



## Dear Friend of Families

Oh, how we grow!

These four words - the theme for this April and for all of 2009 - honor and challenge us. They honor the ways our organization and our state have grown over the past 30 years. They also challenge us to work to grow a better North Carolina for years to come.

Growing healthy, happy kids is not just about having healthy, happy kids today; it is about building a healthier, more prosperous, more successful North Carolina for us all.

In 2009, Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina celebrates 30 years of working with you to make our state a better place for children and families. As both a community of advocates and as a state, we have experienced tremendous change over the course of those 30 years.

North Carolina is a much bigger, diverse and more populous place than it was when we started this work. North Carolina has 40% more children than it did 30 years ago. This is our most vulnerable population, but also one that offers us great hope. These children are our future workers, teachers, voters, professionals, and parents.

We have learned tremendous lessons about how to do our job in a way that is proven to change families, children and lives. Thirty years ago, we simply wanted to let people know child abuse existed and how to intervene after abuse had occurred. Now, we are working statewide to train professionals, educate the public, and implement evidence-based programs that prevent abuse before it happens.

We are responding to an urgent call: Science now shows that experiences in childhood build the architecture of a child's brain and lay the foundation for a child's future. The toxic stress of abuse and neglect impairs brain development causing lifelong health, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral problems. So, when we prevent abuse, we are creating healthier children now, as well as creating a better North Carolina down the road - one with fewer incarcerations, instances of abusive behaviors, and unintended pregnancies; one with less heart disease, liver disease and obesity; and one with more caring, contributing adults.

Our children are growing. How they grow is up to all adults. When you support children and families by reaching out, advocating for and providing evidence-based programs in your community, and helping spread awareness, you are ensuring that today's children are healthy and have the opportunity to lead our state to a great future.

Thank you for being our partner and for helping children, your community and our state grow in a better direction.

Here's to a healthier, brighter future for all of us!

*Rosemarie B. Allen*

Rosemarie "Rosie" G. Allen  
President and Chief Executive Officer • Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina

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# Child Abuse and Neglect in North Carolina

Each year, more than 100,000 children are reported as being abused or neglected in North Carolina. Every accepted report is investigated through a strengths-based, family-centered assessment conducted by either local law enforcement or the local department of social services. These professionals recognize that parenting is an exceptionally difficult job, and that many families face issues that make parenting all the more challenging. This approach ensures that children who need protection are protected and that families who need help get help.

While the number of reports may sound high, cases of abuse tend to be underreported. Adults in your community must have the knowledge they need to recognize and report abuse and neglect. Your community must also have adequate resources available to help support and strengthen families when they need help.

## Child Abuse and Neglect in North Carolina - SFY 2007-2008<sup>1</sup>

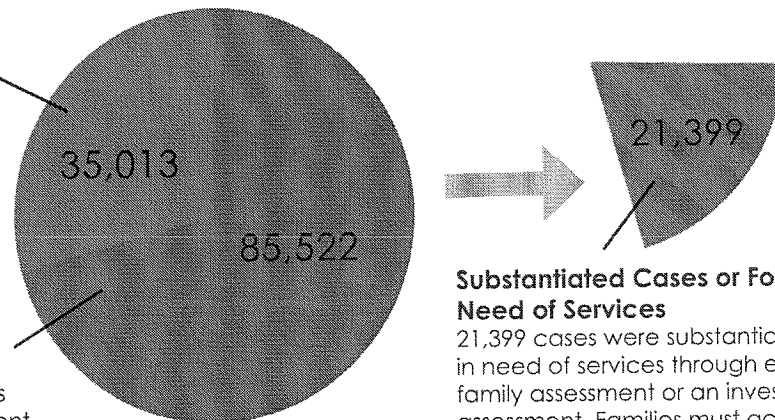
120,535 children were reported as being abused or neglected SFY 2007-2008.  
All of these children were assessed through an investigative assessment or a family assessment.  
21,399 cases were substantiated or the families were found in need of services.  
25 children died at the hand of a parent or caregiver in 2007.<sup>2</sup>

### Investigative Assessments

35,013 children were served through an investigative assessment. Investigative assessments are used in all cases of physical abuse and sexual abuse, or if a family chooses not to participate in a family assessment.

