

The Alliance

SUMMER 2011

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Mission

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance protects children by teaching citizens to recognize and report child abuse and neglect by providing information, educational materials and programs that promote positive parenting.

PFSA Launches New On-line Course for Education Professionals

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSA), in partnership with the Capital Area Intermediate Unit (CAIU), is now offering an online course on recognizing and reporting child abuse specifically designed for education professionals.

Education professionals who come into contact with children through the course of their work are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect; they have a legal obligation to report suspected abuse and neglect. Teachers, guidance counselors, school nurses and other education professionals spend more awake time with children than most other groups, putting them in a unique position to recognize the signs that a child may be a victim of abuse. It is critical that they understand the signs and know what to do if they suspect one of their students has been abused. In 2010, mandated reporters who work in schools made nearly 7,000 reports of suspected child abuse in Pennsylvania.

PFSA's new online program reviews the elements of child abuse, including the legal definitions of a child and a perpetrator and categories and indicators of abuse. It provides an overview of mandated reporting obligations, including how to make a report, protections for those who report,

and the liability for failing to report. The training also outlines the physical and behavioral indicators of abuse, the proper procedures for reporting, guidelines to working more effectively with local children and youth services agencies, and the key points of the Child Protective Services Law.

The online course is a convenient way for teachers to obtain Act 48 credits, especially over summer break. The course can be completed over a series of online sessions or in one, using the teacher-friendly platform Moodle. Four credit hours are provided through the CAIU upon successful completion of the course. Every month the course is offered through the CAIU with registration ending on the last day of the previous month.

In addition, PFSA continues to offer onsite, face-to-face training, which is offered free and in many locations statewide as well as our online course through our website.

For more information visit the CAIU website at www.caiu.org/services/professional-development.aspx and scroll down the page to the calendar of events. Visit the PFSA website at www.pa-fsa.org and click on "Mandated Reporters" and then choose "Online Training Course." ❖



Home Alone

Whether it's an unexpected snow day or a summer break from school, almost every parent is faced with the decision of whether and when to leave a child home alone. Many people look to the law for help in making this decision, but **there is no "legal age" in Pennsylvania when a child can or should be left alone.** It's up to parents to assess their child and living situation and decide what's best for their family.

Being trusted to stay home alone can be a positive experience for a child who is mature and well-prepared; it can boost self-esteem and promote responsibility. However, children face real risks when left unsupervised. If they are not mature and prepared enough to handle situations that may come up while they're alone, children may be frightened, injured or at risk of other harm. Leaving a child alone can be considered child neglect, especially if doing so puts the child in danger.

How does a parent make this important decision? Here are some things to consider:

- **Age and maturity** – Children mature at different rates, so age is only one factor. Consider how your child has shown responsibility in the past. Is your child physically and mentally able to care for himself? Does your child obey rules and make good decisions?
- **Your child's feelings** – Talk with your child to find out whether he is afraid to be home alone. How comfortable is he?
- **Time** – When and how a child is left home alone can make a difference to his safety and success. How long will your child be alone at one time? Will it be during the day or evening, at meal times or

bed time? How often will your child be home alone?

- **Other children** – Children who are ready to stay home alone may not be ready to care for younger siblings. How many children will be in the home without an adult? How do the children get along and how capable is the older child of caring for younger ones?
- **Safety** – Assess your home and think about any safety hazards that your child may come across. How safe is your neighborhood? Do you have a safety plan for emergencies, and can your child follow this plan? Does your child know his address, phone number and how to call 911 if needed? Can he contact you at all times if needed? Who else is available to help in an emergency (a neighbor, for example)?

Once you have determined that your child is ready to stay home alone, here are some suggestions to help you prepare your child and to help you feel more comfortable about him being home alone:

- **Have a trial period** – Leave your child alone for a short time while you are nearby and see how she manages.
- **Role play** – Act out possible situations to help your child learn what to do.
- **Establish rules** – Make sure your child knows what is (and what is not) allowed when you are not home. Many parents find that having a chore list to keep kids busy is a good strategy.
- **Check in** – Call your child while you are gone, or have a friend stop by to check on your child.



