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STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Silence, lies, and the shameful legacy of the Horace Mann School

CHICAGO, IL, June 11, 2012 – Penn State University. Syracuse University. The Boston Red Sox. Miramonte Elementary School. And now the Horace Mann School. It is becoming a disturbing, and all too regular, storyline. We are learning that child sexual abuse occurs in environments that were previously considered places where children could thrive. Choosing to remain silent, the institutions involved appear confused about their responsibility to children and the role they play in healthy child development. Years, sometimes, decades later the consequences of these actions, or lack of action, emerge, as these children, now adults, continue to deal with the confusion about what happened to them and why.

Amos Kamil writes in his June 10th The New York Times Magazine article “Great Is The Truth, And It Prevails,” about sexual abuse in the 1970’s at the Horace Mann School (nytimes.com/2012/06/10/magazine/the-horace-mann-schools-secret-history-of-sexual-abuse.html?_r=1&_r), that it was “a different era in terms of public awareness about sexual predators.” Maybe it was, but if we are in a different era now, why does the story remain the same? And more importantly, how do we take that story and turn it into a teachable moment?

“I call on institutions that deal with children everywhere to take a look at their present, their past, and their future behaviors in terms of what kind of organization they want to be, and what kind of country they want to live in,” said James M. Hmurovich, President & CEO, Prevent Child Abuse America. “There are clear choices to make here, do we care more about the healthy development of children, all children, or silence, profits, and preserving reputations? We think it’s time for institutions to say enough, we are in this together, and just as schools have lesson plans and sports teams have game plans, we can develop sexual abuse prevention plans that would be comprised of strategies such as following:

- Educating all adults and children about healthy sexuality;
- Passing, and enforcing, policies that minimize one-on-one contact between children and adults;
- And when needed, reporting perpetrators to the proper authorities even when it comes at the expense of institution’s public image.

It’s simple really, there is right and there is wrong, there’s no gray area here.”



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ABOUT PREVENT CHILD ABUSE AMERICA

Prevent Child Abuse America, founded in 1972, works to ensure the healthy development of children nationwide while recognizing that child development is a building block for community development and economic development. We believe that communities across the country are doing innovative things with great results to prevent abuse and neglect from ever occurring, and what we need to do as a nation is commit to bringing this kind of ingenuity to communities everywhere. Based in Chicago, Prevent Child Abuse America has chapters in 49 states and over 400 Healthy Families America, home visitation sites in 37 states, the Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and Canada. For more information, please visit preventchildabuse.org and healthyfamiliesamerica.org.