

Futures Without Violence and the Department of Justice Launch Public Awareness Campaign on Children's Exposure to Violence

WASHINGTON – Today, Futures Without Violence, in partnership with the Department of Justice, announced the launch of the first national campaign that will raise awareness, teach skills, and inspire public action to address children's exposure to violence and childhood trauma. The multi-year "*Changing Minds*" campaign will motivate teachers, coaches, counselors, health professionals, law enforcement officers, and others who regularly interact with children to take meaningful action in supporting children who may be affected.

"Violence is far too prominent in our children's lives, but it does not have to define their futures," said former Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr. "We can curb the effects of trauma and restore our young people to wholeness and health, giving them the chance they all deserve to pursue their dreams."

The U.S. Department of Justice, Futures Without Violence, and the Ad Council have released the national education campaign, created pro bono by the advertising agency Wunderman, that features two original videos exploring the personal stories of adults who were exposed as children to violence in their homes and neighborhoods. They have also produced an informational video that explores the impact of violence on the brain development of children.

"The Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence called for a national campaign to alert the public about the extent of the problem and its adverse impact on children," said Administrator Robert L. Listenbee, of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. "*Changing Minds* will open the door to fundamental changes in this country regarding children's exposure to violence and trauma and what caring adults can do to help children overcome their trauma and heal."

"With the tragic violence that has taken place this year in communities nationwide, children today can be exposed to violence throughout their daily lives," said Lisa Sherman, president and CEO of the Ad Council. "We're proud to continue our long-term partnerships with the Department of Justice and Futures Without Violence for this critical effort that will benefit children throughout the country, and we are thankful to Wunderman for donating their talent to develop the poignant and creative videos."

Trevor Sloan, Vice President and Creative Director at Wunderman DC, noted that "'*Changing Minds*' is unique in that the campaign focuses on not just the physical effects that witnessing violence has on children's brains but also on the small gestures we can make to help them heal. We jumped at the opportunity to help educate and inspire adults around this cause and, ultimately, give these kids a better chance at healing so they can look forward to happier lives."

The U.S. Department of Justice and Futures Without Violence, a national health and social justice nonprofit organization working to end violence against women and children, have been partners ever since the Department released the compelling findings of the first National Survey

of Children's Exposure to Violence in 2009. In 2010, the Department launched the national Defending Childhood initiative, created to prevent children's exposure to violence as victims and witnesses, mitigate its impact, and develop knowledge about and increase awareness of this issue.

Exposure to violence during childhood is significantly correlated with adverse health, educational, and social outcomes later in life such as mental illness, poverty, and involvement in the justice system. New and evolving brain science reveals that a child's positive and negative experiences can literally shape, and reshape, the brain: therefore one of the most significant predictors of a child's resiliency in the face of trauma is consistent interaction with a caring and supportive adult.

"The *Changing Minds* campaign has an empowering message," said Esta Soler, Founder and President of Futures Without Violence. "We want to reach millions of caring adults with the good news that fostering stable, supportive relationships can help children who have been exposed to violence and trauma."

The *Changing Minds* campaign has produced a toolkit with video, digital and print content intended to reach adults who interact with children in grades K-12, including teachers, coaches, health professionals, law enforcement officers, social workers and guidance counselors. A new campaign website, ChangingMindsNOW.org, provides resources and tips on how to support children who have been affected by violence.