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Lt. Governor and HFS school supplies donation drive help launch Child Support Awareness Month

‘Brighter Tomorrows’ event Aug. 9 to focus attention on issue

Springfield, Illinois – Bringing fresh attention to the importance of child support, the Department of Healthcare and Family Services will offer donated school supplies and feature Lieutenant Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti in a “Brighter Tomorrows” public outreach event August 9 in Chicago.

It is all part of National Child Support Awareness Month. A proclamation from Governor Rauner will also be read.

“In August we celebrate parents who support their children and children who benefit from the support of both their parents,” said Felicia Norwood, Director of HFS. “Parents who pay and parents who receive child support are building healthy foundations for children.”

In Illinois, the Department of Healthcare and Family Services provides child support services to more than 480,000 families. These services range from helping parents ensure that their child has two legal parents, establishing a fair child support order and enforcing orders when necessary.

The event will be held at the James R. Thompson Center - 100 W Randolph, Chicago. There will be a resource fair in the atrium from 9:00 am to 2:30 pm. A short program will be held at 10:00 am in the plaza outside the Thompson Center.

The Department focuses on fairness to both parents and tries to take into account the challenging circumstances that parents may be faced with – like unemployment or disability – but the primary focus is always to get steady financial support to children, Norwood said.

“Children need the economic and emotional support of both parents,” she said. “This not only supports their day-to-day lives but also provides a lifelong knowledge that their parent cares enough to contribute to their well-being and needs. Regular receipt of child support creates a solid foundation that can build a brighter tomorrow for children.”

For families who received child support, the support represents about 16% of the family income. For families whose income is below the poverty level, child support represents about 45% of the family income.

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Child support has been shown in studies to serve several important goals. It reduces poverty and supports family self-sufficiency, reduces public spending, and increases the involvement of noncustodial parents in children's lives. The receipt of child support may contribute to improvements in the cognitive development of children to whom it is owed.

In the state fiscal year that just ended, more than \$1.4 billion in child support was collected and disbursed. The child support program attempts to operate with high efficiency. For instance, \$4.68 in support is collected for every \$1 spent on program operations. Only 14 cents of every dollar spent is funded by state taxpayer funds.

In keeping with the theme of brighter tomorrows, HFS staff will be collecting donated school supplies in offices around the state and donating the items to local schools.

"We want to supply the resources children need for their brighter tomorrow," said Norwood.

HFS encourages parents who may need its services to view the department's re-designed website. Child support services can be explored at illinois.gov/hfs/childsupport

"For parents who owe support and are behind because of a lost job or other challenge, we encourage you to reach out to us," Norwood emphasized. "We can work with you to help you get caught up. For parents who owe support and have the means to pay but are not, please know that the consequences will catch up to you. Contact us and avoid future penalties. Most importantly, for parents who regularly pay the support they owe and are involved in the lives of their children, thank you. Thank you on behalf not only of your children, but on behalf of all of us at HFS. You are setting a bright example."

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