



City of Philadelphia

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA OPENS PHILADELPHIA SAFETY COLLABORATIVE

Philadelphia, August 26, 2013 – Mayor Michael A. Nutter, City officials and partner organizations officially opened the Philadelphia Safety Collaborative, the newly co-located site for members of the Philadelphia Police Department (PPD) Special Victims Unit (SVU), Department of Human Services (DHS) Sexual Abuse Investigation Unit, Philadelphia Children’s Alliance and staff from the District Attorney’s Office.

The Collaborative integrates and brings under one roof the services of the partner agencies, thereby streamlining the investigative process for incidents of sexual abuse. Prior to the opening of this facility, children and their families were required to visit multiple locations throughout the city. The Collaborative team approach now reduces the number of staff-victim interactions by coordinating the efforts of the tenant activities. This results in a reduced level of trauma for those serviced by the new facility.

“The Philadelphia Safety Collaborative has been a decades-long hope for our city. We have worked in conjunction with a number of critical partners to create this facility that will reduce the adverse impact on victims and their families,” said Mayor Nutter. “I am incredibly proud of the commitment that the Philadelphia Safety Collaborative represents with respect to providing for the well-being and safety of children who have suffered sexual abuse and promoting the interest of justice. It is another example of how the City is working to coordinate crime-response strategies more effectively for our citizens.”

Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey said, “Our Special Victims Unit encounters very sensitive issues, and so children need to be treated with compassion and humanity. The new site allows our investigators, DHS and our advocate partners to be available at one location, providing the best services for these victims, especially during such traumatic experiences. This is collaboration for justice, for service and most importantly for these children.”

DHS Commissioner Anne Marie Ambrose added, “As child welfare professionals, one of our greatest concerns is that our efforts to investigate abuse do not further traumatize its victims. The thoughtful design of the Philadelphia Safety Collaborative will help lessen the trauma of the investigative process by offering a comfortable, child-friendly place for children to receive services and by allowing our partner agencies



to effectively coordinate their efforts in a single location.”

Located at 300 E. Hunting Park Avenue, the 42,000-square-foot facility, renovated by Ironstone Partners, LLC, will feature two entrances for use by PPD SVU, as well as a shared entrance for DHS and the Philadelphia Children’s Alliance. In addition, it includes an internal meditation garden and a parking lot for about 250 vehicles, interview rooms, on-site medical exams and psychological services. Offices are also provided for the Philadelphia Sexual Assault Response Center (PSARC), which operates under the Drexel School of Emergency Medicine. PSARC provides medical services that assist in the collection of evidence for cases involving adult victims (16 years or older) of sexual violence.

“Predators who sexually abuse children survive by creating a culture of silence,” said First Assistant District Attorney Edward McCann. “It is an environment where children are too afraid, ashamed and confused to speak up. This new center will help change that environment. By placing all of these agencies under one roof we are sending a simple message to all sexually abused children in Philadelphia – we’ve got your back.”

The Philadelphia Safety Collaborative will accommodate a staff of approximately 120 full and part-time personnel from social services, the health/medical community, the Police Department and child advocates. These partner activities have the capability to respond in an expedited manner to provide the needed services.

“This new facility and co-located program demonstrates that the City of Philadelphia is prioritizing its children by promising the best response to allegations of abuse,” said Christine Kirchner, Executive Director of the Philadelphia Children’s Alliance. “Since 1989, we have been collaborating on child sexual abuse investigations with our partner agencies, the Special Victims Unit, DHS and the DA’s office, but now that we are all under one roof, we can enhance and expand our team approach. We have the ability to serve the full scope of children who need us with a timely response in a child-friendly facility with on-site medical and mental health services.”

Bill No. 120084, the SVU/DHS Co-Location Bill, introduced by Councilwoman Maria Quiñones-Sánchez, was signed by Mayor Nutter on April 10, 2012. The project broke ground on August 3, 2012. During construction, approximately 85 full and part time jobs were created.

“I am proud to host this unique collaboration that will protect our most vulnerable citizens, our children and their families. The Public Safety Collaborative will put the needs of these victims first and work together to protect and serve children,” said Councilwoman Maria Quiñones- Sánchez.

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Philadelphia Children’s Alliance Imagine a safe haven, where every child affected by the trauma of sexual abuse in Philadelphia is able to begin the healing process; a place where experts in the fields of social work, law enforcement, child protective services, medicine and prosecution collaborate to achieve justice for each child; a place that works to ensure that justice is carried out; that place is the Philadelphia Children’s Alliance (PCA). There are 1,600 reports of child sexual abuse each year in Philadelphia, PCA works to bring healing and justice to every child.