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NEW TREATMENT PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN WITNESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

WHITEHORSE – The Department of Justice has announced a new crisis counselling program for children who witness domestic violence.

The program will be offered to children whose parents are involved in the Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court. It will fit with other treatment services for traumatized children offered by the Department of Health and Social Services, but focus more on immediate assistance.

“This new program aims to reduce the trauma experienced by children when they are caught up in violence in their homes,” Justice Minister John Edzerza said.

The program is made possible by the department’s successful lobbying of the federal government for funding for a five year period. The federal funding for the program provides \$16,700 for this fiscal year followed by \$50,000 per year for the next four years. These funds are subject to legislative approval in the spring sitting of the Yukon Legislature.

The need for such a program is supported by national research that shows that witnessing violence affects the development of children. Victim services workers, with the Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court in the Yukon, currently focus on adult victims but have noted a need for services for their clients’ traumatized children. A Program Advisory Committee will be set up in partnership with Family and Children Services at the Department of Health and Social Services.

In March 2006, the Department of Justice is holding a 3-day information session for front-line workers who work with children who may witness violence. Representatives from the London Family Court from London, Ontario and the Zebra Child Protection Centre from Edmonton, Alberta have been invited to make presentations along with local professionals.

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