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## Child Abuse Prevention Services Legislative Breakfast Focused on the Link Between the Rise In Child Abuse Cases on Long Island and the Recession

ROSLYN, NY: Child Abuse Prevention Services (CAPS), Long Island's leading resource on the prevention of child abuse and neglect, held its 8<sup>th</sup> annual Legislative Breakfast: *Keeping Kids Safe From Abuse in Tough Economic Times* on Friday, March 27 in Melville. The discussion focused on how the downturned economy is affecting our children and families, if our children are being protected, and solutions to prevent child abuse. Speakers included Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy, Assistant Professor Suffolk County Community College and former Child Protective Services Director for Suffolk County Richard Morse, MSW, CAPS Executive Director Alane Fagin, MS, and Director of Programs and Volunteer Services Patricia Cathers, LMSW.

"Child welfare officials have all noted an increase in reports of child abuse and neglect across the country. So many have come to the same conclusion—that the economy has in fact taken its toll on our children and families," said Alane Fagin. On Long Island, almost 16,000 reports of child abuse and neglect were investigated in 2008, with Nassau and Suffolk counties reporting an increase of 9% and 8% respectively. "This period in time may very well be our Perfect Storm... a struggling economy, an increase in stress, and decrease in funding of programs that support our children and families... all leading to increased reporting of child abuse and neglect."

Unemployment, lack of resources and needed services, losing homes, and poverty are known risk factors for child abuse and neglect. "When one parent loses a job and the ability to meet financial obligations... it can be an experience that can rattle families. Parents no longer work as a team and instead take out their disappointments and anger on each other and their children," said Richard Morse.

Congresswoman McCarthy said "when we think of families already living on the edge, we know what we have to do... prevention, prevention, prevention. The sooner we can reach younger kids, single mothers and parents, the better chance we have to save a child—from running away, mental illness, and growing to become child abusers themselves to their children."

"The challenge we face is sustaining the effort and resources required to support children and families right now, and also to invest in prevention—because it is only by doing both that we can diminish the number of children being harmed," said Patti Cathers. "CAPS is in a unique position to help foster a collaborative approach in preventing child abuse and neglect."

CAPS provides essential child abuse prevention and child safety education for school-age children. Its prevention-through-education workshops, for grades K-12, are conducted in small classroom settings and come at no cost to Long Island schools. They empower children to take action and teach strategies to prevent and protect themselves from child abuse and neglect, bullies and peer harassment, cyber-bullies and other Internet threats, sexual harassment and date rape. CAPS has also developed prevention workshops and seminars for educators, para-professionals, parents and community members.

Founded in 1982, Child Abuse Prevention Services (CAPS) is Long Island's leading non-profit resource on the prevention of child abuse, peer harassment and neglect. For information on how to make a donation, schedule a class or volunteer, call 516-621-0552 or email [speaktocaps@optonline.net](mailto:speaktocaps@optonline.net)

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*Working Together to Keep Every Child Safe From Harm.™*  
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