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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **State of Maryland Unveils Website to Help Unaccompanied Immigrant Children**

*New "Buscando" website designed to help refugee children in the state connect with resources*

(Gaithersburg, MD) – In an effort to help the almost 3,000 unaccompanied children who have arrived in Maryland this year, the state has launched **Buscando**, a website designed to connect them and their caretakers with support services and resources.

[www.buscandomaryland.com](http://www.buscandomaryland.com)

Family Services, Inc. (FSI), established in 1908 and dedicated to promoting the resilience, recovery and independence of individuals and families, is one of many social service organizations who has partnered with the state as a resource link to provide support services to unaccompanied immigrant children and their caretakers

Officials from Governor Martin O'Malley's administration debuted the website during a press conference at the Hyattsville Branch Library on Wednesday, September 17, 2014. Ted Dallas, secretary of Maryland's Department of Human Resources, said Buscando (which means "to look" in Spanish) is the newest phase in the state's response to the needs of unaccompanied children in Maryland.

Buscando is designed to serve as a database of resources for children and their caretakers. For example, users can type in their location and search for mental health, and a map is generated which shows contact information for nearby organizations that will provide mental health and family therapy services.

The website was built by volunteer programmers from Code for Progress, Hear Me Code and the Tech Lady Hackathon.

Roughly 2,800 unaccompanied children have arrived in Maryland in 2014, the fifth largest number in the country. The children have come primarily from Central America, fleeing violence in countries like El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.

Anne Sheridan, Executive Director of the Governor's Office for Children, described the project as a "labor of love."

Officials also highlighted other resources for unaccompanied children, including a printed resource guide for people who do not have access to the website. The United Way of

Central Maryland also operates a 24-hour 2-1-1 phone hotline, which aims to provide immediate assistance and guide callers through the Buscando website.

The goal for Buscando is to efficiently deliver information and resources to the people who need them. Sheridan also said she wants children and their caretakers to know that the government is in if for the long haul.

“We are a welcoming place, and we want them to know that help is available,” said Sheridan.

### **About Family Services, Inc.**

Family Services, Inc., an affiliate of the Sheppard and Enoch Pratt Foundation, is the oldest private non-profit social service organization in Montgomery County, Maryland. Founded in 1908, FSI currently operates 32 distinct programs throughout Montgomery, Prince George's and Baltimore Counties and reaches over 25,000 people each year. FSI has extensive experience developing and implementing in-home and community-based services for individuals, children, adolescents and families. FSI provides prevention and early intervention programs which address family functioning and child development, operates Montgomery County's domestic violence shelter for women and their children, provides holistic psychiatric rehabilitation services to promote health and wellness to persons with persistent mental illness, and operates an adult medical day program. Programs are delivered by culturally and linguistically appropriate professionals and para-professional staff who represent 50 different countries and speak 42 languages.

For more information about Family Services, please visit [www.fs-inc.org](http://www.fs-inc.org).

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