BENTONVILLE, Ark. (December 5, 2012) -- Gundersen Health System and the National Child Protection Training Center (NCPTC) announced today they are joining forces to help put an end to child abuse, neglect and other forms of child maltreatment. The two organizations have signed a letter of intent for the NCPTC to become part of Gundersen Health System. The affiliation is expected to be complete in 2013 and will create a first-of-its-kind program in the country.

Gundersen Health System is a physician-led, not-for-profit healthcare system with locations in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa. The NCPTC is headquartered on the Winona State University campus in Winona, Minn., with the Melba Shewmaker Southern Region National Child Protection Training Center on the NorthWest Arkansas Community College (NWACC) campus in Bentonville.

The NCPTC has made a difference in the lives of children and families across the nation through education, training, awareness, prevention, advocacy and the pursuit of justice. Since its inception in 2003, NCPTC staff has trained more than 70,000 child protection professionals in all 50 states and 17 countries.

“This is great news for the long-term sustainability of the NCPTC and our work to end child abuse,” said Dr. Steven M. Gates, senior vice president for learning and provost at NWACC and a member of the NCPTC Board of Directors. “Gundersen is an outstanding health system with a great tradition for serving children. They have long been interested in elevating their support for ending child abuse and are aware of the great work being done by the NCPTC. We’re excited to see this affiliation become a reality.”

The affiliation with Gundersen would allow the NCPTC to expand its scope to training not just professionals like teachers, law enforcement officers and childcare providers, but also healthcare professionals. Along with providing operational support for the current work of the NCPTC, Gundersen has committed to developing a clinical training component for healthcare professionals.
“The NCPTC fits within Gundersen’s mission of improving health in the communities we serve. Research shows the effective prevention of child maltreatment involves education, support and guidance for those entrusted with caring for young children, such as healthcare professionals. By stopping child maltreatment, we can also prevent many of the physical, mental and social problems associated with it. We are pleased to be entering into this affiliation with another nationally recognized organization whose mission is to improve the lives of children and families across the country,” said Jeff Thompson, MD, CEO at Gundersen Health System.

Dr. Becky Paneitz, president of NorthWest Arkansas Community College, said the affiliation represents a mutually beneficial arrangement for Gundersen Health System and the National Child Protection Training Center and its regional centers.

“We at NWACC are excited about the opportunities this affiliation will bring,” she said. “Previously, funding for training operations was accomplished through grants and private donations. With the operations now coming under the umbrella of the healthcare system, the affiliation will ensure sustainability over the long haul.”

NWACC is in the midst of a $3 million capital campaign to fund the renovation and furnishing of a former oncology building to provide a state-of-the-art learning laboratory for child protection professionals. That initiative continues and is not affected by the affiliation. NWACC has raised approximately 80 percent of its campaign goal.

“The affiliation will strengthen NCPTC’s ability to work toward its goal of ending child abuse, neglect and other forms of child maltreatment in three generations,” Paneitz said. “We at NWACC believe great things are in store as we work together to better equip child protection professionals on the front lines of the battle against child abuse and neglect.”

About the National Child Protection Training Center
The National Child Protection Training Center (NCPTC) works to end child abuse, neglect and other forms of child maltreatment in three generations through education, training, awareness, prevention, advocacy and the pursuit of justice. The Center promotes reformation of current training practices by providing an educational curriculum to current and future front-line child protection professionals around the nation so that they will be prepared to recognize and report the abuse of a child. To learn more, go to www.ncptc.org.

About Gundersen Health System
Gundersen Health System is a comprehensive healthcare system that includes a multi-specialty group medical practice, regional community clinics, hospitals, behavioral health services, vision centers, pharmacies and air and ground ambulances. Their staff is made up of more than 700 medical, dental and associate staff and more than 5,500 support staff. Gundersen's flagship campus is located in La Crosse, Wis. Learn more at www.gundluth.org.

About NWACC
NorthWest Arkansas Community College is a smart choice for students wanting to pursue quality higher education. As an accredited institution through The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, NWACC is a public two-year institution that serves and strengthens its surrounding communities in Benton and Washington counties by helping students maximize their potential and exceed expectations. With state-of-the-art facilities, NWACC provides excellent academic instruction and workforce training needed to succeed, offering
personalized attention from highly respected faculty, staff, and administrators. For more information, visit www.nwacc.edu.