

# The Alliance

SPRING 2015

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## Mission

*Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance provides a positive environment for children through the provision of education in parenting skills, support services for families and training programs for professionals.*

## Child Abuse Prevention Month 2015

**Everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse. What's your role?**

Child abuse is a serious problem in every community in Pennsylvania. For decades, Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance has partnered with local family support programs, legislators, schools, faith-based groups and county government offices to stop child abuse – not only after abuse occurs, but by preventing it from happening in the first place. We also focus on keeping children safe when a situation may escalate to abuse.

We can't prevent child abuse when we view it as the responsibility of a few groups of people – "that's Department of Human Services' job" . . . "the police should handle all that" . . . "why isn't the county doing more?" It's time for us to see child abuse as everyone's problem and know that everyone has a role to play in protecting PA's kids from abuse.

**Mandated reporters** (people required by law to report suspected child abuse) make over 75% of the calls to ChildLine, the state's hotline for reporting suspected child abuse. They are often the only link between a child and safety from abuse, and they often spend much of the day's "awake hours" with a child. The mandated reporter's role is to be aware of the signs of possible child abuse and to make a report whenever he or she has a reasonable cause to suspect that abuse has occurred.

The earlier abuse is recognized, the more likely it is that services to address underlying problems will be effective. When mandated reporters build relationships with county child protection agencies, they strengthen the safety net for kids in their communities.

**Parents and others in a parental role** are the largest group of perpetrators of child abuse. By learning how to discipline without physical punishment (which can escalate to abuse), understanding child development and normal behavior, and accepting help and support from others, parents can create positive, nurturing homes for their children. They can also prevent abuse of their children by other adults by creating open communication with their children and knowing the signs of abuse.

**Everyone** in the community can do something to help a child or support a parent. From a neighbor who "keeps an eye out" as kids play in a park, to a stranger who offers a struggling parent a hand or a smile, to a church that sponsors after-school activities – we can all find ways to become part of the solution, one child at a time.

More Child Abuse Prevention Month information on page 2. ●

# Child Abuse Prevention Month 2015

Each April, PFSA sponsors events to increase awareness of child abuse prevention and the many ways of protecting PA's kids from abuse. We will kick off the month with our annual legislative breakfast on Wednesday, April 1, at the Harrisburg Hilton. PFSA will recognize Senate Majority Leader Jake Corman for his outstanding commitment to protecting children and successfully fighting for the \$60 million PSU-NCAA settlement funds to remain in Pennsylvania. Visit our website at [www.pa-fsa.org](http://www.pa-fsa.org) for details and ticket information.



Painting the 2014 mural in Philadelphia.

Here's what's on the calendar for this year:

- Wednesday, April 1, 8:00 AM in Harrisburg – Child Abuse Prevention Kickoff Breakfast “Celebrating Our Partners for Change.” Advance ticket (\$35) required.
- Saturday, April 11 - Hershey 10K Race. Advance registration required.
- Saturday, April 11, 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM – “Painting for Prevention,” Galleria Mall, Johnstown. Open to the public at no charge.
- Saturday, April 18, 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM in Bethlehem – The Front Porch Project. Advance registration (free) required.
- Wednesday, April 22, 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM in Coudersport (Potter County)- The Front Porch Project. Advance registration (free) required.
- Saturday, April 25, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM – “Painting for Prevention,” Martin Memorial Library, York. Open to the public at no charge.
- Monday, April 27 and Tuesday, April 28, 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM in Indiana – The Front Porch Project. Advance registration (free) required.

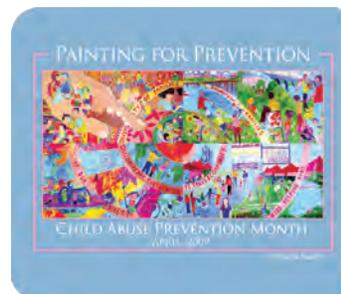
At the national level, this year's theme is “Making Meaningful Connections.” When we make meaningful connections with children, youth and families, we help parents build the skills and access the resources they need to raise happy and healthy children. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services publishes a yearly *Resource Guide for Child Abuse Prevention Month*; it offers tips for parents and communities, suggestions for ways to build community awareness and an in-depth look at the protective factors that keep kids safe. Visit our website – [www.pa-fsa.org](http://www.pa-fsa.org) – to link to all the national resources.

