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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Social Media's "Me Too" Campaign Brings About Reaction and Discussion *Zacharias Sexual Abuse Center Responds to New Clients Ready to Disclose Their Abuse*

GURNEE, IL, October 23, 2017 -- The nationwide online discussion spurred by the "Me Too" hashtag is bringing awareness to a reality widely experienced, but rarely shared in casual conversation. Zacharias Sexual Abuse Center (ZCenter) serves survivors of sexual assault and abuse and is ready to support survivors who are experiencing triggered emotions due to the increased media attention to sexual harassment and assault. ZCenter provides a haven where survivors can heal by offering therapy, medical advocacy and court advocacy free of charge to survivors and their non-offending loved ones.

In this time of increased media attention, it is important to know the following about sexual assault and abuse.

1. Sexual Assault and Abuse is a Crime

Sexual assault and abuse is not simply "bad behavior" or "a mistake" as we have heard in recent defenses of high profile sexual harassment and assault cases -- it is a crime. In Illinois, sexual assault is a Class 1 Felony, punishable with four or more years in prison. Learn more about Illinois statutes for sexual assault, [here](#).

From a survivor's perspective, prosecuting an offender can often mean reliving personal, graphic details about the abuse while cases can proceed for weeks, months, or years. Our ZCenter staff stands with its clients every step of the way, for as much or as little as the client needs, to navigate the justice system.

2. Sexual Abuse is an Epidemic

As the "Me Too" social media campaign has demonstrated, people are realizing the sweeping effect of abuse and assault. It does not discriminate between race, sex, age, economic status, education, or geography. ZCenter's clients range from three-year-olds to clients in their eighties and represent all communities throughout Northeastern Illinois.

3. News Stories and Social Media Themes Do Not Have Trigger Warnings

The "Me Too" personal stories that are being shared on social media platforms can be empowering to some survivors of sexual assault and abuse, but can be triggering for others. ZCenter's 24-Hour Support Line (847-872-7799) is a local resource that is staffed with trained advocates, who listen and respond to callers who may disclose at any time, in any language.

4. Survivors Often Know their Abuser

A relative, an athletic coach, an employer -- [over 70% of survivors know their offender](#). For juvenile survivors, this statistic is over 90%. A personal relationship can be a huge barrier for survivors pursuing justice through the court system, due to both care for their offender and social pressure around protecting the offender's social status.

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“Me Too” Campaign, continued

In light of the increased media attention through "Me too" and high profile sexual assault allegations, ZCenter encourages the community to stay informed and encourages survivors to seek out services and support. ZCenter therapists offer counseling to support clients in their healing process, prevention education throughout Lake County, and advocacy services in hospitals, on our support line and in the courthouse.

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About Zacharias Sexual Abuse Center

ZCenter was built on the courage of survivors, staff, volunteers, and donors, and has been serving the community as a non-profit center against sexual assault and abuse since 1983. Now operating from two locations, Gurnee and Skokie, ZCenter provides places where survivors of sexual violence can heal, and mobilizes the community toward action to end sexual violence. Services are available free of charge to all survivors regardless of race, gender, language, ability to pay, sexual orientation, or religion. For more information, please visit ZCenter.org.

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