### Family Assessments

85,522 families collaborated with their local DSS to improve their family's situation. These cases include neglect, difficulty meeting basic needs, and cases of inappropriate discipline. If abuse is discovered or the family chooses not to participate, an investigative assessment begins.



### Substantiated Cases or Found in Need of Services

21,399 cases were substantiated or found in need of services through either a family assessment or an investigative assessment. Families must access services with the primary goals of protecting the child and preserving the family. In some cases, prosecution of an abuser results.

## Key Points

- Child abuse and neglect is an underreported crime. As an adult, your job is to make sure that children are safe and that your community has adequate resources to help families.
- Child abuse is an issue that affects us all. It leads to both short-and long-term mental, behavioral, cognitive and health issues that affect the entire community. Some of these effects include heart and lung disease, obesity, depression, drug and alcohol abuse, criminal behavior, and poor academic achievement.<sup>3</sup>
- Child abuse is preventable! Your community can prevent child abuse and neglect by supporting proven programs that help strengthen families and help parents create safe, nurturing home environments.

## Prevention Gives Every Child the Foundation for a Better Future

Every adult has a role to play in supporting children and families. Only when our communities work together, can we truly offer children the opportunity to grow into caring, contributing adults.

<sup>1</sup> Data was provided by the NCDHHS-DSS Central Registry for Child Maltreatment for the SFY 2008 (July 1, 2007- June 30, 2008)

<sup>2</sup> Data was provided by the NC Office of the State Medical Examiner

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, ACE Study: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccphp/ace>.

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# What You Need to Know About Child Abuse and Neglect

Our goal will always be to prevent child abuse before it ever occurs. That said, adults still need to be vigilant to protect children from abuse. By knowing the signs and definitions of abuse, you can help a child by responding to any suspicions you might have.

## Your Role in Protecting Children

North Carolina law requires all adults to report suspected child maltreatment. You do not need proof that maltreatment has occurred; you only need reasonable cause to suspect maltreatment. You do not need anyone's permission to file a report. You can report anonymously; even if you give your name, it will not be revealed. Remember, it is your job as an adult to help protect children.

## What is Child Maltreatment?

Maltreatment comes in four forms: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect.

### *Physical Maltreatment*

Physical Abuse is defined as serious injury inflicted by or allowed by a parent/caregiver or substantial risk to a child by non-accidental means. Signs of possible physical maltreatment include:

- Unexplained bruises in various states of healing.
- Self-destructive behaviors such as hitting or biting oneself.
- Welts, bite marks, bald spots.
- Unexplained burns, especially burns that resemble cigarette burns or glove-like burns on the hands.
- Unexplained fractures, abrasions, or wounds.
- Expression of unusual fear of parent/caregiver.

### *Emotional Abuse*

Emotional abuse is the expression of attitudes or behaviors toward a child that may create serious emotional or psychological damage. Signs of possible emotional abuse include:

- Speech disorders, developmental delays.
- Ulcers, asthma, severe allergies.
- Habit disorders including thumb sucking or rocking.
- Extreme passive or aggressive behavior.
- Very low self-esteem, antisocial, or destructive actions.

### *Sexual Abuse*

Sexual abuse is any behavior of a sexual nature imposed on a child including fondling, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration (by a finger, penis or object), exhibitionism, child pornography, and suggestive behavior or comments. Signs of possible sexual abuse include:

- Engagement in sexual behaviors that are not developmentally appropriate.
- A detailed and sophisticated understanding of sexual behaviors.
- Regression to behaviors such as thumb-sucking or limited speech.
- Pain, itching, bruising, or bleeding in the genital area.
- Delinquent or aggressive behavior, depression, or suicide attempts.
- Substance abuse, self-mutilation, promiscuity, running away.

