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New Hanover County Hosts Action Planning Workshop Focused on Needs of Children in Disasters

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW HANOVER COUNTY, NC (April 4, 2019) –

As New Hanover County continues its recovery from Hurricane Florence, a team of disaster planning experts is working to create a child-focused plan aimed at protecting the community's most vulnerable citizens when the next disaster strikes.

County officials gathered Thursday with community partners and with the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University's Earth Institute to develop strategies aimed that will help increase the resilience of children who experience disasters in the county. The action-planning workshop brought together more than 30 representatives from over 20 organizations who serve more than 42,000 children in the region.

The workshop also showcased data on the needs of children in the aftermath of Hurricane Florence, as well as broader resilience to future disasters. Participants identified areas to further develop institutional and community-wide preparedness plans and strengthened connections across various sectors that contribute to the well-being of children in the community.

"Children are the bellwether of the recovery process, and it's important that we come together as a community to help our children now and for the future," said New Hanover County Chief Strategy Officer and Recovery Manager Beth Schrader. "This project supports New Hanover County's strategic focus of creating a more resilient community, by engaging in a holistic approach to recovery with children at the heart."

This important child-serving institution-focused workshop is being conducted as part of the second phase of the Resilient Children/Resilient Communities (RCRC) Initiative. The RCRC Initiative is a national project led by the National Center for Disaster Preparedness and funded by a grant from global healthcare company GSK.

The Initiative has worked with communities in Arkansas and New York for the last three years and most recently, in Puerto Rico, to support the development of local Community Resilience Coalitions (CRCs). These coalitions work to build child-focused community resilience through enhanced emergency and disaster preparedness planning, education, and awareness building. In New Hanover County, this initiative aims to supplement and support the efforts of both the New

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Hanover County Resiliency Task Force as well as the New Hanover County Long-term Recovery Group.

The second phase of this project, started in early 2019, will provide two years of institutional support from NCDP to New Hanover County. Mebane Boyd, the RCRC Initiative's local community champion who also leads the Resiliency Task Force, who's steering committee is closely engaged with this project, said "The work of the Resiliency Task Force to create a more trauma-aware and resiliency-focused community has already been enhanced through our collaboration with the NCDP. We are excited about our continued work together, not only in the context of disaster recovery and preparedness, but also in working to build our community's resiliency skills and protective factors for children who need this from their families and community, even when they are not in a disaster."

"This work will not only benefit New Hanover County, but other communities recovering from disasters across the country", said Jeff Schlegelmilch, deputy director of NCDP, and director of the RCRC Initiative. "This initiative brings together the strength of community partners in New Hanover County, with other partners in North Carolina as well as Arkansas, New York and Puerto Rico, and throughout the country to share best practices, develop new tools and approaches, and to ensure that the trajectory of a child's development is not altered by disasters"

"We are proud to support NCDP and partners in our home state of North Carolina to expand the work of the Resilient Children, Resilient Communities Initiative," said Becki Lynch, Director of US Community Partnerships at GSK. "The community is making important investments to prepare families, and the institutions that they rely on, to keep children safe and help them to bounce back from the impact of disaster."

For more information on the recovery efforts of New Hanover County, see:

<https://hurricanerecovery.nhcgov.com/>

For more information on the RCRC Initiative please see: <https://ncdp.columbia.edu/rcrc>

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About NCDP

[The National Center for Disaster Preparedness at the Earth Institute](#) of Columbia University works to understand and improve the nation's capacity to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. NCDP focuses on the readiness of governmental and non-governmental systems; the complexities of population recovery; the power of community engagement; and the risks of human vulnerability, with a particular focus on children. Learn more about this initiative: <http://ncdp.columbia.edu/rcrc>

About the RCRC Initiative

The Resilient Children Resilient Communities Initiative has worked for three years to design the RCRC Toolbox (<https://rcrctoolbox.org>). As part of the project, NCDP and Save the Children chose two pilot communities to develop, test and fine-tune this new child-focused disaster planning model. The communities are Washington County, Arkansas and Putnam County, New York. In both locations, the project team established "Community Resilience Coalitions," which brought emergency management officials together with child-serving institutions, schools, after school programs, social service providers, health care providers, parents, and dozens of other stakeholders to address gaps in the infrastructure that protects children in the event of a major disaster. The team organized local events to educate policymakers and the public about its work,

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and brought its findings to Washington, D.C., in an effort to influence national policy around disaster planning. The RCRC Initiative is funded by a grant from global healthcare company GSK.

About Resiliency Task Force

The New Hanover County Resiliency Task Force is a collaborative effort of approximately 100 organizations and groups and more than 300 individuals in New Hanover County, North Carolina. The goal of the Task Force is to raise awareness of the amount and impact of trauma in the community, specifically the impact of ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences), and to increase resiliency skills in people of all ages and sectors throughout the community. Towards this end, the group is divided into 6 subcommittees: Healthcare, Data, Ages 0-8, 4th Grade to 12th Grade, First Responders/Justice, and Family/Faith/Community Initiatives. The Duke Endowment provided a planning grant for the group's efforts in the summer of 2018, and efforts were also supported by the NC Department of Public Instruction to bring Community Resiliency Model® (CRM) trainings to the community. Communities in Schools of the Cape Fear, a 501(c)(3) organization, currently serves as the fiscal agent for this initiative in New Hanover County. The Mission of Communities In Schools is to surround its students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.

About New Hanover County

New Hanover County is committed to progressive public policy, superior service, courteous contact, judicious exercise of authority, and sound fiscal management to meet the needs and concerns of our citizens today and tomorrow. The county's focus is to serve the more than 223,000 residents in our community by continually moving forward, being innovative, and making improvements to ensure our community is safe, healthy, and secure. Visit www.NHCgov.com to learn more.

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