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Zika Virus Grant Awarded to Six Presence Health Hospitals

*Grant Helps Spanish-Speaking Illinois Women Understand Impact of Zika Virus
on Them and Unborn Children*

(Chicago, Ill.) – Presence Health Network has received a \$15,000 grant from the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to fund the *Presence Health Zika Campaign/La Campana de Presence Health Para Evitar El Zika*. The program will use Presence Health community health workers in four large Illinois counties to educate local Spanish-speaking women about the potentially devastating impact of the Zika virus on them and their unborn children. The grant will fund programs in six Presence Health hospitals: **Presence Saints Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center** (Chicago), **Presence Mercy Medical Center** (Aurora), **Presence Saint Joseph Hospital - Elgin**, **Presence Holy Family Medical Center** (Des Plaines), **Presence Covenant Medical Center** (Urbana) and **Presence United Samaritans Medical Center** (Danville).

Presence Health is the only hospital system in Illinois that received this grant funding and will provide the largest amount of screenings in the state, an estimated 1,500 Spanish-speaking women to receive education on Zika virus exposure through community health presentations, pre-natal clinics, language assistance services and community health fairs.

This funding is well-timed, as the Zika virus remains a threat and could proliferate soon as warmer weather approaches and mosquitos become active. The Zika virus is spreading explosively in the Americas, which could see up to 4 million cases over the next year. According to the CDC, 5,158 confirmed cases of the Zika virus were reported in the United States between 2015 and March 2017, with 94 in Illinois alone. In February 2016, Presence Health reported the first confirmed case of the Zika virus in Chicago at Presence Saint Joseph Hospital. The woman contracted the virus from a visit to Colombia and has since made a full recovery. Contracting the Zika virus during pregnancy can lead to serious birth defects in children, including microcephaly and other fetal brain defects, joint damage, and muscle growth deformities.

Presence Health hospitals have successful history of providing health-outreach and educational services to at-risk, vulnerable Spanish-speaking families. Presence Mercy Medical Center in Aurora has one of the highest concentrations of Hispanic residents in Illinois, at 51% of the population. In this area, 38% of residents speak Spanish and 10% speak only Spanish and no English.

“The Hispanic population is at an increased risk of exposure to the Zika virus due to travel to visit loved ones in Latin America, a region where the virus has quickly spread to affect 20 countries,” explained Presence Holy Family Medical Center, Nurse Manager, Teresa Del Toro. “We hope that by educating Spanish-speaking women who come to our hospitals from the community around our hospitals about these risks that we can prevent serious birth defects in children until a time when the virus is no longer a threat.”

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About Presence Health

Presence Health is the largest Catholic health system based in Illinois. With over 150 sites of care, including 12 hospitals, 17,700 employees, 4,000 medical professionals Presence Health has a revenue base of \$2.6 billion.