## Why Blue Ribbons?

The blue ribbon is a positive symbol of the investment every adult and every Pennsylvania community can make to strengthen families and make sure that children grow up safe and healthy.



A grandmother named Bonnie Finney began the Blue Ribbon Campaign in Norfolk, Virginia in the spring of 1989, as a memorial for her 3-year-old grandson, who was murdered by his mother's boyfriend. She tied a ribbon on her van and encouraged her friends to do the same. The spirit of the blue ribbon grew and, by the following year, it had become the symbol for child abuse prevention. Today, numerous organizations around the nation continue to use the blue ribbon as a reminder of the victims of child maltreatment and of the positive steps that can be taken to prevent child abuse and neglect



PFSA has been creating “Painting for Prevention” murals since 2008.

During April, PFSA distributes thousands of blue ribbon pins, the national symbol of child abuse prevention. Visit our website ([www.pa-fsa.org](http://www.pa-fsa.org)) for more information on Child Abuse Prevention Month events, to order tickets or purchase blue ribbon pins. ●

## Connect with Us!



An “ounce of prevention” each day in April.

## Frequently Answered Questions

PFSA staff field numerous calls each day about the recent changes to the Child Protective Services Law.

For example:

*Q: I've heard that some volunteers are now mandated reporters. Are they required to have training under the new law?*

A: No. While it is certainly a good practice, and highly recommended that volunteers be included in any training offered to employees, there is no requirement under the law that they be trained. Training requirements include three groups of people:

- Individuals who apply for or renew a health-related license under the Department of State.
- Agencies who are licensed or registered under the Department of Human Services.
- Employees and independent contractors of schools.

*Q: What about requirements for clearances? Has that changed?*

A: Yes, there have been several changes to who must receive clearances. These individuals need to obtain new child abuse, state criminal and federal criminal history clearances every 36 months:

- An employee of child-care services.
- A foster parent or adoptive parent.
- A family day-care provider.
- Anyone over 14 years of age who's applying for a paid position having direct contact with children.
- Child-care providers in child-care facilities or programs.
- Anyone over 18 years of age residing in the home of a foster parent for at least 30 days in a calendar year.
- School employees.

Beginning July 1, 2015, volunteers having contact with or responsibility for children will be required to submit a child abuse and state criminal history clearance prior to approval as a volunteer and every 36 months after. Federal history clearances are not required provided all of the following conditions are met:

- The position is unpaid.
- The individual has been a PA resident for the past 10 years.
- The individual swears or affirms in writing that he has not been convicted of any of the crimes or equivalent crimes in any other jurisdiction listed under section 6344 (c) of the Child Protective Services Law.

Note: No one is "grandfathered in." Anyone in the categories above must obtain the required clearances. Persons whose clearances are older than 36 months will need to have new clearances before the end of 2015.

*Q: I completed PFSA's mandated reporter training, but when I applied to have my health-related license renewed, I was told they have not received verification of my training. What happened?*

A: We realize that there has been some confusion and frustration as everyone works through the new system. As an approved provider, PFSA is required to upload participants' information directly to Department of State (DOS). We gather the information using our CE web form. At the end of training, participants are provided with the URL to the web form. It is essential that participants enter this information correctly, exactly as it appears on the license. DOS completes a match of the information and forwards it to the appropriate board.

If the board tells a licensee they do not have the licensee's information, the problem is one of two issues which are easily remedied.

- 1) The participant did not complete the web form. Please check training materials or call PFSA for the URL to the web form.
- 2) DOS was unable to make a match because the information provided is not the same as DOS records. Call PFSA to verify information; a resubmission may be required.

Please allow at least ten days between submitting the web form and renewal or application of a license. ●

## Community Innovation Zones: Improving Outcomes for Kids Entering School

This winter and spring, PFSA is part of Pennsylvania's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge via our partnership with The Foundation for Enhancing Communities (TFEC), a recipient of one of 12 Community Innovation Zone (CIZ) grants. Grants were awarded last fall to help bridge the achievement gap for at-risk young children.



