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Minnesota to Sponsor First Event of Its Kind in the Nation: The Minnesota Summit To Prevent Sexual Violence

In a remarkable collaboration, five state departments are joining with the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA) to sponsor The Minnesota Summit To Prevent Sexual Violence on December 3 & 4 in St. Paul. For the first time, a public health prevention model will be applied to sexual violence, a problem that costs Minnesota \$8 billion annually and afflicts more than 61,000 Minnesotans of all ages every year. According to the 2009 Violence Data Brief from MDH, one in four females and one in seven males will likely be a victim of attempted or completed sexual assault by age 18.

The Minnesota Summit will gather state leaders to design actions in support of Minnesota's Sexual Violence Prevention Plan. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) developed the plan with support from the Centers for Disease Control. According to Patty Wetterling, Sexual Violence Prevention Director for MDH, "The time is now. We know we cannot treat, prosecute, or educate our way out of this problem. We have to put energy and resources into stopping violence based on sex before it starts."

The Minnesota Summit is the first event of its kind in the nation. It has attracted national attention as a model for future state prevention summits and precedes the National Summit to be held in June 2010 in Washington, D.C. Leaders from business, government, media, faith, and philanthropy, along with issue experts, will identify actions in support of the State's prevention plan. Committed participants include Comcast, Community Shares MN, HealthPartners, Microsoft, Safe Environments: Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, The Search Institute, Target, and United Way.

Donna Dunn, executive director of MNCASA, cites the state statistics as a compelling force behind The Minnesota Summit and the statewide focus on prevention. "Minnesota has a well-deserved reputation for the delivery and coordination of victim services. But the numbers continue to take a toll on our citizens. We can no longer call sexual violence an epidemic. Sexual violence is endemic. This violence and its losses have become 'normal' in our society. The Minnesota Summit will bring 200 of our best minds together to change that norm."

Jeff Horwich from Minnesota Public Radio's "In the Loop" will emcee The Minnesota Summit, which will use IML audience-response technology to facilitate roundtable discussions and action planning. Summit speakers include internationally regarded forensic pediatrician and child development expert Dr. Sharon Cooper, and Eric Janus, President and Dean of William Mitchell College of Law and author of *Failure to Protect*, in which he questions whether public policy has been effective in preventing sexual violence.

The Minnesota Summit is co-sponsored by the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault and the Minnesota Department of Health, along with the Departments of Corrections, Education, Human Services, and Public Safety, as well as the Mayo Clinic's Child and Family Advocacy Program. Interviews are available with key organizers and participants. For more information on The Minnesota Summit, please go to www.theminnesotasummit.com