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**Prevent Child Abuse-New Jersey Releases New Report
to Strengthen Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse in New Jersey**

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ - Prevent Child Abuse-New Jersey, a nonprofit committed to preventing child abuse in all its forms, today released “Strengthening Efforts to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse in New Jersey.” The thirteen-page policy paper analyzes current efforts to prevent child sexual abuse in New Jersey, compares these to lessons learned in other states, and provides a set of recommendations about opportunities to advance prevention efforts throughout the state.

Child sexual abuse is a devastating – and often overlooked – public health problem in New Jersey, with more than 900 confirmed cases in 2009. However, these are only the substantiated cases; due to the nature of the abuse, it is believed that up to 90% of cases go unreported.

Parents often believe that the main risk of child sexual abuse lies with strangers, when the reality is that the risk lies with adults that the child and family know and trust. So far, the most significant effort in New Jersey focuses on educating children about ways to protect themselves from sexual abuse. While this is a valuable and necessary part of a broader continuum of prevention efforts, protecting children from sexual abuse should be an adult responsibility, and one that adults – the ones with whom the trust is placed – need to take more seriously to prevent this tragic crime from ever occurring.

Victims of child sexual abuse suffer an array of short-term and long-term harm, including increased risk for anxiety, depression, substance abuse, eating disorders, future marital problems, and suicide. Due to these risks and unconscionable harm, these children have their innocence stripped from them, and many are unable to go on to lead the healthy, happy, and productive lives once on their horizon.

“We hope this report can raise public awareness about the true facts about child sexual abuse in New Jersey,” said Rush Russell, Executive Director of Prevent Child Abuse-New Jersey, “and importantly, identify steps that policymakers, community leaders, and parents can take to better protect our children from this devastating tragedy.”

A group of the state’s top leaders in the field of child abuse will meet this Wednesday, August 17th, in New Brunswick to begin development of a new strategic plan to strengthen prevention efforts in New Jersey. The meeting is part of a new project, the NJ Partnership to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse, supported by the Ms. Foundation, to mobilize new efforts across the State focused on preventing this abuse before it ever happens.

The paper is available as a free PDF download on Prevent Child Abuse-New Jersey’s website at www.preventchildabusej.org.

ABOUT PREVENT CHILD ABUSE-NEW JERSEY

Prevent Child Abuse-New Jersey, incorporated in 1979 as the state chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America, works in all twenty-one counties of the state to eliminate child abuse and neglect in all of its forms for all of New Jersey’s children. All of the organization’s work is research-based and built around nationally-recognized models. The nonprofit coordinates a full spectrum of family support programs including home visitation services, parent education groups, initiatives that promote parental involvement in a child’s education, and programs for highly vulnerable families. To learn more or to make a donation toward eliminating child abuse, visit us online at www.preventchildabusej.org or call 1-800-CHILDREN.