receive \$20,000 in grants for projects to help prevent worker injuries. The grants are part of Governor Jim Doyle's *Safe Lift Initiative* to help nurses and other health care workers avoid injuries when moving patients.

"Aurora Sinai and Wheaton Franciscan perform a valuable service in meeting health care needs of Milwaukee residents," Secretary Gassman said. "This grant will help their employees provide essential care by preventing injuries on the job. Health care workers can suffer serious back injuries when moving patients, which can end careers and undermine patient care."

According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, six of the top ten occupations at highest risk for back injuries are in health care. Depending on the severity, such injuries can sideline workers temporarily or end their careers entirely. The risk of injuries can also discourage others from nursing or other health care careers and these combined factors can increase the cost of worker's compensation and health care overall.

Governor Doyle developed the *Safe Lifting Initiative* as part of Grow Wisconsin, his comprehensive plan for economic and workforce development. A total of \$325,000 in federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) money is funding the demonstration projects.

The demonstration projects were selected with guidance from the Select Committee on Health Care Workforce Development. The committee's mission is to identify and help implement top-priority, immediate and long-term strategies for addressing the health care worker shortages in Wisconsin.

Based in Milwaukee, Aurora Sinai Medical Center Sinai will train 432 employees in the proper use of patient lifting equipment. Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare will train 244 staff in the use of lifting equipment. Both of these projects are in collaboration with the Milwaukee Private Industry Council, Inc.