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February 24, 2010

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**TENNESSEE DISTRICT ATTORNEYS LAUNCH NEW STATEWIDE
TEEN PREGNANCY AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference today announced a new campaign including aggressive outreach through social media, printed materials and a major effort to build a statewide network of partners to increase their efforts to fight teen pregnancy.

The statewide initiative represents the second phase of the highly successful *What's the Rush?* campaign that raises awareness of the legal, financial and social consequences of becoming teen parents.

“The DAs see the effects of teen parenthood every day in the courts,” said Guy Jones, deputy director of the Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference. “There is a proven direct link between teen parenthood and crime. We are committed to educating teenagers on the serious legal and financial responsibilities that go along with being a parent.”

The DAs started the campaign in 2008 in response to the number of court cases involving teen parents throughout the state. Printed materials and a video were created for the DAs to use when visiting schools and civic organizations to educate Tennessee’s youth about the consequences of becoming teen parents.

After receiving a substantial amount of positive feedback, the DAs decided not only to continue the campaign, but to commit more resources to expand its scope to reach even more teenagers. One of the new additions is the social media initiative the DAs will participate in using Facebook, YouTube and MySpace. They will also be working more directly with campaign partners, and sending new and updated materials to schools and medical offices across the state.

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The Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference is already partnered with the Tennessee Departments of Human Services, Health and Education; Tennessee Academy of Family Physicians; Tennessee Academy of Physician Assistants; Tennessee School Counselor Association; National Association of Social Workers – Tennessee Chapter; Dr. Benjamin L. Hooks Job Corps Center; Hospital Alliance of Tennessee; and YMCA of Memphis & the MidSouth.

“We are pleased to partner with the district attorneys, who see this problem firsthand,” said DHS Commissioner Virginia T. Lodge. “Continuing and expanding this program can make a difference in communities across Tennessee.”

The most recent statistics from the Tennessee Department of Health show that in one year there were 13,000 reported cases of teen pregnancies statewide. Statistics from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy show that teen parenthood can lead to a number of legal, financial and health consequences. Those statistics include:

- Eight out of 10 teen fathers do not marry the mother of their first child.
- Less than half of mothers who have a child before they are 18 years old graduate from high school, and less than 2 percent have a college degree by age 30.
- Teen fathers have less education and earn much less money than teenage boys without children.
- The children of teen mothers are more likely to be born prematurely and at a low birth weight, which can cause infant death, blindness, deafness, respiratory problems, mental retardation, cerebral palsy, dyslexia and hyperactivity.
- Children of teen mothers are 50 percent more likely to have to repeat a grade in school and are less likely to finish high school.
- The sons of teen mothers are two times more likely to end up in prison.
- The children of teen mothers are two times more likely to suffer abuse and neglect compared to children of older mothers.

For more information about *What's the Rush?*, call Guy Jones at (615) 532-2594. To learn more and access the campaign materials, please visit www.tndagc.org/whatstherush.

Facebook: www.facebook.com/whatstherushtn

MySpace: www.myspace.com/whatstherushtn

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