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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW PUBLIC SERVICE CAMPAIGN ENCOURAGES RUNAWAY, HOMELESS AND AT-RISK YOUTH TO SEEK ASSISTANCE WITH CHICAGO SAFE PLACE PROGRAM

Community Outreach Program Offers Youth Assistance in Time of Need

CHICAGO – July 14, 2011 – A new public awareness campaign that targets youth in crisis in the Chicago area debuts today. This campaign supports the recently announced Chicago Safe Place program which targets youth in crisis (runaway, homeless and at-risk youth). This campaign and program have been funded through a cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). Chicago Safe Place is directed by Youth Network Council, in collaboration with three youth service agencies: Alternatives, Inc., Universal Family Connection, Inc., and Westside Youth Network, Inc. The Chicago Safe Place program is based on the National Safe Place model that started in 1983 in Louisville, KY through the YMCA. The City of Chicago is the largest city and one of more than 1,500 communities nationwide with a Safe Place program.

Chicago Safe Place is a youth outreach program that creates a network of Safe Place sites each identified by the program's distinctive yellow and black diamond-shaped Safe Place logo. Locations such as restaurants, small businesses, convenience stores, and community-based organizations offer a place for youth to access immediate help. The awareness campaign will assist youth aged 11-17 who have problems at home, are homeless, have runaway or just need to talk to someone.

“The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is thrilled to support such a worthwhile initiative that targets Chicago’s youth,” said Jeff Slowikowski, Acting Administrator, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice. “Our office strives every day to protect children and youth through our programming and resources. The Chicago Safe Place program and Youth in Crisis campaign are great examples of coordinated prevention and intervention services for juveniles.”

The Chicago Safe Place Youth in Crisis campaign has been developed and directed by INOBTTR (“I Know Better”), a non-profit organization that educates about safety through public awareness in a proactive effort to keep kids safe. The Youth in Crisis public awareness campaign (PSA) officially launches today in Chicago and will run through October 3, 2011. Mass transportation plays an integral role in this campaign to raise awareness amongst youth in general, but specifically those who may be facing trouble. Key PSA/ad elements include:

- Bus/street benches
- Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) platform screens
- CTA bus tails



- Bus interior ads
- Train interior ads
- Print ads to run in Mash school newspapers – 2 ads in the September 2011 timeframe

“INOBTBTR is very excited to lead the ‘Youth in Crisis’ campaign,” said INOBTBTR Founder Steve Schankman. “Our goal was to deliver a simple and impactful campaign and I believe we have achieved it. With an awareness campaign such as this, we are very clear about the message. If you are a youth in crisis, Chicago Safe Place is the answer to get help immediately.” The three month campaign has a net visibility of more than 60 million impressions across Chicago.

Here’s how the Chicago Safe Place program works -- a youth can walk into a Chicago Safe Place location and identify her/himself as a youth in crisis. A youth worker is dispatched to meet the young person, facilitate an assessment, and work with the youth to determine available options and services. Alternate ways a youth can access immediate help are by calling a 24 hour/day toll free hotline (888.816.3264) or by texting the word “SAFE” and their current location (street address, city, and state) to 69-8-66.

“Our young people are dealing with a myriad of issues and crisis situations,” said Susan Cowen, CEO of Youth Network Council. “The Safe Place program provides options to seek help and provides a safety net for youth in Chicago.”

According to the 2010 National Runaway Switchboard Call Statistics, more than 2,000 calls were made from Chicago’s 773 and 312 area codes in 2010. Additionally, on any given night there are an estimated 2,000 youth on Chicagoland streets according to the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Unaccompanied Homeless Youth in Illinois: 2005 report.

Furthermore, Safe Place strives to reduce victimization of young people through access to resources. The National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence, sponsored by OJJDP and supported by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, found in 2008 that more than 60 percent of children surveyed were exposed either directly or indirectly to violence within the previous twelve months.

Safe Place Areas

Chicago Safe Place is currently operating in 24 city neighborhoods. The northern area includes West Ridge, Rogers Park, Lincoln Square, Edgewater, Uptown, North Center and Lakeview. The middle region has Avondale, Logan Square, Lincoln Park, Near North Side and Loop. The southern area has Archer Heights, Brighton Park, McKinley Park, Bridgeport, New City, Grand Boulevard, West Englewood, Englewood, Greater Grand Crossing, Auburn Gresham, Avalon Park, and Burnside. The program is seeking additional funding to cover all 77 neighborhoods within the City of Chicago.



Campaign

The Chicago campaign is one of six public awareness campaigns and is a part of the Project Youth Safety initiative – a comprehensive multimedia, multicultural overarching youth safety awareness initiative. INOBTR is currently working on upcoming Project Youth Safety campaigns to create issue awareness with today’s youth including topics such as child abuse, domestic violence, cell phone safety as well as teen dating violence. Chicago’s Youth in Crisis is the first to launch of the six campaigns. Additional information on this project is available at www.projectyouthsafety.org.

To learn more about the Chicago Safe Place Program, contact Liz Tracy at 312.802.1338 or via email at etracy@youthnetworkcouncil.org.

PROJECT PARTNERS

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) provides national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to juvenile delinquency and victimization. OJJDP supports states and communities in their efforts to develop and implement effective and coordinated prevention and intervention programs and to improve the juvenile justice system so that it protects public safety, holds offenders accountable, and provides treatment and rehabilitative services tailored to the needs of juveniles and their families. Learn more about OJJDP’s programs and resources at www.ojjdp.gov.

Youth Network Council (YNC) advocates for vulnerable youth in Illinois, and for the agencies that serve them. Through a combination of training and technical assistance, policy development, and coordination and monitoring of service delivery systems, YNC works to build and maintain a strong state-wide youth service system. Since 1972, YNC’s mission has been to support local, community-based youth service agencies and to enhance their capacity to serve young people and their families with the goals of keeping them safe, reducing their involvement with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and guiding them along the path to adulthood. To learn more about YNC and Chicago Safe Place, please visit their respective websites at www.youthnetworkcouncil.org and www.chicagosafeplace.org.

INOBTRO (“I Know Better”) is a non-profit organization that educates broadly through public awareness in effort to keep kids safe. The organization is most known for its training and community outreach programs on Internet Safety outreach. INOBTR is uniquely skilled in marketing, special events and communications. Their most recent campaign entitled “Decisions” was part of the US Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s Project Safe Childhood national campaign in 2008. INOBTR can be found online at www.INOBTR.org.

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