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CLERGY GET TRAINING FOR EMERGENCIES FROM ITC FAITH AND HEALTH LEADERSHIP GROUP

(July 26, 2006 – Atlanta, GA) Faith plays an important role in health, mental health and quality of life among minorities. To address the myriad issues related to pastoral care and counseling and mental health in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) Institute for Faith-Health Leadership (IFHL) Emotional Support Center (ESC), UCLA Center for Research, Education, Training and Strategic Communications on Minority Health Disparities funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation will offer a Katrina Clergy Training Conference on August 8th and 9th, 2006 at Loyola University in New Orleans, Louisiana from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.. The group will address such topics as pastoral care and counseling, clergy self-care and tools to recognize, prevent, and address conditions such as trauma, mental disorders, and the signs and symptoms of anxiety and depression. Church parishioners may experience many or all of these conditions and clergy may need to address them during times of disaster. The outcome of the training weekend is intended to lead toward the development of a Mental Health/Disaster Network Development and Referrals system.

The minority church and other faith-based organizations have provided continued support, guidance, and direction to individuals and families facing health related and life threatening illnesses during the past year. ITC's Faith and Health Leadership Emotional Support Center along with its partnering organizations have been central to the care provided to minority communities under the current devastation on the Gulf Coast and in prior similar situations. Faith communities—including churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, and other places of worship—have tremendous potential for building assets and forging access to improve the health status in minority communities.

The Interdenominational Theological Center's Institute for Faith-Health Leadership (IFHL) Emotional Support Center (ESC) focuses its efforts on providing emotional support services and referrals to other social services for the victims and responders of these natural disasters. It also serves as a referral center to other agencies that are providing more advanced mental health services for those who are identified as needing counseling and who are in need of other support services. By networking with the faith-based institutions associated with the IFHL, ESC assists with finding a safe place within the faith-based community to express the feelings and concerns of both victims and responders.

This Clergy Training Conference will be held August 8-9th, 2006, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on the campus of Loyola University, New Orleans, Louisiana. Registration is free and open to all clergy that desire to participate. Providing training and increasing awareness among clergy and mental health professionals about new strategies to promote collaboration in addressing personal and community emotional and mental health concerns in the aftermath of natural disasters is the primary goal.

For more, contact Dr. Rueben Warren for additional information at (404) 527-7744 or visit the website to learn how you can help <http://www.minorityhealthdisparities.org>.

The Interdenominational Theological Center, a cooperative theological academy of six different denominations, a Lutheran Center and an at large denominational fellowship, is in its fourth decade of providing service to the world as the leading academy for African American graduate theological education and training. ITC is the only UNCF institution that offers graduate theological education. The institution touts a world-class faculty, a vibrant and challenging afro-centered curriculum, and national and international outreach programs initiatives that include: Faith and the City, the Health and Faith Leadership Initiative, Black Women in Church and Society, The Continuing Education and Distance Learning Program, The Institute for Black Religious Life, The Youth Hope Builders Academy, Faith Journey, Religious Heritage of the African World, and the Urban Theological Institute.