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New Jersey Launches New Campaign to Support Foster Care and Prevent Child Abuse
Everyone in the state can find a way they can help with Raise Me Up

CAMDEN – The New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Casey Family Programs today launched a new campaign – Raise Me Up – aimed at inspiring people to support children in foster care to help prevent child abuse and neglect in communities throughout the state. Raise Me Up campaign is an initiative of Casey Family Programs, the largest national foundation with a sole mission to advocate for children in foster care.

“I am proud of the real progress New Jersey has made on behalf of children and families throughout the State,” said Governor Jon S. Corzine. “More children have been joined with their forever families, more children are being served close to their own homes and communities, and more families are being supported to prevent child abuse and neglect from ever occurring. The Raise Me Up campaign will help us continue to build on these successes to create a stronger future for children in need by engaging and strengthening our communities in new and innovative ways.”

The Raise Me Up campaign message is simple: ‘You don't have to raise a foster child to ‘raise them up.’ You just have to raise your hand and say you'll help.’

“All of us have a role to play in raising up the nearly 500,000 children in foster care across our nation,” said Cari DeSantis, executive vice president of Casey Family Programs. “Raise Me Up is more than an awareness campaign, it is a call to action on behalf of children right here in New Jersey who just need the helping hands of caring adults and a committed community to reach their full potential.”

“We are so grateful that Casey Family Programs wanted to bring this inspiring campaign to our state,” DCF Commissioner Kimberly Ricketts said. “We truly believe there is something for everyone on the Raise Me Up Web site – no matter how much time you have or where you are, you can make a difference.”

DCF, with financial support from Casey Family Programs, has launched the Raise Me Up media campaign using powerful television, radio and transit advertisements that highlight the problems that can often affect children in foster care – such as mental illness, homelessness and prison – if they are unable to successfully reunify with their families, find another safe, loving and permanent family, or obtain the support they need to strive as independent young adults.

Raise Me Up invites the public to get involved by simply visiting the Raise Me Up Web site – www.RaiseMeUp.org – by clicking on New Jersey, interested people will be linked

with a variety of options on how to help foster children and prevent child abuse and neglect in their own communities.

New Jersey's Raise Me Up campaign benefits programs and services include:

- Recruitment of foster and adoptive families, especially families for teens, sibling groups and medically-fragile youth.
- Support for adolescents transitioning from care by donating to the NJ Foster Scholars Program to fund their college education and career development and volunteering with the Transitions for Youth Program.
- Community involvement in the state's 37 local Family Success Centers, which support families in need of services and support.
- Finding new mentors and volunteers for local community Boys and Girls Clubs.
- Donations to benefit and support recently reunified families around the holidays.
- Support for the state's Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA).
- Raising community awareness of supports for youth in need, including the 24-hour 2NDFLOOR youth helpline.
- Spreading the word about New Jersey's child safety campaigns to prevent injury or harm to children and infants.

New Jersey's primary partners who are offering volunteer opportunities through their organizations are: Boys and Girls Clubs in New Jersey, CASA of New Jersey, 180 Turning Lives Around, Foster and Adoptive Family Service (FAFS), all 37 local Family Success Center in New Jersey, and Transitions for Youth – Institute for Families in the Rutgers' School of Social Work.

New Jersey also identified several sponsoring and supporting organizations that have committed to support Raise Me Up by helping spread the message or financially contributing to a participating program. These supporters include Medco, Verizon Communications, Atlantic City Electric, PSEG, the New Jersey Coalition of Automotive Retailers, South Jersey Industries, Inc., Wachovia, and the Girl Scouts of New Jersey.

Casey Family Programs selected New Jersey for a national launch, making New Jersey the second launch of Raise Me Up – which had only previously been piloted in Austin, Texas – because of the tremendous work already underway at DCF to improve the state's child welfare system. Since 2006 DCF has:

- Achieved significant progress with record numbers of adoptions – over 4,200 former foster children adopted between 2006 and 2008
- Recruited and licensed over 5,200 new foster and adoptive families – yielding total net gain of more than 1,800 stable, safe and loving homes
- Reduced the number of children in out-of-home placement by 25 percent, from 11,380 children in June, 2006 to 8,603 children in June, 2009.
- Reduced the number of children sent out-of-state for specialized behavioral health services from over 300 in March 2006 to only 56 children in September 2009.

- Created unprecedented child abuse and family support services including the creation a statewide network of Family Success Centers, a new home-visitation program for new mothers, and a pilot Differential Response Initiative in six counties

To become a Raise Me Up sponsor or supporter, please call DCF Communications at 609-292-0422.