- **Talk about your child's feelings** – Encourage your child to share his feelings about staying home alone and address any concerns he has.
- **Don't overdo it** – Even a mature, responsible child should not be alone too much or too often. Consider after school programs, community centers or church activities to help keep your child busy and supervised when you are away from home.

Parents should remember that the safety of a child should always be the first priority! For more information on helping your child be home alone, visit the parenting section of our website-www.pa-fsa.org.

Adapted from "Leaving Your Child Home Alone," Child Welfare Information Gateway. ❖

PFSA cares about keeping our planet green for future generations. Our newsletter is printed on 50% recycled paper and is also available electronically. Visit our website at www.pa-fsa.org to sign up for the e-version of "The Alliance".♻️

Front Porch Moments

You are attending a religious service and watch as Dwayne, the father sitting in front of you, is struggling to keep his son, Andre, quiet during the service. You watch Dwayne get “rouger” with Andre until he finally grabs his son by the arm and quickly leaves the room. You are concerned about what might be happening out in the hallway. What do you do?



PFSA's new program initiative, The Front Porch Project (FPP), can help you to think through just such a scenario and decide how – and whether – to get involved when you are concerned about a child in your community, neighborhood or a public place. Developed by the American Humane Association (AHA), FPP is sponsored in Pennsylvania by PFSA; two-day trainings are now being scheduled across the state.

“Front Porch Moments” are what we call those **times when a little interaction can make a big impact** on a parent who is struggling or a child who needs some extra supervision or attention. The moment when you, as a neighbor, community member, friend, or family member, step forward to help a child (or a parent) is important in helping the parent feel supported and the child feel safe.

There are many ways you might respond to the Front Porch Moment described above:

- You might head for the rest room and casually observe what’s going on. Once you check it out, you might not be concerned and just keep walking.
- Maybe you’d spend a few minutes with Dwayne and Andre in the hallway, perhaps telling Andre that you also needed to get up and stretch a little.
- Dwayne might appreciate an offer to take Andre outside for a few minutes while he takes a break, or you might offer to walk Andre to the child care room.
- Does the religious organization have quiet toys or games for children during the service? If not, you might suggest a basket of such items be placed in the back of the room for families.

Share your Front Porch Moments! When you come across a situation similar to the one above, and you find a solution that works for you, contact PFSA and we’ll pass your ideas on to others. An easy way to do this is to visit our blog at www.protectpakids.org.

To learn more about the Front Porch Project, and sponsor or attend a local training, visit our website at www.pa-fsa.org or call (800) 448-4906. ❖

JOIN OUR



Find out about the latest developments in child welfare and family support programs by reading PFSA's new blog at www.protectpakids.org (you can also access the blog through our website, www.pa-fsa.org). Get involved in your community and support families, connect with others and share ideas about how **we can all work to protect children from abuse.** ❖

Find Us on Facebook

Keep up with PFSA events and happenings on our new Facebook page. You can find out about training opportunities, new publications, and special events, as well as view our weekly Tuesday Tips and other resources. Next time you're online, check us out on Facebook! ❖



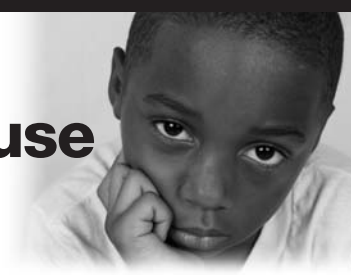
Suspect Child Abuse?



Call **ChildLine**
1-800-932-0313

Child abuse hotline available 24 hours a day

Responding to Disclosures of Child Abuse



When a child tells a trusted adult that she has been abused, the response of the adult can make a big difference in the way a child feels about the disclosure. It can also help – or hinder – an investigation by child welfare or law enforcement staff. Here are some suggestions for what to do:

When a child discloses abuse:

- Control your emotions
- Listen to the child
- Reassure the child
- Document
- Call ChildLine – 1-800-932-0313

What NOT to do when a child first discloses abuse:

- Do not force the child to talk
- Do not require the child to tell others in your organization
- Do not be suggestive in your questioning
- Do not teach body parts
- Do not challenge the child's honesty
- Do not ask "why"
- Do not try to "prove or disprove" child abuse
- Do not demand details
- Do not use words such as "good/bad"
- Do not use dolls or stuffed animals

