



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL DESIGNATES MAIN HOSPITAL AND CLINICS "NO HIT ZONES"

NEW ORLEANS – Hot pink stop signs emblazoned with the words “NO HIT ZONE” have been posted across Children’s Hospital’s main campus, Calhoun Street and State Street campuses, and outpatient clinics, as April is Child Abuse Prevention Month.

In posting the signs and sharing the message, Children’s Hospital’s Audrey Hepburn Children at Risk Evaluation (CARE) Center and the New Orleans Children’s Advocacy Center (NOCAC) are raising awareness about the most prevalent risk factor of child physical abuse – corporal punishment. The No Hit Zone signs illustrate the well-established harmful effects of corporal punishment and promote effective painless parenting techniques.

“The launching of our No Hit Zones is an important step in not only reducing violence exposure for all who visit Children's Hospital, but also creating a culture for the healthy development of children and families,” said John Nickens IV, Children’s Hospital President and CEO.

There are four basic tenets that are hallmarks of the No Hit Zone initiative:

- ♣ NO ADULT SHALL HIT A CHILD
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Children’s Hospital staff are being trained to give parents resources for effective guidance and explain the harms of physical discipline in a non-shaming or blaming fashion. The CARE Center is also providing opportunities for pediatricians, pediatrics residents and community members to practice communicating the negative effects of physical discipline.

“I am very pleased that Children's Hospital is the first hospital in Louisiana to adopt a No Hit Zone,” said Neha Mehta, MD, CARE Center Medical Director. “As a child abuse pediatrician with over 15 years of experience, I have seen firsthand the injuries to children who have been hit by



their parents. I have been astonished by how many children I see with bruises and scars to their bodies from being “spanked” by their parents and the number of children I see who didn't tell parents about sexual abuse because they feared being ‘whipped.’”

According to the CARE Center, across the nation, corporal punishment has become a social norm in disciplining children. It is also identified as the most prevalent risk factor for child abuse in America. In the south, where the incidence of spanking is above the national average, the number of children who are victims of physical force is even higher. Physical punishment hurts kids from all races and ethnicities. Fifty years of research demonstrating the adverse effects of corporal punishment led the CDC in 2016 to alter its definition of physical abuse. The amended definition describes physical abuse as “the use of physical force, such as hitting, shaking, burning or other shows of force against a child,” removing the phrase “that resulted in injury” from its former explanation. Physical force leads to increased aggressive and risky behaviors in children, damage to brain development, and a lifelong impact on mental health. Corporal punishment has been shown to increase, rather than deter, undesired behaviors.

Originating at Rainbow Babies and Children’s Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio, in 2005, No Hit Zones have been successfully duplicated by numerous pediatric and adult hospitals and communities across the country. Posting No Hit Zone signage and training staff have been effective steps taken to create safe and caring environments for children, families and staff. Because key informants—trusted pediatric providers—deliver this scientific, research-based message, parents are more likely to listen.

“Parents need to understand that hitting children is not only harmful, but also non-effective,” said Ellie Wetsman, CARE Center child abuse pediatrician. “I am delighted to see Children's Hospital take leadership to reduce violence experienced by children.” Throughout Children’s Hospital and its clinics across the state, No Hit Zone signs will be posted illustrating the well-established harmful effects of corporal punishment and promoting effective painless parenting techniques.

As part of the initiative’s launch, Children’s Hospital is sharing tips for painless parenting alternatives, with links to effective parenting materials by developmental stages.

[Infant](#) [Toddler](#) [School Age](#) [Tween/Teen](#)

If a program, institution, school or other locations wish to become a No Hit Zone, contact Stacie.Leb Blanc@lcmhealth.org.

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About Children’s Hospital New Orleans

Children’s Hospital is a 224-bed, not-for-profit regional medical center offering the most advanced pediatric care to children from birth to 21 years. With more than 400 physicians trained in more than 40 subspecialties, it is the only full-service hospital exclusively for children in Louisiana and the Gulf South.