



NOVA Contact: Keisha Walker or Malrie Shelton, 901.222.3990
Press Contact: Splash Creative, PR@splashcreativeink.com

October 10, 2012

Mayor Luttrell announces launch of NOVA program to care for kids exposed to violence

MEMPHIS, TN — Shelby County Mayor Mark Luttrell today announced the formation of a network of closely collaborating service providers and other partners to care for children exposed to violence, and to give support to their families.

The program is called the Network for Overcoming Violence and Abuse, or NOVA. It has begun providing services in neighborhoods within six zip codes in the Hickory Hill and Raleigh-Fraser areas where data has shown high incidences in which children experience violence at home or are the victims or witnesses of crime.

In 2011 Shelby County's Office for Early Childhood and Youth received \$2 million to build the collaborative and to begin providing trauma-informed counseling and other victim services in the initial service areas. The funding came from the U.S. Department of Justice Defending Childhood Initiative. The city was one of eight sites in the nation to receive funding.

"Every day, behind the headlines and the news flashes, there are children hurt by what they see, or hear or feel," the Mayor said. **"This exposure to violence and resulting trauma can turn into many other problems, including bad behaviors, and too often the cycle of violence continues.**

"For a year, the NOVA partners — including social service nonprofits and academic and governmental organizations — have worked together to ensure that the system of care brought to these neighborhoods represents the best practices known to help children who have suffered from violence," Luttrell continued.

"They also have worked hard to ensure that this is a program that will endure and grow," he added. **"Our promise to the community is this will not be one more local child-based program that is pronounced with fanfare and then fades away."**

Children living in these zip codes can get NOVA services immediately, by referral or through direct contact with a trained provider, or by calling (901) 222-3990: 38115, 38118, 38125, 38127, 38128 and 38141. **"Besides having statistics showing the need, these neighborhoods have community resources and support systems that will help the families,"** Luttrell said.

While it is hoped that NOVA services will be expanded in the next couple of years, the Mayor added that any child can be connected to services at the same agencies if a family member calls the service provider directly, or calls the 2-1-1 community LINKS number.

Luttrell said what makes NOVA unique is that the government and nonprofit providers have come together to coordinate training and work processes, enhancing their services in a way that has never been done before.

(More)

The new NOVA program provides Family Service Providers who will directly connect hurt children and their families to professional caregivers. Family Service Providers from Agape Child and Family Services are based in the Wingood Manor, Todds Creek and Bella Vista apartment communities. Other Family Service Providers will work within the Protective Services office and with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) in Juvenile Court, in the Family Safety Center and with Victims to Victory.

NOVA also is funding child therapists at the Exchange Club Family Center and Victims to Victory. In addition, training for child-care and youth development providers will help leverage the work of law enforcement and social service groups who have come together under the auspices of the Defending Childhood Initiative.

In addition to those agencies, other primary NOVA partners include the Center for Community Building and Neighborhood Action (CBANA) at the University of Memphis, Consilience Group, LeBonheur Community Health & Wellbeing, Memphis Area Women's Council, Memphis Child Advocacy Center, Splash Creative (advertising firm), Tennessee Department of Children's Services, and the University of Memphis Department of Social Work.

Mayor Luttrell explained that the NOVA projects fits perfectly under the umbrella of Operation: Safe Community.

“That community-wide effort’s first five-year phase focused on suppression of crime. Now, Operation: Safe Community is concentrating on intervention and prevention. Intervening in a positive and healing manner for children who experience violence and trauma lies at the very heart of this project.”

(End of News Release)

About the Network for Overcoming Violence and Abuse

NOVA is a network of public and private agency partners in Memphis and Shelby County connecting a community of trained adults to children and youth exposed to violence for trauma counseling, parenting support and other family assistance. NOVA is a strategy of Operation: Safe Community 2012-2016 as a way to reduce youth violence by helping ensure young victims of exposure to violence are nurtured so that they do not become future perpetrators.

About the Office of Early Childhood and Youth

The Shelby County Office of Early Childhood and Youth coordinates programs, advises policymakers and promotes community understanding that all children deserve to be healthy, safe and nurtured. The OECY is a demonstration of Shelby County Government's commitment to children and families and serves as a means for attracting dollars from outside the community for strategic investments.