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## **Joining Forces to Protect Illinois' Children**

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month

(CHICAGO) – Children's Home + Aid, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services join forces to honor National Child Abuse Prevention Month in April. With events throughout the state, the three organizations, with dozens of partners statewide, raise awareness about the issue of child abuse in Illinois and assist the public in locating and utilizing available prevention resources.

"Children who suffer abuse and neglect are far more likely to be arrested, struggle with substance abuse, have low academic achievement and face a number of other challenges," said Nancy Ronquillo, president and CEO of Children's Home + Aid. "Whenever possible, we want to prevent that abuse before it happens. We strengthen families stressed to the breaking point. We connect parents to the resources they need to make it through and keep their family together, from early childhood education to treatment for mental health issues. We work with them to reduce the odds of violence, abuse, and neglect."

"National Child Abuse Prevention Month in April gives us the opportunity to spotlight the issue of child abuse and make the public aware of the dozens of programs that strengthen families and protect children all across Illinois," Ronquillo continued. "It is essential that we work in partnership with organizations like Prevent Child Abuse Illinois and the Department of Children and Family Services to ensure we are doing whatever it takes to put children on the path to a better life and keep them there."

"An estimated one in five children in Illinois is abused or neglected before they turn 18, and more often than not, the abuse is from a relative or a trusted family friend," says Bobbie Gregg, acting director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. "Along with our partner agencies, we are working to provide support for families to help prevent child abuse and neglect from occurring."

A kick-off event is scheduled for April 1<sup>st</sup> at 9 a.m. at the historic Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago. Similar events are being held in Springfield, East Moline, Rock Island, Carterville and Edwardsville to kick-off April as Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Throughout the month of April, dozens of child abuse prevention events across the state will bring Illinois communities together to address the issues of child abuse and neglect. For a full listing of child abuse prevention activities state-wide, please visit [www.childrenshomeandaid.org/bluebowcalendar](http://www.childrenshomeandaid.org/bluebowcalendar).

Governor Pat Quinn also joins the effort to stamp out child abuse in Illinois, with his support of the Governor's Pledge. The Governor's Pledge, launching in April for Child Abuse Prevention Month, urges the public to take an active role in the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

“All children deserve a safe and loving place to call home,” Governor Quinn said. “By signing the Governor’s Pledge, the residents of Illinois can promise to provide this protection for our children and help put a stop to the abuse and neglect. I commend our partners for working together to raise awareness and support for our state's most vulnerable.”

To sign the Governor’s Pledge, please visit [www.childrenshomeandaid.org/govpledge](http://www.childrenshomeandaid.org/govpledge)

### **About Children’s Home + Aid**

Children’s Home + Aid is a leading child and family service agency in Illinois. We help children recover their health, their hope, and their faith in the people around them. We link children to a network of opportunity and care, to extended family, teachers, mentors, and the resources of the neighborhood and community. For 130 years, Children’s Home + Aid has gone wherever children and families need them, and work where that work has been proven to be most effective: at home, in the classroom, in the neighborhood, in the course of daily life. With offices located across Illinois, we serve more than 40,000 children and families in over 60 counties each year. For more information about Children’s Home + Aid, visit [childrenshomeandaid.org](http://childrenshomeandaid.org)

### **About Illinois Department of Children and Family Services**

Founded in 1964, DCFS has the primary responsibility of protecting children and strengthening families through the investigation and intervention of suspected child abuse or neglect by parents and other caregivers. Over the last four years, DCFS received more than one million calls to our Child Abuse Hotline, offering and coordinating services wherever needed to help children remain in their homes safely. In instances where children must be removed from the home for their safety and well-being, DCFS makes every effort to return them safely to their homes as quickly as possible. When that simply is not possible, DCFS is equally committed to pursuing adoption by loving families to provide children with the permanent, safe, and nurturing homes they need and deserve to reach their fullest potential. As part of its duties, DCFS licenses and monitors all Illinois child welfare agencies and more than 14,000 day care centers, homes, group homes and day care agencies in the state.

### **About Prevent Child Abuse Illinois**

Prevent Child Abuse Illinois envisions an Illinois where all children grow up in healthy, nurturing homes and communities free of abuse, neglect, violence, or endangerment of any kind. Since 1990, a chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America, PCA Illinois has provided guidance for child abuse prevention by providing statewide leadership through education, support for community initiatives, and advocacy. For more information visit our website at [www.preventchildabuseillinois.org](http://www.preventchildabuseillinois.org).

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