- Do not try to change the child's mind
- Do not touch the child without asking the child's permission
- Do not make promises to the child that you cannot keep

PFSA offers a free three-hour training on how to respond to disclosures, as well as a laminated tip card with information for mandated reporters. Contact us at (800) 448-4906 to learn more or schedule a training. ❖

State Issues 2010 Child Abuse Report



The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare recently issued its report on child abuse for 2010, showing a decline in both reported and substantiated cases of child abuse last year, along with a decline in injuries and fatalities from child abuse. This is good evidence that **progress is being made, but the battle is far from won.** "We are encouraged by the 2010 Annual Child Abuse Report," PFSA Executive Director Angela Liddle said, "but this should not be cause to let down our guard or let our effort to combat child abuse wane – just the opposite. We can see that we're making a difference. We should redouble our efforts."

Among the report's findings:

- There were 24,615 reports of suspected child and student abuse in 2010; 15% were substantiated (proven that abuse had occurred). There were 727 fewer reports and 287 fewer substantiated reports than in 2009.

- Thirty-three children died from abuse in 2010, 10 fewer than in 2009. Nearly all of the fatalities—96%—involved children under 5 years old. Most perpetrators of fatal abuse (75%) were parents.
- Approximately 9 out of every 1,000 children living in Pennsylvania were reported as victims of suspected abuse in 2010, while 1 out of every 1,000 children was found to be a victim of child abuse.
- Substantiated reports of child abuse in 2010 accounted for 4,810 injuries to children. Physical injuries ranged from bruises, cuts, and abrasions to broken bones, skull fractures, and scaldings. The majority of injuries (63%) were due to sexual abuse.
- Child abuse is geographically universal. Reported and substantiated cases of child abuse occurred in all 67 counties in

2010—encompassing all urban, suburban, and rural areas of the state. The majority of counties (35) saw a decline in the number of abuse cases reported.

- Mandated reporters—people required by law to report child abuse—accounted for 77% of reports of suspected child abuse and 77% of substantiated reports. Schools were by far the largest source of reports from mandated reporters.

Anyone who suspects a child is being abused or neglected should contact ChildLine at (800) 932-1013; the line is open 24 hours a day and you may remain anonymous. The full report can be viewed on PFSA's website – www.pa-fsa.org – in the "About Child Abuse" section. ❖

Child Abuse Prevention Month 2011



This mural was created by mothers incarcerated at SCI Muncy. It depicts their feelings about “parenting from the inside” and their hopes for reunification after their release.



Judith Youshock of Heart 2 Art paints alongside children and college students at the Indiana mural.



Everyone who paints is invited to sign their name to the back of the mural.



Even the Easter Bunny added a few strokes to the York mural.



Over 250 people participated in the York mural event, including members of several Girl Scout troops.

did you know?

- ✓ That the blue ribbon has been the nationally known symbol for Child Abuse Prevention Month since 1989. Blue ribbons are available from PFSA throughout the year and can be used to raise awareness that child abuse occurs in all areas of the state and in all economic and social groups.
- ✓ PFSA has been leading the Child Abuse Prevention Month efforts in PA for almost 15 years, including legislative events, community-based rallies and conferences, as well as our popular Painting for Prevention events.
- ✓ This year’s Painting for Prevention events involved over 500 people in public events in two counties; a third event involved 12 women incarcerated at SCI Muncy – all three events produced colorful murals designed by the participants that remain in the communities as a constant reminder that child abuse can be prevented. ❖

E-newsletter Available

Have “The Alliance” delivered to your inbox! Sign up for our quarterly newsletter on our Web site – www.pa-fsa.org. You can also unsubscribe to the paper newsletter by contacting PFSA at info@pa-fsa.org. Forward “The Alliance” to your colleagues and friends to help spread the word about PFSA. ❖



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Pennsylvania
Family Support Alliance™

Protecting children from abuse

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"Visit us at www.pa-fsa.org"

**STANDARDS FOR
EXCELLENCE**

**"We will
be known
forever by
the tracks
we leave."**

--Dakota Proverb

