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April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Family Resource Center of South Florida Spreads Awareness About the Warning Signs of Child Abuse and Neglect

Miami HEAT Joins With FRC to Raise Funds To Help Prevent Child Abuse & Strengthen Families

Miami, FL – March 1, 2012 – **April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month**, a key time to reflect on the state of child abuse and what can be done to identify and prevent this injustice. **Family Resource Center of South Florida (FRC)**, one of the **state's leading child welfare private, not-for-profit** organizations, is educating the public about the warning signs to help empower the community to play an active role in child abuse prevention. To that end, FRC is pleased to announce an important and timely campaign this April.

Florida continues to be hit especially hard by the continued recession, causing cases of child abuse to be on the rise. Recent data from Florida's Department of Children and Families (DCF) for the Miami-Dade region supports this. According to DCF, the number of investigations per month increased in 2011, with an average of 1,262 investigations per month, up from 1,046 per month in 2010. Moreover, the number of local children in out-of-home care jumped to 1,746 per month in 2011, in contrast to 1,298 in 2010.

In light of this, FRC is working especially hard to bring this critical issue to the forefront of our community by empowering the public with the warning signs of child abuse and neglect as well

as knowledge of the toll-free abuse hotline (1-800-96-ABUSE). The five most common types of abuse and what the signs to look for are:

1. **Physical Abuse:** Child has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, welts or swelling, sprains or fractures, lacerations, abrasions or black eyes.
2. **Sexual Abuse:** Child has difficulty walking or sitting; demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior; experiences nightmares, bedwetting or sudden change in appetite, bowel habits or urinary habits; experiences social withdrawal, anxiety or depression; and/or becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14.
3. **Physical Neglect:** Child is consistently dirty and has severe body odor; lacks sufficient clothing for the weather; begs or steals food or money; is frequently absent from school; and/or states that there is no one at home to provide care.
4. **Medical Neglect:** Child has unattended medical or dental needs; lacks immunizations, or glasses; has an untreated psychological illness, has developmental delays; and/or is not receiving necessary medication for a chronic disease that can cause disability, disfigurement or death.
5. **Emotional Abuse:** Child appears either overly compliant and passive or very demanding and aggressive; is inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example); and/or has low self-esteem, speech disorders, startles easily, depression or has attempted suicide. Parent constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child, is cold and rejecting, withholds love, treats siblings unequally, and/or is unconcerned about the child's problems.

Child Abuse Prevention Month is recognized throughout the month of April with various events taking place to educate the public in South Florida and across the nation about the prevalence of child abuse and what individuals can do to make a difference. In Miami, the HEAT has teamed up with FRC for a fundraiser to support FRC's work in this area. Specifically, a portion of proceeds from tickets sold for the **Friday April 13th Miami HEAT game vs. the Charlotte Bobcats** will be donated back to FRC. Tickets purchased through www.frcflorida.org/miamiheat support the cause and include a discount code for friends, family, and guests.

Dr. Oren Wunderman, Executive Director of Family Resource Center, discussed the agency's commitment to reducing child abuse and neglect through the new education campaign, "This campaign is about engaging the community and raising awareness about the most obvious signs of child abuse as well as empowering people with action steps to make a difference." "The earlier abused children get help, the greater chance they have to heal from their abuse and not perpetuate the cycle."

Family Resource Center provides child welfare and advocacy services to over 1,000 children annually in Miami-Dade. Approximately two-thirds of the children will be reunified with their parent(s), while one-third will become free for adoption. Family Resource Center works to

respectfully treat, rehabilitate, and mentor troubled families through comprehensive, responsive care. Its goal is to keep families together, where appropriate, and strengthen loving ties to the family and the community. Through the provision of evidence-based, dignified, and confidential services, Family Resource Center works to break the cycle of child abuse and neglect.

If you would like to learn more about child abuse and how to be part of the solution to end this injustice, or if you would like to schedule an interview with Dr. Wunderman of Family Resource Center, the leading child welfare charity in South Florida, please contact Amber Haeckel at 917-805-0471.

About Family Resource Center

Family Resource Center of South Florida, Inc., a non-profit organization, was founded in 1978 by a group of concerned community leaders. FRC's mission is the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect by strengthening families. The agency provides integrated care for children in the foster care system, parent education classes, mental health services, substance abuse counseling, adoptions, and aid in the licensing and oversight of foster homes.

FRC has been recognized by *Florida Trend* magazine as one of the top 100 BEST PLACES TO WORK in the state in both 2010 and 2011. Business Leader Magazine also recognized the agency as one of the Top 20 Small Businesses in South Florida for both 2010 and 2011.

About the Executive Director, Dr. Oren Wunderman

Oren Wunderman, Ph.D., has worked in non-profit child welfare agencies or mental health centers for most of the last thirty years. He is licensed as a Psychologist, Marriage and Family Therapist, and Mental Health Counselor. He earned his Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees from the University of Miami. He has taken coursework in non-profit management from the Harvard University School of Business and the Florida International University School of Business. For the past 15 years, he has been a yearly guest lecturer in the subjects of Child Abuse and Forensic Psychology at the University of Miami, Departments of Counseling and Clinical Psychology, Miami Children's Hospital and several local Community Mental Health Centers.

Dr. Wunderman has been with FRC for the past 15 years, 10 of which he has served as the Executive Director. During his tenure, Dr. Wunderman has enabled FRC to triple in size while expanding the complexity and scope of services. He extols to the staff the values of Transformational Leadership, whose cornerstone beliefs are: (1) Treat the clients respectfully, always caring for them as though they were loved members of your family, and (2) Always preserve a fundamental humility and awe about the vital services provided to troubled clients.

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