*Parents and children have fun while learning in Harrisburg School District programs.*

CIZs bring together early childhood educators, parents, parent engagement staff, business leaders and service providers to expand successful programs for children from low-income families, children with disabilities or developmental delays and children experiencing homelessness. PFSA's role is to provide training and materials in the Harrisburg School District.

"This project gives PFSA a chance to share what we've learned over the years – how to get parents excited and involved in their child's school experience and how to support the professionals who work with kids every day – to improve outcomes for children entering kindergarten. We're excited about being part of this team," says PFSA President and CEO Angela Liddle. ●

# New Website Launches

PFSA relies on technology to educate mandated reporters, parents and the general public about child abuse prevention. After a year of planning, working with



design teams and web developers, writing new content, and updating information, we're pleased to launch our website with a fresh look and lots of new features. Among the changes we made:

- Our new website will allow you to quickly navigate to exactly what you want to know, with each section color-coded by audience. So mandated reporters, for example, can read about the new legal requirements and find answers to frequently asked questions by going directly to the yellow tab across the screen.

- PFSA's state-of-the-art online training is easier than ever to access and fully meets all of the requirements for training under the amendments to CPSL. We electronically submit your continuing education credits to health-related licensing boards under the Department of State.
- We added interactive quizzes for parents and community members. For example, we help you think through how to step in and help a child when you're concerned. Parents can answer true and false questions designed to increase knowledge of child development and address common parenting concerns.
- The most recent data on child abuse and neglect, best practices for prevention, and trends in the child welfare field are easy to find from our home page's "Understanding Child Abuse and Neglect" section. A special section contains PFSA's research on child abuse in Pennsylvania.
- It's easy for you to join the fight against child abuse with one click – contact your legislator, receive email alerts and updates, donate to our prevention efforts and find out more about protecting kids.
- When you order parent education materials, blue ribbon pins or mandated reporter resources from our online store, we use the latest technology and security features to safeguard your transaction.
- Find out where we are holding prevention events, when new legislative or policy issues are at the forefront and other "hot topics" with a quick look at any page of the site.
- We added a brand-new section for community members and those interested in our Front Porch Project. Lots of asset-building information for neighborhoods, faith-based organizations, schools and others can be found in this section.
- Pennsylvania's 24-hour hotline to report child abuse, ChildLine, is shown on every page, so it's easy for you to make a report of suspected abuse. Mandated reporters can also access electronic reporting via our website's link to the Department of Human Services.

Visit us at [www.pa-fsa.org](http://www.pa-fsa.org) and explore all the great things PFSA offers online! ●

## Welcome!

We welcome **Sean M. McCormack, Esq.** to PFSA's Board of Directors. Mr. McCormack is a Chief Deputy District Attorney in Dauphin County. He received his B.A. from Villanova University and his J.D. from Widener University School of Law. He has worked in the Dauphin County District Attorney's Office since 1989 and has been the Chief of Dauphin County's Child Abuse Prosecution Unit since 1995. He has tried over 150 cases, the majority being child sexual assault cases. He is the recipient of numerous awards for his work in the area of child abuse prosecutions. He served in the PA Army National Guard for 21 years and served as a member of the PA Joint State Government Commission's Advisory Committee on Services to Children and Youth. Mr. McCormack has lectured at the Pennsylvania Bar Institute (PBI) Criminal Law Symposium and is a frequent instructor at the Municipal Police Academy at Harrisburg Area Community College. He was recently named to the Pennsylvania Child Advocacy Center Advisory Committee (CACAC), as well as the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Medical/Legal Advisory Board on Child Abuse.

Welcome **Shy Lawing**, the newest addition to PFSA's staff, as our Mandated Reporter Training Program Coordinator. She is responsible for the administration of PFSA's statewide Train-the-Trainer Program for mandated reporters of child abuse, including coordination of training sessions, inventory of training materials and provision of technical assistance. Ms. Lawing is a central PA native and a graduate of Bishop McDevitt High School. She is a West Chester University graduate with a M.S. in Higher Educational Counseling and a M.Ed. in Educational Psychology and has been working in the human services and education fields for over 13 years. Ms. Lawing is the mother of two beautiful girls, Kennedy & Imani - they are the apple of her eye! ●

## Thank You...

PFSA thanks **The Donald B. and Dorothy L. Stabler Foundation** for its ongoing commitment to protecting Pennsylvania's children by funding the development of our online Mandated Reporter Training. The Stabler Foundation was established in 1966 exclusively for charitable, religious, scientific, literary, or educational purposes. ●

## Here's The Proof

Over the years, many parents involved in PFSA programming have shared stories of the challenges and joys of raising children, often in situations that are less than ideal. These stories help other parents learn and grow, while professionals who work with families gain insight into “what works” with families. But very few have reached out to others as consistently as Marshall Harrison of Harrisburg. He has been working with PFSA to help other parents for over four years – in this newsletter and PFSA-sponsored family support programs, as well as in his job as house manager for the Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center in Harrisburg.

