



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

# NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Lutheran Social Services of Illinois Recognizes National Alcohol Awareness Month**

April is National Alcohol Awareness Month, and Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) joins other organizations in recognizing the importance of this month – and the toll that alcoholism takes on many lives.

“Alcoholism is chronic, progressive, terminal disease,” says Kathy Dwyer, associate executive director of LSSI’s Behavioral Health Services. “Alcoholism is chronic in that people can recover from it, but they will always have it,” she adds.

She notes that alcoholism is progressive in that it generally starts slowly and gradually increases until there are more frequent loss-of-control situations. However, for some people – and we don’t know why – this stage can occur rather quickly, she says.

Finally, alcoholism is a terminal disease. If a person doesn’t seek treatment and stop drinking, he or she “tends to die of this illness,” Dwyer says.

To assist people with alcoholism and other drug users in their recovery, LSSI offers three levels of care: outpatient, intensive outpatient and residential rehabilitation, as well as detox. In addition, LSSI has residential extended aftercare programs and sober living facilities, the latter of which provides a less structured environment for recovering alcoholics.

“Our goal is to prepare people for transition to independent living and develop social living skills,” says Roy Shannon, director of LSSI’s Men’s Residence North in Rogers Park, one of two facilities in Chicago. The other is the Men’s Residence South. There also is a residential extended aftercare program for women on the north side of Chicago, and a residential rehabilitation program for both men and women, and a residential extended aftercare program for men at LSSI’s Behavioral Health Services in Elgin.

Treatment does work. One woman, who was in treatment for 11 months and was discharged last December, shared her feelings: “The counselors here are caring and supportive, and teach me how to

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treat my disease while learning to love myself. Treatment has shown me how to live again, love myself, and have hope for the future.”

LSSI services are available to all people without regard to religious affiliation, race, sex or age, although LSSI gives priority status for pregnant women to use its treatment services. Staff members include licensed clinical therapists and addiction counselors. The counselors evaluate each individual’s situation and determine what treatment, if any, is appropriate. Staff members also assist families and other loved ones of people living with a substance abuse problem.

This year, the theme of National Alcohol Awareness Month – A Call to Action – focuses on the epidemic of underage drinking and the devastating effects it can have on youth. According to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence:

- The typical American young person will see 100,000 beer commercials before he or she turns 18 (that is more than the ads they will see for sneakers, gum and jeans).
- About 9.7 million current drinkers in the United States are between the ages of 12 and 20.
- Alcohol is the most frequently used drug by high school seniors.
- Young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21 or later.
- Alcohol is a factor in the four leading causes of death among persons ages 10-24 following motor-vehicle crashes, unintentional injuries, homicide and suicide.

National Alcohol Awareness Month, sponsored by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence since 1987, encourages local communities to focus on alcoholism and alcohol-related issues.

Founded in 1867, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois is a statewide, not-for-profit social service agency of the three Illinois synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with more than 100 program locations, as well as an agency of the United Way.

*For more information on LSSI’s substance abuse programs in the Chicago area, call 773/282-7347 ext. 241. The Behavioral Health Center in Elgin can be reached at 847/741-2600. Or visit [www.LSSI.org](http://www.LSSI.org).*