



For immediate release

November 24, 2009

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EVENT: Press Conference Dec. 1, 2009, 10:00 AM
Location: Virginia State Capitol, House Room 1
Topic: Campaign for Children's Mental Health

Richmond, VA: On December 1, Voices for Virginia's Children, along with coalition partners including child advocacy organizations, mental health professionals, provider organizations, stakeholder groups and organizations representing families, will launch The Campaign for Children's Mental Health.

Speakers from two family organizations will present the compelling stories of families who have struggled to access mental health services for their children. Mira Signer, executive director of NAMI Virginia, and Vicki Hardy-Murrell, director of Virginia Federation of Families, a program of Mental Health America of Virginia, will use these stories to help document the unmet needs and system deficiencies that have brought this broad coalition together in a concerted "call to action". From Voices for Virginia's Children, John Morgan, PhD, executive director, and Margaret Nimmo Crowe, campaign coordinator and senior policy analyst, will present additional evidence of inadequacies in child mental health services and the need for system reform.

The Campaign for Children's Mental Health is a 3-year sustained effort to make mental health services more available and accessible to Virginia children in need. It will strongly endorse Governor-elect McDonnell's call for system improvements; urge the General Assembly and state and local government to work collaboratively with the administration to address system deficiencies; and conduct a high-profile three-year advocacy and education drive to build public and political support for improved mental health services for children.

Despite the numerous studies and task forces that clearly document the inadequacies in the child mental health service system, efforts to improve the system have been insufficient. Virginia's system remains fragmented, under-funded and ineffective. The

Surgeon General reports that 1 in 5 kids has a mental health problem. Virginia's Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services estimates that between 92,000 and 111,000 Virginia children and adolescents have a serious emotional disturbance. Only one in five, however, receives needed treatment.

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Press Kits: Available Nov. 30

Interviews: Spokespersons available immediately following briefing