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CHICAGO May 25, 2010 More than 168 people, including attorneys, judges, teachers, social workers, legal professionals and affected families attended an educational event sponsored by the DuPage County States Attorneys Office about the effects of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and the need for those in the legal profession to be better educated about the disorder. DuPage County States Attorney, Joe Birkett, helped organize the event and provided information about future laws and plans for the state of Illinois in dealing with those affected.

FASD costs the state of Illinois an estimated annual amount of \$344,625,810. Over the course of five years that cost rises to approximately \$1.35 billion. FASD is the leading preventable cause of mental retardation in the world and brings about a host of severe physical, mental and emotional disabilities. A child with FASD has little or no impulse control, which often leads to issues with law enforcement.

Mr. Birkett spoke about how the county works to educate people on the effects of consuming alcohol during pregnancy. Currently, SB3332 is awaiting a signature by Illinois Governor Pat Quinn, which would require sex education programs to include materials about the hazards associated with the consumption of drugs and alcohol during pregnancy. The law will make Illinois the first state to require FASD education in the country.

SB3332 represents the future and I am hoping that it inspires people to write the Governor and ask him to sign the bill, said James Osta, executive director of FASTeam, an Illinois-based organization dedicated to raising awareness of FASD. This event is just a first step in educating legal professionals and, ultimately, the rest of the public about the effects of FASD. However, its good to know that people are willing to learn so we can improve the treatment of those suffering with FASD when they come into contact with the legal system.

Those interested in writing Governor Pat Quinn to encourage him to sign SB3332 can do so via regular mail at: Office of the Governor 207 State House Springfield, IL 62706. Or, they can email the governor by filling out the form located at his website: <http://www.illinois.gov/contactthegovernor.cfm>.

The event provided several expert speakers such as the Honorable Anthony P. Wartnik, a retired judge from the state of Washington and leading advocate for changes in the legal system in dealing with offenders and victims with FASD.

Judge Wartnik started his discussion by acknowledging that the days attendance was the largest single group he had spoken to about FASD. He explained that those suffering from the effects of FASD are unable to understand the consequences of their actions, a malady duplicated and proven in laboratory experiments. He reported that 60% of those suffering from FASD end up having trouble with the. He also explained that too many judges use the wrong standards to determine a defendants mental capacity in criminal cases when FASD is a contributing factor.

Dr. Susan Echiverri, a specialist on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), a pediatrician and geneticist also spoke. Dr. Echiverri stated that 1 in 100 children suffer from FASD, which makes it the most common birth defect that she comes across. She also explained the need for greater education among doctors and medical professionals about FASD to be able to recognize symptoms more easily.

Several families who have lived with FAS and FASD answered questions and told stories of life with children who suffer mental, physical and emotional disabilities while trying to cope with FASD

symptoms.

DVDs made during the seminar of all of the speakers presentations will be made available throughout the state to police departments, chiefs of police and attorneys.

About FASTeam

Fetal Alcohol Support Team, FASTeam, is dedicated to raising the awareness of and aid in the prevention of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. More information about the annual charity motorcycle is available at www.fastride.us or by calling 630 418 3300. For more information about the FASTeam or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder visit www.fasteam.org