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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Attention: Health/Food/Lifestyle Section Editors

AnxietyBC seminar helps parents manage anxious kids

Almost 5,400 Victoria children held hostage by anxiety disorders

Victoria - Raising children in a volatile world is challenging enough, but it's especially difficult for parents of children suffering from anxiety disorders.

Children with anxiety disorders are among the best and the brightest, but are afraid to engage in life. An anxiety disorder may first present as an unwillingness to participate in normal activities most kids enjoy such as sports, sleepovers and even attending school, as well as in somatic symptoms such as chronic stomachaches and headaches.

An anxiety disorder may also impact a child's social interactions with peers, school performance, behaviour (e.g. crying, temper tantrums), and sleep.

Anxiety disorders in children are more common than one would think and can get in the way of any kind of future or hope for a normal life. Approximately 10 per cent of children suffer from one or more anxiety disorders, and 80 per cent go untreated. That amounts to almost 5,400 children in the Greater Victoria area.

Tara, a Victoria resident, knows all too well how this complex malady can soon take over and rob children and families of a quality of life most take for granted. One of her children was diagnosed with separation anxiety disorder at the age of seven, and generalized anxiety disorder at the age of 13.

Tara, who herself was diagnosed with panic attacks 13 years ago, says that children with anxiety disorders struggle with trying to hide their condition, and with getting their parents to understand it.

"The biggest challenge for my child is in not wanting people to know, and the fear of never feeling normal again," said Tara.

Thankfully, help is available. To help educate parents about anxiety disorders and facilitate early intervention, the Anxiety Disorders Association of BC (ADABC), in cooperation with the F.O.R.C.E. Society for Kids Mental Health, is offering a free and

helpful seminar on Feb. 1 in Victoria on parenting children with anxiety disorders. The seminar will teach parents how to identify if a child has an anxiety disorder, and how to manage the problem at home.

Dr. Melisa Robichaud, the psychologist who will be facilitating the Victoria ADABC seminar, believes the challenge for parents of children with anxiety disorders is two-fold.

"First, many parents try to understand what they did wrong that led to their child developing an anxiety disorder. It is, of course, not their fault, but there is a tendency for parents to blame themselves for their child's distress.

"Second, it can be difficult for parents to go through treatment with their child, as much of therapy involves confronting one's fears. It is often a struggle for parents to see their child distressed or anxious when facing fears, even if they know that it is beneficial in the long-term."

Robichaud says that the goal of the ADABC Family Skill Building Seminar is to give parents practical strategies and tools that they can use at home to help them manage their child's anxiety.

"There is a woeful lack of resources for the treatment of child anxiety, and this is very frustrating for parents who want to help their children but are not sure how. It is our hope that the parents who attend the seminar come away with a good plan for how they will start to work with their child to manage his or her anxiety in the long-term," added Robichaud.

The ADABC-sponsored Family Skill Building Seminar takes place in Victoria on Feb. 1 at 7 p.m. at the Victoria Public Library, Nellie McClung Branch, 3950 Cedar Hill Road. ADABC will also be hosting seminars in the Tri-Cities area, Abbotsford, Vancouver, and Richmond. For more information, call 604.525.7597, email info@anxietybc.com, or visit www.anxietybc.com.

Funding for ADABC programs is provided by Fraser Health, the Provincial Health Services Authority, the Ministry for Children and Family Development, and other regional health authorities and foundations. ADABC members play a key role in supporting the ongoing dissemination of resources and advocacy with their membership fees and donations, while the public and corporate sponsors assist ADABC during its fund-raising campaigns. ADABC is very grateful to all its supporters and well-wishers.

ADABC is one of seven provincial agencies that make up the BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information. These agencies are working together to provide high quality, evidence-based information on mental health and substance use to help individuals and families living with mental health and substance use problems live productive, fulfilling lives. Funding is provided by the Provincial Health Services Authority with additional support from the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

The Anxiety Disorders Association of BC, a non-profit organization, was established in 1999 by a group of concerned consumers, family members and professionals. Its mission is to increase awareness and promote education of anxiety disorders, increase access to evidence-based treatment, and encourage and develop new treatments and delivery.

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