



# Kinship Link

Volume 14, Issue 4

April 2018

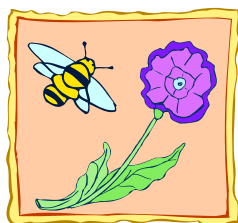
## Pro Kinship for Kids

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## April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

When we help children do better today, we all do better tomorrow! The expression “children are our future” has been around for quite some time and is never more true than now. We know that child development is a foundation for community and economic development, as capable children grow to become the foundation of a prosperous and sustainable society. We also know that the basic architecture of the brain is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues through adulthood. The interactions a child has in his or her home, school, and community become part of this intricate brain architecture. Toxic stress, such as neglect or abuse, damages the developing brain and leads to problems in learning, and behavior, and increased susceptibility to physical and mental illness.

What is child abuse? Child abuse is any maltreatment of a child that results in harm or injury. Child abuse

includes: **Physical abuse** - an injury to a child that is not an accident, for example, hurting a child by hitting, burning, biting, or shaking. **Sexual abuse** - any sexual contact with a child, including exhibitionism, photographs or films, or prostitution. **Physical neglect** - failure to give the child food, clothing, medical care, shelter, or supervision. **Emotional abuse or neglect** - an abusive parent may scare a child by threatening to leave him or her, or may be severely critical. A neglectful parent may not spend any time with the child or may never show the child any affection. A neglectful parent may not provide enough food or medical attention.

Know the warning signs of abuse. Children who are abused may show physical and behavioral signs. Please pay attention to the treatment of children around you. You may be a child’s only lifeline to safety. Child abuse is

everyone’s business. If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, call child protective services at Family Services.

General signs of abuse are present in children who seem:

- Nervous around adults or afraid of certain adults
- Reluctant to go home (for example, coming to school early or staying late)
- Very passive and withdrawn - or aggressive and disruptive
- Tired a lot or complaining of nightmares or insomnia
- Fearful and anxious
- To show sudden changes in behavior or school performances

Some signs of physical abuse:

- Unexplained burns, bruises, black eyes, or other injuries
- Apparent fear of a parent or caretaker
- Faded bruises or healing injuries after missing school

## April is Child Abuse Prevention Month continued

### Some signs of sexual abuse:

- Difficulty walking or sitting, or other indications of injury in the genital area
- Sexual knowledge or behavior beyond what is normal for age
- Running away from home

### Some signs of physical neglect:

- Missing school a lot
- Begging/stealing money or food
- Lacking needed medical or dental care
- Being frequently dirty
- Using alcohol or other drugs
- Saying there is no one at home to take care of them

### Some signs of emotional abuse or neglect:

- Acting overly mature or immature for age
- Extreme changes in behavior
- Delays in physical or emotional development
- Attempted suicide

- Lack of emotional attachment to the parent

You should also consider the possibility of abuse if a parent or caregiver shows the following signs. Signs of an abusive adult:

- Seems unconcerned about the child's welfare at school or at home
- Denies problems at school or at home, or blames the child for them
- Sees the child as worthless or as a burden
- Avoids discussing the child's injuries or gives conflicting explanations for them
- Seems isolated from other parents, and school and community activities
- Uses harsh physical discipline or asks other caretakers to use it
- Depends on the child for emotional support

- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- Seems indifferent to the child
- Seems secretive or tries to isolate the children from other children
- Frequently blames, belittles, or insults the child

These signs don't prove that a child is being abused. However, they could be a sign that the child and his or her family needs help. Work with them to get the help they need to be a better, supportive family.

Overall, the ability to change brain architecture and behavior decreases over time, so getting it right early is less costly, to society and individuals, than trying to fix it later. This is why we need to support families as a whole community. For when we help children do better today, we all do better tomorrow!!



## Do All You Can for Kids!

It takes all of us to create strong communities that support strong families and nurture strong children. Here is what we all need to do:

1. Be a nurturing adult. Children need to know that they are special, loved, and capable of following their dreams.
2. Learn about how children grow and mature, and have realistic expectations of what children can and cannot do.
3. Help a friend. Being a parent isn't easy. Someone you know may be struggling with his or her parenting. Offer to take care of the children so the parent can take a break.
4. Help yourself as a parent. When the big and little problems of your everyday life pile up to the point you feel overwhelmed and out of control take time out. Take a deep breath. Turn on some music. Know who to call for support.
5. Get involved. Advocate for families. Offer assurance through a smile or a positive comment if you see a parent struggling. Show empathy - imagine yourself in the other person's shoes. Offer encouragement - say something positive that you see about the child or adult. Distract or redirect their attention away from the stressful situation.
6. Promote programs in schools and the community about child abuse. Educating children and adults about prevention can help keep children safe.
7. Report suspected abuse or neglect. If you have a reason to believe a child has been, or may be, harmed, call your local family services department to make a child protection report.

You may be the only caring person that a child has to count on for help!

100  
Years  
FROM  
Now

... it will not matter what my bank account was, the type of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove, but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a **CHILD**.