

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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River Bridge Regional Center seeks to assess the state of Child Abuse Prevention Education in Garfield County

Glenwood Springs, Colorado - River Bridge Regional Center (RBRC) is embarking on an exciting phase to enhance access to quality services for child abuse prevention in our community. Every five years, RBRC goes through reaccreditation with the National Children's Alliance. During this intensive period, we meticulously assess our policies and practices involving our staff, board, and multidisciplinary partners. Our reaccreditation status demonstrates our commitment to maintaining high standards in providing care and treatment to our clients.

One of the new standards for accreditation is Child Abuse Prevention Education. An essential component of meeting this standard is "conducting an assessment of current prevention activities/programs in the community to avoid duplication, ensure coordination, and demonstrate how its efforts fit into the larger array of prevention education, training and services." (2023 National Optional Standards of Accreditation for Children's Advocacy Centers). It is crucial to conduct a community needs assessment as the initial step to improve child abuse prevention education for parents and caregivers in our community.

The community needs assessment aims to evaluate current resource usage, detect service overlaps, and highlight areas needing attention. RBRC offers training sessions within our community, targeting teachers, parents, caregivers, coaches, counselors, and the public in general. We understand there may be opportunity for collaboration among these groups to enhance, expand, and raise awareness about child abuse prevention education. The assessment results will inform the development of an evidence-based child abuse education program tailored for the community.

Taking on such a significant project has prompted RBRC to seek professional expertise in leading research and assessment from OMNI Institute, based in Denver, Colorado. Shon Reed, Research Manager at OMNI, is leading the needs assessment effort and is looking forward to working with RBRC. "This is an exciting next step for River Bridge, and we are privileged to support the organization's efforts to ensure its programs and services are responsive to the needs of the community." The goals for River Bridge's Community Assessment Project will positively impact numerous individuals in our community. Amy Gomez, named in March 2024 as the RBRC Mental Health Therapist and Prevention Coordinator, is enthusiastic about driving RBRC's prevention efforts, expressing, "The assessment will help us enhance our services and create an evidence-based Child Abuse Prevention Program. By collaborating, we can strive for a more cohesive community where education and services are readily available to establish a safe and supportive environment for our children."

Collaboration will play a vital role in the success of this project. RBRC and OMNI Institute will collaborate with community agencies, law enforcement, educators, and health professionals. The support from these essential partners will enhance the ongoing work and aid in creating future programs to promote child abuse prevention education. Programs that will focus on teaching body safety, healthy relationships, and communication to prevent child abuse. Having these conversations can lead to healthier and stronger connections between the child and adult, which can help prevent the child from entering unsafe situations.

RBRC appreciates Glenwood Springs Subaru for their ongoing support in raising funds for our advocacy center through the annual Share the Love event. A portion of the \$23,500 donation in 2023 has been allocated to kickstart the initial phase of this project. Furthermore, RBRC is actively fundraising and applying for grants to secure the project's sustainability.

About OMNI Institute

OMNI Institute is a Colorado-based nonprofit social science consultancy that provides integrated research and evaluation, capacity building, and data utilization services to foster understanding, guide collaboration, and inform action to accelerate positive social change focused on children and families, community and behavioral health, economic security, and adult and juvenile justice. Founded in 1982, OMNI Institute has honed a nationally recognized service delivery model that is focused on rigorous research and application of best practices, authentic engagement with clients and their vested partners, and the cross-systems expertise and insights needed to address complex social issues.