

Prevention through Partnership...Together, we can prevent child abuse...

Every day in Luzerne County, a dedicated group of professionals report to work preparing to face challenging situations that will jeopardize their safety, break their hearts, and test their strength. Despite the challenges, these individuals know the work they are preparing to do is critical, rewarding, and so very important. These professionals work around the clock as they know what they do will make a difference in our community by protecting children and strengthening families. These individuals are not the ones you normally think of when you consider protection. They are not police officers or doctors, not teachers or fire fighters. They are child welfare workers. You don't hear about them very often as they are required to maintain confidentiality about the children and families they serve. Although they cannot share the specifics with you, they need you to know about the work they do every day right here in our community. They need you to know because protecting children is everyone's job. They need you to know because if we work together, we can prevent child abuse.

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. This month and throughout the year, Luzerne County Children and Youth Services encourages all individuals and organizations to play a role in making Luzerne County a better place for children and families. By ensuring parents have the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to care for their children, we can help promote children's well-being and prevent child maltreatment within families and communities.

Children who experience maltreatment are twice as likely to suffer overall poor health including risk of asthma, broken bones, unplanned pregnancies, burns, traumatic brain injuries, and bruising. Maltreatment also impacts children's psychosocial functioning contributing to truancy, aggressive behavior, running away, and drug and alcohol abuse. Exposure to trauma has potentially severe consequences for the mental health of children and adolescents including anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal ideation, self-injurious behaviors, and depression.

Adults who were abused or neglected as children are at a greater risk for a variety of adverse physical and mental health conditions when compared with adults who were not maltreated as children. Preventing child abuse and neglect not only protects children, it creates healthier adults, healthier families, and a healthier community.

Luzerne County Council will designate April as Child Abuse Prevention Month in Luzerne County. Protecting children and strengthening families will benefit us all. Effective child abuse prevention activities succeed because of the meaningful connections and partnerships created between child welfare, education, health, community and faith-based organizations, businesses, and law enforcement agencies. Communities must make every effort to promote programs and activities that benefit children and their families. Please do your part to prevent child abuse and neglect. Set a good example. Reach out to neighbors or relatives in need. Learn to recognize the signs of abuse and neglect. Visit www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu for the mandated and permissive reporter online training. Other on line resources are available through the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and the National Children's Advocacy Center. Report suspected child abuse and neglect by calling ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313 or Luzerne County Children and Youth Services at 570-826-8710.

- submitted by Brian Steve