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Governor

Roberta Gassman
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State of Wisconsin

Department of Workforce Development

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**Secretary Gassman Awards Injury Prevention Grant to
Black River Memorial Hospital and Riverfront**
Governor Doyle's *Safe Lifting Initiative* will help health care workers avoid back injuries

Black River Falls & LaCrosse— Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced that Black River Memorial Hospital in Black River Falls and Riverfront in LaCrosse will receive \$25,199 in grants as part of Governor Jim Doyle's *Safe Lift Initiative* to help nurses and other health care workers avoid injuries when moving patients.

"These organizations provide valuable services in meeting health care needs of residents of western Wisconsin," Secretary Gassman said. "These grants will help employees continue this essential care by preventing injuries on the job. The back injuries nurses may suffer when moving patients 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 health care worker shortages in Wisconsin.

Black River Memorial Hospital is an accredited primary health care facility located in Black River Falls. It is an independent, non-profit organization that is locally controlled. The hospital will receive a \$20,000 grant to train 114 employees on proper use of safe lifting equipment.

Riverfront is a non-profit organization based in La Crosse that serves more than 1,800 people in Wisconsin and Minnesota. The majority of people served have a cognitive disability or mental illness. Riverfront will receive \$5,199 and plans to train 136 employees.

These projects are in collaboration with Workforce Connections, Inc., based in LaCrosse.