May 18, 2011

Chairman Tom Harkin
Ranking Member Richard Shelby
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Senate Dirksen 131
Washington, DC  20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Shelby:

The undersigned organizations are pleased to write in full support of the continuation of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) and urge you to fund the NCTSN at the full 2011 funding level of $40.8 million in FY 2012, and underscore the original intent of this congressionally-launched initiative. Over the last eleven years, this outstanding and highly successful initiative has improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of children and families who have experienced trauma and is a critically important national resource for all child-serving systems.

Child traumatic stress is a serious public health problem that affects millions of children and costs our country billions of dollars each year. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) administered NCTSN was established by the U.S. Congress in 2000 to address the issue of child trauma by establishing a collaborative network of over 130 university, hospital, and diverse community-based organizations, with thousands of national and local partners, whose mission is to raise the standard of care and improve access to services for traumatized children, their families, and communities throughout the United States. Over the last decade, the dedicated professionals working as part of the NCTSN have brought about widespread and lasting improvement in the lives of traumatized children and their families in this country. Scientific information is getting to front-line providers faster, evidence-based resources, treatment, and trainings are being disseminated, and children are getting better. This initiative is working.

Unfortunately, the President’s FY 2012 budget proposes cutting this program by almost 75%, and ending its congressionally mandated mission to serve as a national resource. As State and federal budget cuts continue to limit available local community mental health and child services, it is essential to continue our investment in this national program that is providing high quality trauma-informed services, treatment, and training to states and communities all across the nation.

For FY 2012, we urge you to retain the funding for the NCTSN at the FY 2011 level of $40.8 million, and to establish in statute that the NCTSN should continue with its original mission as envisioned by Congress, one that supports collaboration of researchers and providers to expedite science to service, and to deliver the highest quality care promptly to children and families who experience traumatic events. This national and local resource is critically needed at this time, and we strongly urge you to continue to provide full support to this initiative in the coming years.

Our organizations are grateful to you and your colleagues for your strong bipartisan commitment to the NCTSN over the past 11 years. You and your staff have worked tirelessly to provide support for this important program that is transforming the lives of children and families across the country. We welcome the opportunity to work with you to ensure that this vital program continues.
Sincerely,

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association of Practicing Psychiatrists
American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
American Psychological Association
Anxiety Disorders Association of America
Association for the Advancement of Psychology
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Child Welfare League of America
Clinical Social Work Association
Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Institutes
Mental Health America
National Association for Children’s Behavioral Health
National Association of Mental Health Planning & Advisory Councils
National Child Abuse Coalition
The National Crittenton Foundation
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
The North American Resource Center for Child Welfare
School Social Work Association of America
Society of Professors of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry