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## **Springfield Media Release - April is Child Abuse Prevention Month** ***Everyone has a role to play to keep kids safe***

Springfield, Ill. – Prevent Child Abuse Illinois, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital will commemorate the start of April as National Child Abuse Prevention Month at a joint press conference at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, April 3 at the St. John's Pavilion, 301 N. 8<sup>th</sup> St., Springfield.

Several prominent speakers are set to give remarks at the kickoff event. Springfield's Mayor Jim Langfelder will read the governor's proclamation; and DCFS Regional Administrator Cathy Smith, St. John's Children's Hospital and Women's Services Executive Director Vernessa Glover and Prevent Child Abuse Illinois Executive Director Denise McCaffrey will also give remarks.

"Children are our future and all children deserve great childhoods," said Denise McCaffrey, executive director of Prevent Child Abuse Illinois. "We need to recognize that each one of us has a role to play in preventing child abuse. It's about our future. It's about protecting children."

"At DCFS, we are often 'first responders' when it comes to helping families in crisis, and every day we see some of Illinois' most vulnerable children and their families," said Illinois DCFS Acting Director B.J. Walker. "Working together we can prevent serious harm to the children and reduce trauma that will potentially affect them all of their lives. In particular, we should join together – at the community level – to reach out and touch families who are struggling and do all that we can to support them so they can support their children."

Vernessa Glover, executive director of HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital said "As healthcare providers, we know that child abuse and neglect often present as unmanaged chronic conditions, psychological disorders, reduced life expectancy and substance abuse in adulthood. By shining a light on awareness, early intervention and prevention, we are protecting a child's right to joy and innocence and improving long-term health outcomes in our community."

Child Abuse Prevention Month has been observed each April since its first presidential proclamation in 1983. Since that time, millions of Americans have participated in this national campaign. Individuals, organizations and communities across the United States plant pinwheels, tie ribbons, organize trainings, host fundraisers and support a multitude of other activities celebrating healthy, happy childhoods and raising awareness that all children deserve to grow up in nurturing, safe homes.

### **About HSHS St. John's Hospital**

HSHS St. John's Hospital in Springfield, Illinois is a regional medical center offering a comprehensive array of health care services to central and southern Illinois. Founded in 1875, St. John's is the flagship hospital of Hospital Sisters Health System and is home to the Prairie Heart Institute, St. John's Children's Hospital, St. John's Women's Services, St. John's Neurosciences Institute, St. John's Cancer Center, orthopedic services and AthletiCare. St. John's now has one of the most advanced surgery centers in the nation and a renovated patient tower with all private rooms. St. John's is designated as a level I trauma center, has its own college of nursing and is a teaching hospital for the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine. For more information about St. John's Hospital, visit [www.st-johns.org](http://www.st-johns.org).

### **About Hospital Sisters Health System**

Hospital Sisters Health System's (HSHS) mission is to reveal and embody Christ's healing love for all people through our high quality Franciscan health care ministry. HSHS provides state-of-the-art health care to our patients and is dedicated to serving all people, especially the most vulnerable, at each of our 15 local systems and physician practices in Illinois (Breese, Decatur, Effingham, Greenville, Highland, Litchfield, O'Fallon, Shelbyville and Springfield) and Wisconsin (Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, Oconto Falls, Sheboygan and two in Green Bay). HSHS is sponsored by Hospital Sisters Ministries, and [Hospital Sisters of St. Francis](http://www.hshs.org) is the founding institute. For more information about HSHS, visit [www.hshs.org](http://www.hshs.org). For more information about Hospital Sisters of St. Francis, visit [www.hospitalsisters.org](http://www.hospitalsisters.org).