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## News Release

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## CENTER FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN APPOINTS MANDATED REPORTING EXPERT ITS NEXT DIRECTOR

HERSHEY, PA – Benjamin H. Levi, M.D., Ph.D., a professor of pediatrics and humanities at Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and Penn State College of Medicine, has assumed the directorship of the Center for the Protection of Children at Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital. Dr. Levi, a practicing pediatrician and highly published expert in the area of mandated reporting of suspected child abuse, recently returned from a year-long sabbatical overseas examining how other countries protect children from abuse, including how abuse and neglect are reported to law enforcement.

Levi succeeds center inaugural director Andrea Taroli, M.D., who will focus on development of the Children's Hospital's clinical program for child protection—along with Kate Crowell, M.D., and Laura Duda, M.D., who are the founding members of this clinical team—a program integral to the center's overall mission to improve the detection, treatment, and prevention of child abuse.

Launched in December 2011, the Center for the Protection of Children brings together an interdisciplinary group of Penn State clinicians and researchers who are well respected for their achievements in the field of child abuse. Based at Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital on the Medical Center and College of Medicine campus, the center is a collaborative effort whose goals are to prevent maltreatment, improve reporting of suspected abuse, provide comprehensive care for children who have experienced abuse, and advance knowledge about how best to protect vulnerable children and support them and their families.

"With his expertise in studying child abuse and processes for reporting abuse and neglect in the United States and abroad, Dr. Levi brings a valuable global perspective to the leadership of the Center for the Protection of Children," said Harold L. Paz, M.D., Medical Center chief executive officer, Penn State's senior vice president for health affairs, and dean, Penn State College of Medicine. "Dr. Levi's broad-based experience in developing creative partnerships, tools and educational programs to address the problem of child maltreatment will enable him to build on the

foundation already established under Dr. Taroli's leadership and further expand the Center's clinical, educational, research, and advocacy activities."

For the past 10 years, Dr. Levi has worked on the topic of mandated reporting of suspected abuse, including developing the "Look Out for Child Abuse" web site—which includes Pennsylvania's only online tool for reporting suspected abuse—in conjunction with the Center on Children and the Law at Penn State Dickinson School of Law. As center director, Dr. Levi will continue the work of strengthening existing collaborations and building new ones across Penn State and with community partners toward the goal of developing a truly integrated, interdisciplinary approach to addressing the causes and consequences of child maltreatment.

## Ongoing initiatives of the center include:

- Establishment of The TLC (Transforming the Lives of Children) Clinic to provide comprehensive primary care to and serve as a "medical home" for victims of child abuse who are in foster care
- Development of cutting-edge, high-tech, multi-media mandated reporter educational modules to those on the front lines for protecting children, with school teachers the first target audience
- Recruitment of an additional pediatrician specializing in child abuse, a psychologist
  with expertise in traumatic stress, and a social science researcher to establish the
  foundation for an accredited three-year subspecialty training program in child abuse
  pediatrics

Dr. Levi emphasizes the role of the center as a community partner. "Our shared vision for the center is to be a top-flight clinical and academic resource for those concerned with protecting children. And it is one of the center's goals to integrate our efforts with many of the community organizations and individuals doing good work on behalf of children."