### *Neglect*

Neglect is any serious disregard for a child's supervision, care or discipline. Signs of possible neglect include:

- Reported abandonment by parent/caregiver.
- Unattended medical needs, lack of supervision.
- Consistent hunger, inappropriate dress, poor hygiene.
- Lice, distended stomach, poor social skills, begging or stealing food.
- Frequent absences or tardiness at school.
- Extreme fatigue or falling asleep in class.

## Whom should you call?

Call your local county Department of Social Services (DSS) and ask to speak with a social worker. Share any information you have about the child – name, age, address and parent or caregiver name – and what makes you suspect abuse.

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North Carolina

1-800-CHILDREN

WWW.PREVENTCHILDABUSENC.ORG

# What You Need to Know About Child Abuse and Neglect

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## What happens after you report?

If your report is accepted for assessment, DSS will initiate an assessment within 24 hours for abuse or 72 hours for neglect. The assessment will include a visit to the home and interviews with the child, his or her family and others. DSS will work to protect the child while helping the family address issues that may be contributing to the abusive or neglectful behavior. Families most frequently work with DSS to receive services in the form of counseling, emergency foster care, help with basic needs, parenting classes, and intensive in-home services. If you disagree with DSS' decision, you can request a review of the case by the District Attorney.

## To prevent abuse and neglect, you can:

- Be a nurturing parent!
- Help a friend, neighbor, or relative who is having trouble with family.
- Educate parents you know about healthy child development or healthy parenting.
- Get involved – advocate for services that help families.
- Volunteer at a local child maltreatment prevention program.
- Help develop parenting resources at your local library.
- Ask for help for yourself.
- Tell parents in your community that parenting is hard.
- Offer your support to parents in your community.

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# Raising Public Awareness

## Raising Awareness

Child Abuse Prevention Month provides a great opportunity to talk to your community about the need for prevention.

Too often, when the public thinks of child abuse, they cue up thoughts of horrible cases of abuse reported in the news. Unfortunately, this also often leads to the feeling that one individual cannot make a difference.

Child Abuse Prevention Month gives you the opportunity to steer the conversation in a new direction. Here are some key messages for you to use when communicating with the media and the general public, along with some ways to get your message out.

## Key Messages

- Every child deserves a healthy, nurtured childhood and the opportunity to grow up to be a caring contributing adult.
- Science now shows that child abuse can cause long-term physical, mental, cognitive and behavioral consequences that affect both the child and the entire community. Some examples include increase crime, heart and liver disease, poor academic achievement, and drug and alcohol abuse.
- Prevention is possible. Preventing abuse means finding ways to help parents and other caregivers create healthy, safe, nurturing environments for children.
- The entire community must be engaged to support parents in order to reduce child abuse and neglect.

## Ways to Raise Awareness

Here are some ways to get your key messages out to your community:

### **Host a Blue Ribbon event.**

Create a family-friendly event and give your community the opportunity to rally around kids and families. Some ideas include a picnic, rubber ducky derby, bake-off, family movie night, or a family field day. Let your imagination run wild!

### **Reach out to your local media.**

Remember that your local reporters are always looking for leads. Offer them ideas for stories on parenting or family support issues. You can also use one of the PSAs or the Letter to the Editor included in this year's April Campaign packet.

### **Educate others.**

Equip your employees or coworkers with training and resources to support parents and prevent abuse. Make sure that each employee has a list of other community resources to link families to when needed.

### **Reach out to businesses.**

Ask local businesses to hand out blue ribbons and positive parenting brochures to customers and employees with children. See if a local business will help you host a blue ribbon event.

### **Honor others' good work.**

Host an event to honor strong families and those who support them – teachers, librarians, law enforcement officers, doctors and nurses, and parents themselves.

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## Media Outreach Samples

Partnering with your local media is a great way to build public awareness and build relationships in your community during Child Abuse Prevention Month. Your advocacy work helps them meet their goal of providing an important public service – keeping the community informed and engaged. Here are some templates to get you started. Remember that your story will become more powerful when you add in information about local programs and people.

### PSA :15

Parents have one of the toughest jobs around! After all, they're not just raising kids, they're building our future. Do what you can to support parents. If you are a parent, ask for help and advice. It's up to all of us to make sure that the foundation for our future is strong. For more info, visit [www.preventchildabusenc.org](http://www.preventchildabusenc.org).

