



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, April 12, 2017

Contact: mediainquiry@acs.nyc.gov, (212) 341-0999

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDRENS SERVICES, JCCA, ECPAT USA, CAUSE VISION ANNOUNCE EXPANDED EFFORTS TOWARDS COMBATting CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IN NEW YORK CITY

ACS, ECPAT-USA, Cause Vision are partnering to produce and distribute “Where Is Dylan?” a comic book about youth sex trafficking

ACS expands anti-sex-trafficking programming through Safe Harbour state funding

New York, NY – The NYC Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) Senior Advisor for Investigations Susan Morley was today joined by JCCA (formerly known as Jewish Child Care Association) CEO Ronald E. Richter, ECPAT-USA Executive Director Carol Smolenski, and Cause Vision founder Natsuko Utsumi to announce expanded efforts to combat child sex trafficking throughout New York City.

ACS, JCCA, ECPAT-USA and Cause Vision will partner on distributing ‘*Where Is Dylan?*’ a comic book to help educate youth about human trafficking and empower them to protect themselves. The partners are working together to raise community awareness about this sensitive issue, continue promoting supportive programming for those escaping sexual exploitation, and encourage young people to get involved in combatting sex trafficking.

“Raising awareness among youth, parents and professionals is key to combatting child sex trafficking. People must become aware that it is happening right here in New York City, and our kids need to be educated to protect themselves,” said **ACS Senior Advisor for Investigations Susan Morley**. We still have a lot of work to do, but we’ve come a long way from the era when sexually-exploited youth were criminalized, to programs and supportive services designed to give survivors a permanent way out. Today, ACS continues to build on its efforts to serve youth and prevent trafficking with innovative partnerships like the ‘Where Is Dylan?’ comic book that helps us share the message that there is no shame in asking for help.”

“JCCA is entrusted by ACS with caring for the second most teenagers among the fostering agencies in NYC. Our extensive experience working with young people who have been commercially sexually exploited confirms that they are especially vulnerable to the sinister



manipulation used by predators. This comic book offers an important tool to add to our arsenal,” said **JCCA CEO Ronald E. Richter**.

“ECPAT-USA's entire mission for the last 25 years has been aimed at protecting children from sexual exploitation,” said **ECPAT-USA Executive Director Carol Smolenski**. “We know we can't do it alone. We value our partnerships with ACS, Cause Vision, JCCA and so many other organizations because working together we have already made strides to create a world in which no child is bought or sold for sex.”

“Cause Vision’s approach for fights against human trafficking is prevention by educating vulnerable population about human trafficking. We use manga comic, that is a popular medium, to ensure children and teenagers to read through the stories, and learn embedded messages,” said **Cause Vision’s founder Natsuko Utsumi**. We are very pleased that our book ‘Where Is Dylan’ will be disseminated to the children of New York City thanks to the partnerships with ACS and ECPAT-USA.”

Where Is Dylan? was developed and created by Cause Vision with ECPAT-USA as part of its comic book series on human trafficking. ACS purchased the comic book using funds from the Safe Harbour grant and will distribute it, along with guidelines for its use created in collaboration with ACS, throughout our partnering foster care networks. ECPAT-USA will also ensure that the comic book gets into the hands of at-risk youth through its Youth Against Child Trafficking Program.

Sexual exploitation of children can happen anywhere in the world, and continues to be an issue within New York City. While some believe that human trafficking only happens in other countries, or that it involves children being snatched off the streets, this is not always the case. When a young person self-reports or is identified as sexually exploited, it is important that they are treated as victims of abuse and not viewed as criminals.

The Administration for Children’s Services is diligently working to shift that perception adding special training on Human Trafficking to the curriculum for incoming Child Protective Specialist (CPS) workers. Anyone doing frontline work with ACS must be able to identify the signs of a sex-trafficking victim.

In addition, ACS’ Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy provided trafficking trainings for 3,600 social welfare professionals in 2016, and has partnered with faith-based community organizations to implement the “Not On My Watch” campaign citywide.



ACS has also developed a Child Trafficking Mailbox which provides a vehicle for ACS and provider agency staff to send notifications of trafficked children, ask questions, request resources and receive case practice guidance, and to work with other youth-serving agencies and partners to identify and intervene where there is suspected trafficking. Last year, over 170 children were identified, and the agency intervened.

Through the Safe Harbour program, the City of New York has served 2,500 exploited or at risk for exploitation youth in 2016 providing therapy, crisis beds, and transitional living, among other preventive services. The Safe Harbour programs provided services to engage and educate exploited youth and assist with risk reduction through the use of internships, counseling groups, and outreach efforts.





About the New York City Administration for Children's Services:

The Administration for Children's Services (ACS) protects and promotes safety and well-being of New York City's children and families by providing child welfare, juvenile justice, and early care and education services. In child welfare, ACS contracts with private nonprofit organizations to support and stabilize families at risk of a crisis through preventive services, and provides foster care services for children not able to safely remain at home. The recently released ACS' 2016 [Foster Care Blueprint](#) indicates a 25% increase of children achieving permanency through kinship guardianship and a 5% in adoption rates even as the overall number of children in foster care continued to decline, among other significant progress made to improve case practice and outcomes for children and families in the foster care system. In juvenile justice, ACS manages and funds services including detention and placement, intensive community-based alternatives for youth, and support services for families. In early care and education, ACS coordinates and funds programs and vouchers for close to 100,000 children eligible for subsidized care.

For more information about NYC ACS, please visit www.nyc.gov/acs

About JCCA:

JCCA's mission is to provide the highest quality child welfare and mental health services to New York's neediest and most vulnerable children and families to ensure that their safety, permanency and well-being lead to a life of stability and promise. We are guided by the Jewish mandate of tikkun olam—the responsibility of every person to make the world a better place. Our highly trained, dedicated staff works in partnership with families to build on their strengths, preserve the family when possible, and help create new families when necessary, so that all children may thrive through experiencing the benefits of a healthy family and belonging to a community of support.

For more information about JCCA, please visit www.jccany.org

About ECPAT-USA:

For more than two decades ECPAT-USA has been at the forefront of the fight to end the commercial sexual exploitation of children. We go to the source of the problem by fighting for new and improved laws, encouraging the private sector to do its part, and raising awareness among those who may be in a position to identify a child who is being commercially sexually exploited.

For more information about ECPAT-USA, please visit www.ecpatusa.org



About Cause Vision:

CAUSE VISION produces media and materials to inform and educate communities on issues directly relevant to their people; these materials are conceived and produced to be disseminated among communities most in need of these welfare-enhancing resources. Our mission to educate people about such issues is rooted in our desire to promote social and behavioral change that ultimately leads to improving populations' well-being. Such materials are to be distributed through local organizations that reach out to those communities and educate them.

For more information about Cause Vision, please visit www.causevision.org

#####