“I’m now doing all the things I only dreamed of doing in the past. It’s real now,” he says. Marshall spends much of his free time with his family – his girlfriend Sarah, daughters Clarissa, age 26, Mikayla, 10 and son Carter, 3. “Saturdays we’re at Mikayla’s basketball games, or whatever else she’s doing. We eat out as a family, have fun and just hang out together. My oldest daughter lives in New York and she comes to visit, or we go there.” He especially likes taking care of Carter and is proud that Carter has never known his dad as incarcerated or addicted to drugs.

Marshall credits his relationship with God, his network of supportive people and the willingness of his family to forgive and open their hearts to him as the factors that have changed his life so completely over the past five years. “I had harmed my family in so many ways – being in and out of jail, not being honest, breaking promises – the way you do when you’re addicted to drugs. Especially with my older daughter, I’m blessed to have a connection with her now, because even though I wasn’t part of her life as she was growing up, she has given me a second chance and I’m just so grateful to be a dad” he says. “I didn’t want to miss out on any more of my children’s lives, and that became the priority for me.” Now, he looks for ways to share the message that parenting is the most rewarding part of his life.

### PFSA Noted in Child Abuse Prevention Report

Last year, staff members of the Joint State Government Commission prepared a report for Pennsylvania’s General Assembly, in which they examined child abuse prevention programs across the state and outlined the work of each organization. The report, published in November 2014, included PFSA and looked at our three initiatives: Family Support Programs for parents, The Front Porch Project, and Mandated Reporter Training. In each program area, the authors noted the effectiveness of our programs.

When discussing the services PFSA offers to local affiliates, who use our materials, training and technical assistance in their work with families, the report noted that “by addressing several risk factors and providing additional oversight to vulnerable children, the

Recently, Marshall accompanied PFSA Program Director Beth Bitler to do a brief presentation to senior staff of the PA Board of Probation and Parole in Camp Hill. We were invited to talk about how PFSA helps incarcerated parents reconnect with family through our weekly support programs in Community Corrections Centers, where Mr. Harrison first learned about PFSA. He shared his experiences as an ex-offender, recovering addict and – most importantly – father. “If you would have told me a couple years ago that I’d be here talking to the people who were watching me,” he said with a smile, “I would have said you were crazy.” He went on to talk about the crucial role that support plays in lives of fathers who want to get back on track with their children. “You can’t really do it alone. You need people to talk to when you’re not sure you’re on the right path, and answers to questions. This program gave me that support.”

The audience was impressed by Marshall’s courage and humor as he talked with them. **“Mr. Harrison is proof that change can happen with determination, support and mentoring. He is an example of what works through community services and collaborations such as exist with PA Family Support Alliance,”** said Daniel McIntyre, Deputy Executive Director for the PA Board of Probation and Parole. “I think we were all inspired and uplifted by how Mr. Harrison now gives back to the community. It added so much to our meeting to see that programs do work.”

Thanks to Marshall Harrison for sharing his life experiences with others and to the PA Board of Probation and Parole for listening! ●



*Marshall Harrison and his family.*

PFSA Family Support Program appears to be an effective prevention initiative.” The description of our Mandated Reporter Training Program, which is a substantial part of the prevention work we do, included our commitment to introducing new technologies to meet then ever-increasing needs of mandated reporters. The Front Porch Project, now in its fourth year, was described as “a good example of a well-designed and well-executed community-based, general-public initiative that may play a notable part in facilitating primary prevention in the community.”

We appreciate the thoroughness with which the Joint State Government Commission conducted their research and the opportunity to talk about the important work of child abuse prevention. ●

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*Protecting children from abuse*

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“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”

— *Barack Obama*

