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**ATTORNEY GENERAL HOLDER UNVEILS *DEFENDING***

***CHILDHOOD* INITIATIVE**

***$5.5 Million in Grants Awarded for First Phase of Initiative***

WASHINGTON – Attorney General Eric Holder today officially unveiled *Defending Childhood,* a new Department of Justice initiative focused on addressing children’s exposure to violence. The goals of the initiative are to prevent children’s exposure to violence as victims and witnesses, mitigate the negative effects experienced by children exposed to violence, and develop knowledge about and increase awareness of this issue.

“For me, the issue of children’s exposure to violence has been both a personal and professional concern for decades. As our nation’s Attorney General and as a parent, it remains a top priority,” said Attorney General Holder. “Through renewing and refocusing our efforts to serve our nation’s most vulnerable and most distressed children we can transform the country we love for the better – one child at a time.”

A key component of the initiative is a multi-year demonstration program. Phase I

includes planning grants for eight demonstration sites announced today. In Phase II, up to four communities will be selected from the initial eight to receive funding for further implementation of their plans, based on the availability of funding. This program supports the development of comprehensive community-based strategies to prevent and reduce the impact of children’s exposure to violence in their homes, schools, and communities.

The eight demonstration sites are:

* City of Boston ($160,000)
* City of Portland, Maine ($160,000)
* Chippewa Cree Tribe, Mont. ($153,210)
* City of Grand Forks, N.D. ($159,967)
* Cuyahoga County Board of Commissioners, Ohio ($157,873)
* Multnomah County Department of Human Services, Ore. ($159,349)
* Rosebud Sioux Tribe, S.D. ($159,534)
* Shelby County, Tenn. ($159,099).

Some examples of the efforts these grants will support are:

* improving the identification, screening, assessment, and referral of children and their families to appropriate programs and services;
* increasing access to and utilization of quality programs and services; and
* developing new programs and services where gaps exist.

The grantees will work in collaboration with other local organizations, including victim service providers, tribal non-profit organizations, and community based organizations with a documented history of effectiveness concerning children exposed to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

In addition to the demonstration program grants, the Department of Justice is committing additional funding for research, evaluation, public awareness and partnerships related to the initiative. The other awards announced today are:

* Action Partnerships for Professional Membership and Professional

Organizations Responding to Children Exposed to and Victimized by Violence ($1,498,932) - Office for Victims of Crime

* Evaluation of the Attorney General’s Children Exposed to Violence Demonstration Program: Phase I ($500,000) – National Institute of Justice
* Public Awareness and Outreach for Victims in Underserved Communities ($995,089) – Office for Victims of Crime
* Research and Evaluation on Children Exposed to Family Violence ($1,244,869) – National Institute of Justice.

Detailed information about grants awarded in each of the above categories is available at

www.justice.gov/defending childhood.

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