

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## EDUCATION LEADERS BACK CAMPAIGN TO STOP CHILD ABUSE

*“You are Not Alone” campaign to reach over one million Illinois students*

(SPRINGFIELD) – The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) announced today that a new campaign by DCFS to stop child abuse is being backed by the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB), Illinois Education Association (IEA), Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT) and Illinois Parent Teachers Association (Illinois PTA). The goal of the “You are Not Alone” campaign is to let all school children know that help is available for them, a sibling or friend who is being abused or neglected. DCFS says the backing of education leaders will aid efforts to reach the one in five Illinois children who are abused or neglected before they turn 18.



Currently, the campaign is slated to reach 1.1 million Illinois children in public and private schools. Since the campaign’s launch in mid-September, 600 public school districts serving approximately 950,000 children as well as charter schools across the state have joined the effort by agreeing to display prevention posters in schools. DCFS is also partnering with non-public schools across the state, including the schools of six Catholic dioceses, to reach more than 150,000 additional students.

“Illinois schools are on the front lines, reporting more than 17,000 suspected cases of abuse or neglect last year, and we are grateful to have their support in this effort,” said deputy director Dave Clarkin, who spearheads the campaign for DCFS. “Our goal is to let every child know that help is only a phone call away, before the harm becomes irreversible or claims more victims.”

(more)

“We are all committed to working together to ensure safe, loving homes and brighter futures for children,” says Roger Eddy, executive director of IASB. “School board members across Illinois understand that children can’t do their homework if they don’t have a safe home to go to at night, or their home is in chaos because of abuse or domestic violence.”

“In addition to being education employees, IEA members are citizens of our communities, committed to the health and safety of our students,” says IEA president Cinda Klickna. “Children must be able to get the help they need as soon as possible. That’s why the 130,000 IEA members enthusiastically support this campaign.”

“Teachers and school staff often recognize common warning signs of abuse and want to do everything possible to keep students safe,” says Aviva Bowen, spokesperson for the IFT. “By working together and letting children who are being abused know that they are not alone, we can give them hope as well as help.”

“Every adult in Illinois has a shared responsibility to ensure children are safe by reporting suspected abuse and neglect,” says Peggy Staehlin, state president of the Illinois PTA. “Unfortunately, too many adults don’t live up to that responsibility. It is critical that children know there is still somewhere they can turn for help.”

The “You are Not Alone” campaign builds on recent Illinois efforts to partner with schools to combat child abuse and neglect. Enacted in January, Erin’s Law requires schools to incorporate sexual abuse awareness and prevention into health curricula. A broader measure to ensure the detection and reporting of all child abuse and neglect championed by the IFT was enacted just last month. Under that measure, all school employees will receive training on recognizing and reporting child maltreatment when hired as well as refresher trainings at least every five years.

“DCFS is grateful to have the support of education leaders, as well as the more than one million Illinoisans who volunteer or give to local efforts to ensure strong families,” says Clarkin. “All nine million adults in Illinois have a shared responsibility to promote the common good by ensuring safe, loving homes and brighter futures for children. The department hopes that even more Illinoisans will join the effort in the coming year.”

Schools and other organizations that would like to request “You are Not Alone” posters can contact Jennifer Florent at 217-524-1970 or [Jennifer.Florent@illinois.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Florent@illinois.gov).

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