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Contact: Jassen Strokosch
Illinois DCFS
312-814-6847

Illinois DCFS kicks off The Domestic Violence Co-Location Program in Lake and Winnebago counties in partnership with the Quality Improvement Center on Domestic Violence in Child Welfare

Vernon Hills, IL – Today the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) joined forces with domestic violence agencies and community partners at the Lake County Juvenile Court Depke Center, 24647 Milwaukee Ave. in Vernon Hills to launch The Domestic Violence Co-Location Program (DVCLP) in Lake and Winnebago counties.

The DVCLP is a partnership between DCFS, domestic violence agencies and other community partners that is funded by a federal Quality Improvement Center on Domestic Violence in Child Welfare (QIC-DVCW) grant administered by Futures Without Violence. Under the partnership, domestic violence advocates employed by A Safe Place and Remedies Renewing Lives will be housed in the DCFS Waukegan field office in Lake County and Rockford field office in Winnebago County.

Advocates will assist child welfare professionals as they work with families who have experienced or are currently experiencing domestic violence, enhancing the effectiveness of the child welfare intervention while taking into consideration the families' unique needs.

"This partnership targets the shared goals of the domestic violence prevention community and DCFS to reduce the risk of violence in Illinois families, enhance the safety of child and adult survivors of domestic violence, increase offender accountability, support parental strengths and improve outcomes for children and families experiencing domestic violence," said Marc D. Smith, acting director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. "Collaboration is key to protecting children and supporting families. The DVCLP will add tremendous value."

“For so long, advocates have struggled with the best approach to working with families that experience violence in the home. This often includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse of the parent but also witnessing and experiencing violence by children in these homes. Here in Illinois, we have tried to address these common issues with two different systems that didn’t always work well together. Now we are embarking on a project that will focus on the whole family and how all our systems can better support the family in ending this violence,” said Vicki Smith, CEO/executive director of the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence. “I believe this is critical work toward ending all forms of violence in our communities. The Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence, along with Ascend Justice and The Network, are excited to be partners in such innovative efforts.”

“We are thrilled to collaborate with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and their partners on this important work,” said Lonna Davis, director of children & youth programs at Futures Without Violence. “Meaningful collaboration and communication across the sectors and departments striving to serve families experiencing domestic violence is essential. As a team we are advancing child welfare practice, and as a community we are now further along in helping to improve the safety, permanency and well-being of families across the state.”

“In the end, the DVCLP will improve outcomes for families because they will be more connected to community supports, thus improving the safety and resiliency of adult and child survivors of domestic violence,” said Judge Valerie Boettle Ceckowski, supervising judge in the 19th Judicial Circuit Court serving Lake County. “The DVCLP will contribute to reducing the use of violence in Lake County and promote greater responsibility and healthier family involvement of the person who used violence. Through this partnership there will be greater equity in outcomes among families regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation; fewer families will be separated and children will be safely returned home or placed in another permanent loving home more quickly.”

***About the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS):** Founded in 1964, DCFS is responsible for protecting children from abuse or neglect by responding to calls received on the Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873). With the goal of keeping children safe, DCFS strengthens and supports families with a wide range of services. When keeping a child safe means removing them from the home, DCFS makes every effort to reunite them with their family. When the best interest of the child makes this impossible, DCFS is committed to pursuing adoption by loving families to provide children with a safe and permanent home. DCFS is also responsible for licensing and monitoring of all Illinois child welfare agencies.*

***About A Safe Place:** Founded in 1978, A Safe Place is the leading advocate for eliminating domestic violence in northern Illinois, and is Lake County, Illinois’ only provider of services exclusively for victims of domestic violence. A Safe Place provides emergency shelter, permanent housing, a 24-hour crisis line (847-249-4450), court and non-legal advocacy, individual, group and children’s counseling, art therapy, family visitation services, batterer intervention services, community outreach, prevention education and professional training. The agency’s service area includes Lake, McHenry and northern Cook counties in Illinois; however, clients come to A Safe Place from across the state, region and country. For more information about A Safe Place, visit www.asafeplaceforhelp.org.*

About Ascend Justice: Ascend Justice is a non-profit legal services organization whose mission is to empower individuals and families impacted by gender-based violence through legal advocacy and system reform.

About Futures Without Violence (FUTURES): For 40 years, FUTURES has provided groundbreaking programs, policies and campaigns that empower individuals and organizations working to end violence against women and children around the world. Striving to reach new audiences and transform social norms, FUTURES strategically enhances the leadership of diverse professionals such as doctors, nurses, judges and athletic coaches on improving responses to violence and abuse. The organization also works with advocates, policy makers and others to build sustainable community leadership and educate people everywhere about the importance of respect and healthy relationships. For more information on FUTURES' work, please go to www.FuturesWithoutViolence.org and sign up to receive alerts.

About the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence: The Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence is a 501 (c) 3 membership organization comprised of agencies and individuals supportive of all efforts for the safety of victims of domestic violence and their dependents as well as the accountability of abusers. The administrative office provides advocacy, training and technical assistance to and on behalf of its member agencies and the people they serve.

About The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence: The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence is a collaborative membership organization dedicated to improving the lives of those impacted by domestic violence through education, public policy and advocacy; and the connection of community members to direct service providers.

About Remedies Renewing Lives: Remedies provides critical and often times lifesaving services to adults struggling with substance abuse and to victims of domestic violence and their children; and works to end the cycle of abuse and addiction through education and community involvement. Remedies is the only domestic violence shelter and advocacy agency in Winnebago and Boone counties. Each year Remedies serves over 1,500 victims of domestic violence, roughly 20% of which are children. Remedies substance abuse programs serve an additional 1,800 adults each year. Remedies provides a safe, supportive environment and critical, client-centered services designed to promote the healing of individuals and families. Remedies is a private, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization governed by a voluntary board of directors.

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