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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Metropolitan Peace Initiatives Celebrates New
Community Violence Intervention Training Center with Ribbon Cutting**

CHICAGO, January 13, 2024 – The Metropolitan Peace Initiatives (MPI), a division of Metropolitan Family Services (MFS), marked the grand opening of the **Metropolitan Peace Academy's** (MPA) – Chicago's highly-acclaimed community violence intervention (CVI) training center – new brick and mortar facility. The ribbon cutting event was hosted by **ABC 7 anchor Val Warner**.

The MPA is MPI's premiere multi-disciplinary training program, designed to professionalize and strengthen the fields of street outreach and community violence intervention. It provides intensive training for street outreach workers, case managers, victim advocates, trauma recovery specialists, as well as community trainings for Chicago residents and police officers.

"Trauma lies at the heart of so much pain and conflict in our neighborhoods, as evidenced by a recent study revealing that half of Chicago residents have been exposed to gun violence," said **U.S. Senator Dick Durbin**. "The official opening of the Metropolitan Peace Academy symbolizes hope — a culmination of years dedicated to improving public safety and access to services for Chicagoans. It represents hope that fewer mothers will bury their children, fewer doctors will become gunshot wound experts, and fewer community members will suffer the trauma of gun violence. It's an honor to have played a part in this initiative, and I look forward to witnessing all of the life-saving work MFS will continue to do for our community."

"We appreciate Senator Durbin's long-term commitment to keeping families and communities safe," said **MFS President and CEO Ric Estrada**. "Senator Durbin's ongoing championship of Metropolitan Family Services has allowed us to open the Metropolitan Peace Academy in a beautiful new facility to deliver the nation's leading efforts to promote, train, and professionalize community violence intervention."

"This new academy opening in Pilsen will provide training to professionals in the field of street outreach to build a citywide network and to equip our communities with the knowledge to continue promoting non-violent practices and resilience. I'm proud to support these initiatives and proud to have them in our district," said **U.S. Rep. Jesus "Chuy" Garcia**.

Metropolitan Peace Initiatives (MPI) Executive Director, Vaughn Bryant said, "As a Black man having the privilege to help Black and Brown men, mostly in my generation, heal and be better, I wanted to give them the world...and this (the Metropolitan Peace Academy) is it!"

The new facility, funded in part by the Illinois Department of Human Services, the U.S. Department of Justice, the Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities and other generous donors, was created in the wake of the program's continued growth, increase in participants and staff, and CVI's increasing effectiveness as a model for public safety in Chicago. The ribbon cutting marks the grand opening of the MPA's own training space for the first

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time in the Academy's six-year history. Prior to the new site, MPA trainings were held at various locations throughout the city.

About MPI

Metropolitan Peace Initiatives (MPI), a division of Metropolitan Family Services, convenes Communities Partnering 4 Peace (CP4P), a coalition of 13 community-based organizations focused on reducing gun violence in 27 of Chicago's highest-risk neighborhoods. For more information, visit www.MetropolitanPeaceInitiatives.org.