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**The Highmark Foundation's Ten-Year Investment in
Bullying Prevention Yields Positive Outcomes**

Camp Hill, Pa., October 27, 2017 – A new report, released today by the Center for Safe Schools, examines the impact of Highmark Foundation funded bullying prevention initiatives. For more than ten years, the Highmark Foundation has worked with community partners to expand and enhance Pennsylvania's bullying prevention programs, creating the largest and most comprehensive effort to be implemented and studied to date. This work is viewed as a national model for creating changes in school culture.

The report reviews the research on bullying prevention and identifies key strategies that reduce and prevent bullying problems among Pennsylvania children. The report also focuses on how to build capacity within the Commonwealth to sustain and deepen evidence-based violence prevention in schools, and contribute to the research base on bullying. Recommendations are provided that outline critical next steps to advance bullying prevention efforts in Pennsylvania and beyond.

Research documents bullying's pervasive negative impact on American youth, including serious health and developmental outcomes. According to the National Education Association, on any given day, nearly 160,000 children in the U.S. miss school due to fear of being bullied. Studies suggest the most effective way to address bullying is through schoolwide efforts that are evidence-based and comprehensively focus on changing the climate of a school.

The Highmark Foundation's notable work in bullying prevention includes adoption of the public health model. Changing societal understanding of the bullying issue and adults' responses to bullying requires a coordinated effort that builds capacity within institutions to support youth and families. To that end, the Highmark Foundation invested in bringing information and resources related to bullying and bullying prevention to communities. These included systems of training and consulting for schools, health care providers and youth serving agencies; as well as resources for families and programs.

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“The Center for Safe Schools is proud of its decade-long partnership with the Highmark Foundation in the development of new and expanded bullying prevention programs, research and resources that have reduced the incidents of bullying, increased awareness and provided training throughout Pennsylvania,” said Shileste Overton Morris, director of Center for Schools and Communities, the agency that manages the Center for Safe Schools.

The Highmark Foundation’s bullying prevention strategy and partnership initiatives have resulted in:

- The first statewide implementation of an evidence-based bullying prevention program, an effort that impacted more than 210,000 students in Pennsylvania and involved 15 percent of its schools.
- Significant reductions in bullying in Pennsylvania’s schools; specifically, students who are bullied decreased by 11-17 percent and students who reported bullying others decreased by 26-35 percent.
- Increased capacity for professionals to lead evidence-based bullying prevention efforts and make informed decisions about issues of peer abuse.
- Parental access to support and tools to address bullying issues, including a toolkit of resources and a bullying helpline.
- Practice-based publications and tools and professional learning opportunities directed at diverse education audiences that reinforce awareness and the integration of best practices in bullying prevention.

“The work we have been able to accomplish in the bullying prevention space over the past decade would not have been possible without the Center for Safe Schools and other outstanding community partners,” said Highmark Foundation President Yvonne Cook. “Through these partnership initiatives, there have been great strides made in bullying prevention in Pennsylvania and across the country. Our efforts have helped thousands of students remain safe at school.”

The report, “A Public Health Approach to Leading Bullying Prevention: The Highmark Foundation’s Impact Since 2006” is available online at www.SafeSchools.info/HMF-10-Year-Report-2017.pdf.

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About the Highmark Foundation

The Highmark Foundation is a private, charitable organization that supports initiatives and programs aimed at improving community health. The Foundation's mission is to improve the health, well-being and quality of life for individuals who reside in the communities served by Highmark Inc., and its subsidiaries and affiliates. We fulfill our mission by awarding high-impact grants to charitable organizations that implement evidence-based programs. Central to the Foundation’s mission is identifying and continuously re-evaluating our region’s prevailing health needs. By doing so, the Foundation remains at the forefront of those needs, well equipped to pinpoint issues that most urgently need support. For more information, visit www.highmarkfoundation.org.

About the Center for Safe Schools

The Center for Safe Schools is a statewide clearinghouse and consulting program for schools, law enforcement, parents and others on school safety and youth violence prevention; including bullying prevention. For more information about the Center for Safe Schools, visit www.SafeSchools.info.