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Contact: Heather Tarczan

Heather.Tarczan@illinois.gov

312-590-0875

Deputy Gov. Grace Hou joins Illinois DCFS Acting Director Heidi E. Mueller & Midwest Asian Health Association to Open First Asian American Family Advocacy Center in Illinois

Center will provide culturally appropriate services to Asian American families

CHICAGO – Deputy Governor Grace Hou joined Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Acting Director Heidi E. Mueller, the Midwest Asian Health Association (MAHA), elected officials, and community partners today to announce the official opening of the first Asian American Family Advocacy Center in Illinois.

“The Pritzker Administration is helping Asian American families in underserved communities access the services they need – in the language they need them,” **said Deputy Governor Grace Hou.** “Thanks to the DCFS grant awarded to MAHA, we’re celebrating the grand opening of a first-of-its kind, culturally relevant center that will strengthen families and support youth.”

Family Advocacy Centers (FACs) are a statewide network of unique community-based providers that tailor their programming to the individual needs of the communities they serve. Thanks to a \$287,000 grant from DCFS, the Midwest Asian Health Association, located 218 W. 26th St. in Chicago, will be able to expand its umbrella of community services to support the Department’s goal of preserving and reuniting families. Those services include case management and advocacy, parenting support groups, health insurance enrollment assistance, monthly health screenings, immunizations, disease prevention education, a food pantry, and LIHEAP services to families served by DCFS and older youth who have aged out of the Department’s care. All services will be available in English, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Spanish.

“Illinois DCFS is committed to increasing services to traditionally underserved populations –as well as ensuring that they are offered to families in a culturally-sensitive manner and in their preferred language,” **said Illinois DCFS Acting Director Heidi E. Mueller.** “The Midwest Asian Health Association is a trusted presence in the community. When our young people and families are here, they know they will receive the respect and care they deserve, which is how we want everyone partaking in our services to feel. I am thrilled to have them as a partner so the young people and families we serve receive the support they need to thrive.”

"With a specific focus on creating strong social and personal foundations for families, MAHA aims to improve community health outcomes and wellbeing through the Family Advocacy Center," said **Midwest Asian Health Association Executive Director Dr. Hong Liu**. "We look forward to working with the Department of Children and Family services (DCFS) and community partners to meet the high needs of our communities."

There are 38 FACs and 9 satellite offices across the state operated by 28 service providers. FACs serve as a one-stop shop for information, connections, and support that strengthen families and help them maintain stability in their community. They accept referrals from DCFS, child welfare contributing agencies and community stakeholders.

To access a list of FACs by zip code or your location, visit the Service Provider IDentification and Exploration Resource (SPIDER) website at <https://spider.dcf.illinois.gov/>.

About the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Founded in 1964, DCFS is responsible for protecting children from abuse or neglect by responding to reports received by the Child Abuse Hotline at childabuse.illinois.gov (non-emergency situations) or 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873). With the goal of keeping children safe, DCFS strengthens and supports families with a wide range of services. When keeping a child safe means removing them from the home, DCFS makes every effort to reunite them with their family. When the best interest of the child makes this impossible, DCFS is committed to pursuing guardianship or adoption by loving families to provide children with a safe and permanent home. DCFS is also responsible for licensing and monitoring of all Illinois child welfare agencies.

The Midwest Asian Health Association (MAHA) is a non-profit, 501 ©3 organization established in 2003 with a mission to reduce health disparities for medically underserved, low-income populations in the Midwest through providing culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate services, which include community outreach education, screening and immunization, linkage to care, mental health services and research and policy advocacy. To serve its mission, MAHA collaborates with community-based organizations, health care providers, academic institutions, public health departments and volunteers.

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