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**ADMH AND PARTNERS TO CELEBRATE
CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK MAY 3-9, 2015**

MONTGOMERY – Governor Bentley proclaimed May 3-9, 2015 as Children's Mental Health Awareness Week in Alabama, coinciding with both National Children's Mental Health Awareness Week and National Mental Health Month, observed annually in May. The National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health sponsors Children's Mental Health Awareness Week each year in an effort to increase public awareness of the triumphs and challenges in children's mental health and to emphasize the importance of family and youth involvement in the children's mental health movement.

In recognition of this observance, the Alabama Department of Mental Health, Alabama Family Ties and Alabama Youth M.O.V.E. are partnering to raise public awareness and promote a greater understanding of mental health disorders that affect thousands of Alabama children each year. Community mental health providers have been encouraged to sponsor an event to commemorate the week as they have done in previous years. Events such as health fairs at local high schools, direct participation with child abuse awareness events with a focus on mental health issues, poster contests, purchasing and encouraging the wear of green ribbons, and distribution of promotional items from the National Federation of Families to parents at the community's monthly support meetings are examples of past involvement.

Alabama Family Ties has secured art work from a youth consumer during their training and awareness events over the last year that is displayed on a poster in recognition of the observance. These posters are distributed statewide to be displayed throughout the week.

Alabama Youth M.O.V.E. is a youth-led organization devoted to improving services and systems that support positive youth growth and development through uniting the voices of individuals who have been served by various systems including mental health, juvenile justice and education. Alabama Youth M.O.V.E. and Alabama Family Ties work together to promote Children's Mental Health Awareness Week statewide each year through their "Wear a Green Ribbon for Children's Mental Health" campaign. More information about AYM can be found on the Alabama Family Ties website, and on AYM's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/AlabamaYouthMOVE>.

The latest national data shows that bipolar disorder, major depression, attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and various severe anxiety disorders affect one in five children each year. In Alabama, approximately 27,000 children receive public mental health treatment every year.

"Many people in our communities are directly affected by mental illnesses," said Dr. Beverly Bell-Shambley, associate commissioner of ADMH's Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. "The good news is treatment works and recovery is possible, but only if people can get access to that treatment. Less than one-third of adults and less than one-half of children with a diagnosed illness

receive treatment. The U.S. Surgeon General has reported that stigma is a major barrier to people seeking help when they need it,” Bell-Shambley said. “That’s why Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week is so important. We want people to learn the facts and end myths to help break the stigma and silence that too often surround the topic. The more people know, the better they can help themselves or help their loved ones get the help and support they need. By changing attitudes about mental illness, we can change lives.”

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RESOURCES

To learn more about Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week activities going on throughout the state, as well as children’s mental health services in Alabama, contact the Alabama Department of Mental Health at 334-242-3200 or visit www.mh.alabama.gov.

For more information about Alabama Family Ties, visit their Web site at <http://www.alfamilyties.org/advocacy.html>.

More information about National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week can be found at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) website at <http://www.samhsa.gov/children> and the National Federation of Families website at <https://www.ffcmh.org/awarenessweek>