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Illinois Department of Children and Family Services recognizes Human Trafficking Awareness Month

CHICAGO – On Friday, January 28, Illinois DCFS will join advocates and volunteers at a candlelight vigil in Calumet Park, Illinois in recognition of Human Trafficking Awareness Month.

The event, organized by Dr. Kisha Roberts-Tabb with Roberts-Tabb & Associates, will take place from 9-10 p.m. at 12808 South Ashland Ave. to shine a light on the issue of domestic human trafficking. Packets that include toiletries and information about substance abuse services, shelter care programs and human trafficking referral services will be distributed to anyone in need. Runaway youth, youth in care and homeless youth are especially vulnerable to human trafficking.

“It’s important for everyone to realize that human trafficking is happening across the United States every day. DCFS works in coordination with law enforcement and community organizations to provide a safety net to rescue child human trafficking victims and help them heal,” said Illinois DCFS Director Marc D. Smith. The public can help keep children safe by learning the signs of human trafficking and by immediately calling 911 or the Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-25-ABUSE) if they believe a child is in danger.”

In Fiscal Year 2021, Illinois DCFS investigated 309 allegations of human trafficking of children, 127 of those in Cook County – a number experts believe is lower than the true number of incidents. Often, victims of human trafficking do not seek help because they are fearful, ashamed of their situation, distrust law enforcement or become dependent on the perpetrator. The Illinois Safe Children Act ensures that all children who are lured or coerced into prostitution/human trafficking are innocent and immune from criminal prosecution; and will be placed in the child welfare system instead of the criminal justice system.

“The RTA Group is dedicated to bringing awareness to human trafficking through training, evaluation, coaching and counseling to ensure that vulnerable populations are afforded the



best care and treatment possible without violating their dignity and safety,” said Dr. Kisha Roberts-Tabb. “In a nation coined as the land of the free, the exploitation of women and children has become a common occurrence in impoverished communities. It is important that we give a voice to the voiceless.”

KNOW THE SIGNS. A trafficked child might:

- Have an adult control them by speaking for them
- Seem out of place given the time of day or night
- Look disheveled or dressed in clothes that they could not afford to buy
- Show signs of physical abuse such as bruising or red marks
- Not possess any form of identification
- Perform inappropriate work for their age and not be compensated

To report the suspected human trafficking of a child under the age of 21, call the Illinois DCFS Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-25-ABUSE (22873). To report the suspected human trafficking of an adult over age 21, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888.

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.

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