### PSA :30

Parents have one of the toughest jobs around! After all, they're not just raising kids, they're building our future. Building healthy kids is one sure way to build a brighter North Carolina for all of us. Do what you can to support parents. Reach out, lend a helping hand. If you are a parent, ask for help and advice from friends, family, neighbors, doctors and others. It's up to all of us to make sure that the foundation for our future is strong. For more info, visit [www.preventchildabusenc.org](http://www.preventchildabusenc.org).

### PSA :15 Spanish Version

Los padres tienen uno de los trabajos más difíciles en todo el mundo! Después de todo, ellos no sólo están criando niños, ellos están contruyendo nuestro futuro. Haga lo que pueda para apoyar a padres de familia. Si usted es un padre, pida ayuda y consejo. Es nuestra responsabilidad asegurarnos que la fundación para nuestro futuro sea fuerte. Para más información, visite [www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org).

### PSA :30 Spanish Version

Los padres tiene uno de los trabajos mas difíciles en todo el mundo! Despues de todo, ellos no solo están criando niños, ellos están construyendo nuestro futuro. Criando niños sanos es una manera segura de construir una mejor Carolina del Norte para todos nosotros. Haga lo que pueda para ayudar a los padres de familia. Tienda una mano para ayudar. Si usted es un padre de familia pida ayuda a sus amigos, familiares, vecinos, doctores y otras personas. Es nuestra responsabilidad asegurarnos que la fundacion de nuestro futuro sea fuerte. Para mas informacion visite [www.preventchildabusenc.org](http://www.preventchildabusenc.org).

### Sample Letter to the Editor

Every child deserves a safe, healthy childhood and the opportunity to grow up to be a caring, contributing adult. Ensuring healthy environments for kids today is really about ensuring a brighter, stronger, more prosperous community for all of us. Research now shows that a child's experiences in early life actually build the architecture of the brain, and have a dramatic effect on their cognitive, social and emotional development. Research also shows that the toxic stress of abuse and neglect can severely damage this foundation. In the short term, abuse means behavioral problems in school and lower student achievement. In the long term, it means more crime, more drug problems, more heart and liver disease, and other issues. Those are costs we all bear. The good news is that child abuse is preventable through both individual and community action. Often times, abuse occurs when parents find themselves in stressful situations and don't have the parenting skills to cope. Reach out to the parents you know; little gestures like an offer to babysit can make a big difference. Make sure that your community has evidence-based parent support programs that are proven to help parents build skills and to reduce abuse. Giving children the opportunity to grow up to be caring, contributing adults in our community requires all of us. By reaching out and by ensuring strong community support, you can do your part to prevent abuse and create a better future.

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## Child Abuse Prevention Month Proclamation

**Whereas**, preventing child abuse and neglect is a community problem affecting both the current and future quality of life of a community;

**Whereas**, child maltreatment occurs when people find themselves in stressful situations, without community resources, and do not know how to cope;

**Whereas**, the majority of child abuse cases stem from situations and conditions that are preventable in an engaged and supportive community.

**Whereas**, child abuse and neglect can be prevented by making sure each family has the support they need to raise their children in a healthy environment;

**Whereas**, child abuse and neglect not only cause immediate harm to children, but are also proven to increase the likelihood of criminal behavior, substance abuse, health problems such as heart disease and obesity, and risky behavior such as smoking;

**Whereas**, all citizens should become involved in supporting families to provide safe, nurturing environments for their children giving them the opportunity to grow up to be caring, contributing members of the community;

**Whereas**, effective child abuse prevention programs succeed because of partnerships created among social service agencies, schools, faith communities, civic organizations, law enforcement agencies, and the business community;

**Therefore**, I do hereby proclaim

**April as Child Abuse Prevention Month** and call upon all citizens, community agencies, faith groups, medical facilities, elected leaders and businesses to increase their participation in our efforts to support families, thereby preventing child abuse and strengthening the communities in which we live.

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Signature

Date