



For Immediate Release

September 28, 2016

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Shelby County Government to Unveil U.S. Department of Justice Campaign to End Children's Exposure to Violence

UTHSC to partner for Phase II of the Defending Childhood Initiative to Address Impact of Violence on Shelby County Children

Memphis, Tennessee -- On Thursday, September 29th, Shelby County Government will host a press conference at 8:30 a.m. at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center's Student Alumni Center at 800 Madison Avenue to unveil the public education campaign for the Defending Childhood Initiative in Shelby County to help end children's exposure to violence.

Shelby County is one of eight sites nationwide chosen by the U.S. Department of Justice for the initiative, created to address the impact on children as both victims and witnesses. The Defending Childhood Initiative, locally called the DCI-Network for Overcoming Violence and Abuse (DCI-NOVA), has already laid the groundwork, having spent the past five years focusing on preventing childhood violence and providing help to children who've been exposed to violence.

"This campaign is designed to change attitudes around violence," said Martha Lott, director of Community Services for Shelby County Government. "The partners have spent five years laying the groundwork for this program in Hickory Hill and Frayser-Raleigh, getting those communities involved in prevention and connecting families to professionals who can help. We're looking forward to expanding the work."

A number of partner agencies, such as Agape Child and Family Services, Memphis Child Advocacy Center and the University of Memphis, will be on hand, along with Mayor Luttrell and UTHSC, to unveil details about the campaign, including ways to further provide resources and access to local children and families and persons who care for children through specialized programs, trainings and social work initiatives.

"Studies show 60 percent of American children have been exposed to violence in their homes or neighborhoods, and that exposure could contribute to negative behaviors in children and a cycle of violence," said Dr. Altha Stewart

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of UTHSC's Center for Health inJustice Involved Youth. "UTHSC is excited to build on the great work already done by DCI-NOVA to continue to inform and help our families in Shelby Countyas the work of the grant transitions to UTHSC. "

This press event will precede *Trauma Through the Lens of Culture*, hosted by UTHSC to discuss childhood trauma and violence, featuring national expert, Dr. Isaiah Pickens, Assistant Director of the Service Systems Program for the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.

For more information on the Defending Childhood Initiative – Shelby County, visit www.defendingchildhoodshelby.org.

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This project is supported by Award No. 2011-MU-MU-K005 awarded by the Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs.