Easterseals And The Abbott Fund Join Together To Advance Health Equity Through The Black Child Fund

- Support for the Easterseals Black Child Fund Will Advance Early Identification and Interventions Among Black Children to Reduce Health Disparities Often Experienced in Early Childhood

FEBRUARY 1, 2021, CHICAGO – The Abbott Fund, the foundation of the global healthcare company Abbott, is the first funder to support Easterseals' newly established Black Child Fund, with a $250,000 grant to advance health equity by addressing racial disparities in healthcare among young Black children with autism and other disabilities. The Easterseals Black Child Fund has been established to provide timely diagnosis and appropriate care to help address these longstanding disparities, which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Abbott Fund's support will help improve the early intervention, diagnosis and treatment of autism and other neurological conditions including developmental delays that can have long-term physical and behavioral impact. Funding will benefit communities served by three Easterseals Affiliates: Easterseals Serving Chicagoland and Greater Rockford; Easterseals DuPage & Fox Valley; and Easterseals Midwest in Missouri and Kansas.

According to research by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black children with autism are less likely to be identified at an early age and often wait on average more than three years before getting a formal diagnosis so that evidence-based interventions can be delivered. Early diagnosis is key, because delayed interventions are often not as effective and often result in the need for longer and more intensive support that increases costs for care.

"Through the Easterseals Black Child Fund, we intend to change the trajectory for Black children in America with autism and disabilities moving forward," said Easterseals President and CEO Angela F. Williams. "The pandemic has heightened our awareness of the health disparities in the Black community that begin early in life and are often driven by key Social Determinants of Health, such as a lack of access to quality healthcare, education and economic opportunity. Through the Abbott Fund's support of our Black Child Fund, we intend to begin to remedy this immediately through the work of Easterseals in DuPage County, Fox Valley, and Rockford (IL) as well as in St. Louis and Kansas City (MO)."

Community outreach to advance free online access to *The Ages* & *Stages Questionnaires*® screening tool that captures developmental progress in children between the *ages* of one month to 5 ½ years is among goals of the funding provided by the Abbott Fund. Working with communities, churches, schools, and pediatricians, Easterseals will leverage the screening tool to help assure early identification of developmental delays among young Black children. Additional support includes the establishment of family navigation services to streamline diagnostic approaches for a quicker introduction to therapy, as well as building capacity by training professionals to help patients locally.

"Abbott and the Abbott Fund are committed to advancing health equity for communities of color and we believe the Black Child Fund can make a difference in expanding services and providing quality health care to Black children with autism and other disabilities," said Melissa Brotz, president of the Abbott Fund and vice president of Global Marketing and External Affairs at Abbott. "Easterseals is a trusted organization that works alongside the people they serve to support people's ability to live better and healthier, a mission we share. We're proud to be the first funder of this important new initiative."

The Easterseals Black Child Fund leverages the organization's expertise in delivering early childhood services for more than 100 years through its Network of 67 Affiliates in communities nationwide while creating training curriculum, sustainable programs, and scalable resources to benefit at-risk youth. With a fundraising goal of $5 million, the Fund promises to make a difference for children that will follow them throughout their lives.

About Easterseals

Driven by its purpose to change the way the world defines and views disability, Easterseals makes profound, positive differences in people's lives everyday through its life-changing services and powerful advocacy. For more than 100 years, Easterseals has served as an indispensable resource for individuals living with disabilities, veterans, seniors, and their families. Together, our Affiliates in communities nationwide serve 1.5 million people annually through a variety of services including early intervention; autism services; inclusive childcare; medical rehabilitation including physical, occupational, and speech therapies; behavioral health services; workforce development programs; adult day services; respite; transportation; and more. In schools, workplaces, and communities, we're fostering environment where everyone is included and valued – making a real and positive impact on us all. Join us in ensuring that everyone – regardless of age or ability – is 100% included and 100% empowered. Learn more at www.easterseals.com.

About Abbott and the Abbott Fund

Abbott has a clear focus on innovating for access and affordability, with the goal of improving the lives of more than a third of all the people on Earth each year through its 2030 Sustainability Plan. An important part of this work is advancing health equity, working side-by-side with the communities we serve to address health disparities and tackle barriers to health. This includes efforts across our business and in partnership with others to expand access to technology, quality care and nutrition, and to advance STEM and health education to inspire a diverse and innovative next generation. To learn more, please visit abbott.com/sustainability.

Abbott is a global healthcare leader that helps people live more fully at all stages of life. Our portfolio of life-changing

technologies spans the spectrum of healthcare, with leading businesses and products in diagnostics, medical devices, nutritionals and branded generic medicines. Our 109,000 colleagues serve people in more than 160 countries.

The Abbott Fund is a philanthropic foundation established by Abbott in 1951. The Abbott Fund's mission is to create healthier global communities by investing in creative ideas that promote science, expand access to healthcare and strengthen communities worldwide.

Connect with us at abbott.com and abbottfund.org.

For further information: Easterseals: Sharon Watson, SVP, Marketing Communications, swatson@easterseals.com; Abbott and the Abbott Fund: Angela Duff, 224-668-6894