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## **Devereux Observes Mental Health Awareness Month**

VILLANOVA, PA —May 4, 2015 — May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Mental Health America established Mental Health Awareness Month 66 years ago in an effort to give greater visibility to mental health conditions and to emphasize the importance of good mental health for all people. MHA's theme for this year is "Addressing Mental Health before Stage 4," a reference to the current disparity in treatment and perception of brain health and other physical health issues, which often discourages people from seeking help for mental health conditions until they have reached a critical stage.

"It's an appropriate theme," says Dr. Marilyn Benoit, Devereux Senior Vice President and Chief Clinical and Medical Officer. "When we think about our heart health, diabetes prevention and cancer, we think about screenings and prevention. If we sense something is wrong, we seek medical attention. So why don't we do the same when it comes to mental health conditions?" she asked.

As one of the oldest and largest nonprofit providers of healthcare in the country, Devereux understands that mental health -- brain health -- is as fundamental to wellbeing as any other aspect of physical health. Devereux offers a vast continuum of programs and services for children and adolescents living with mental health challenges, including specialty programs for sexually exploited children and LGBTQI youth who have sustained trauma through bullying, isolation, etc.

Additionally, Devereux is a strong voice in support of social and emotional health for all people, with our national Institute of Professional Training and Research (ICPTR) dedicated to advancing resilience as a public health issue. The divisions of ICPTR provide training, research and resources to Devereux programs, as well as to other child and youth-serving organizations, government agencies, early childhood programs, schools and community-based systems of care. Promoting and incorporating social and emotional learning (SEL) in public education is a focus of ICPTR, with a growing body of research indicating that SEL not only improves children's academic achievement, but creates the foundation for a successful, productive adulthood.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness ([NAMI](#)), one in four adults experiences mental health issues every year, which can contribute to the onset of serious medical conditions such as major depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. Among children and teens, one in five experiences serious emotional disorders every year. Approximately one-half of chronic mental illness begins by the age of 14 and three-quarters by age 24. "During Mental Health Awareness Month, everyone should take the time to learn the symptoms of mental illness," said Dr. Benoit. "Early identification and treatment make a big difference in successful management of an illness and recovery," she added.

To celebrate Awareness Month, individuals and communities could proactively learn more about mental health challenges and look for ways to end the stigma associated with them and encourage individuals to seek help for themselves and their loved ones. To learn more about [mental health conditions](#) visit [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org).

To learn more about Devereux's continuum of care, visit [www.devereux.org](http://www.devereux.org).