

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | April 9, 2020

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

ND agencies announce line-up of virtual events and activities for parents, children and others to help build protective factors in families during COVID-19 pandemic

BISMARCK, N.D. – In recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month, the North Dakota Department of Human Services' Children and Family Services Division and Prevent Child Abuse North Dakota (PCAND) have partnered with child advocate agencies in the state to host virtual events and activities beginning this week to help build stronger, healthier families during this stressful time.

"We all have a role in building the protective factors families need to ensure that children grow up healthy and happy," said Marlys Baker, the department's child protection services administrator. "COVID-19 has made life difficult. Social distancing is very important for health reasons. However, it can increase the risk for isolation and impact mental well-being and parenting. We are inviting parents, children and community members who can support them to participate in virtual events and opportunities organized by our partners that support mental health and well-being."

Upcoming Events:

PCAND is hosting events on its Facebook page throughout the month. Beginning today, April 9, they will host **Heidi Woods**, founder of Mindful You – Mindful Me, on Thursday afternoons. Woods will present four 20-minute virtual sessions that will cover caregiver and child mental health and well-being, and yoga and mindfulness resources and practices to reduce stress, including simple tips to incorporate mindfulness and social and emotional learning at home. Her sessions will be posted on the PCAND Facebook page Thursday afternoons starting today and ending April 30.

PCAND is also hosting North Dakota native and recognized clinical researcher, physician and author **Dr. Bruce Perry** on April 16 from 2 to 3 p.m. Central Time. Perry who is senior fellow of the Child Trauma Academy, a community of practice based in Houston, Texas, and adjunct professor in the departments of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University in Chicago, Ill., will discuss coping with COVID-19 and helping children and families manage stress and build resilience. Individuals are encouraged to check the PCAND Facebook page for updates and the link to attend Perry's presentation.

On April 23, PCAND will post a discussion with pediatrician and integrative medicine physician **Dr. Kathy Anderson** about a pediatrician's view during COVID-19. Anderson has been practicing in Bismarck for the past 10 years at Mid Dakota Clinic and CHI St. Alexius Medical Center where she has served as chair of pediatrics. She recently launched a pediatric telemedicine practice.

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In addition to these opportunities, community partners have also organized virtual educational activities. North Dakotans are invited to add these events to their calendars and to participate.

North Star Human Service Zone, which includes **Burke, Divide, Renville and Williams counties**, has created a Facebook group to recognize Child Abuse Prevention Month, promote healthy family interactions, and share information and promote weekly events. This week, they are inviting families to have their own family game night and to post pictures. Next week, they are encouraging yard displays and pinwheel decorations, along with messaging focused on healthy family interactions. The third full week of April, they are encouraging families to cook and enjoy a meal together, and during the final week of April, they will hold a virtual popcorn and movie night.

The **Region 6 Parent Resource Center** in **Valley City** continues to share resources promoting strong, healthy families and will deliver their parent education class in an online format in April.

West Dakota Parent and Family Resource Center in **Dickinson** is hosting 5-minute Facebook Live sessions promoting PCAND's virtual events this month. They will also be offering a weekly 30-minute check-in to open the lines of communication among parents regarding self-care. They hope the open format will encourage parents to reach out if they are looking for extra support.

Lastly, the **Dakota Children's Advocacy Center** in **Bismarck** is hosting virtual events in April on social media. Topics will include: emotional regulation (April 14), Tucker Turtle Takes Time to Tuck and Think (April 15), caregiver and kid yoga (April 16), caught being good jars (April 17), calm down bottles (April 20), feelings storytime With Miss Sparkles (April 21), cool coping strategies (April 22), "things I like about me" flowers (April 23), chore magnets (April 27), and gratefulness cards (April 28).

The department's Children and Family Services Division supports and funds statewide child abuse and neglect prevention programs and activities in collaboration with public and private partners. Resource information is on the department's website at www.nd.gov/dhs/info/covid-19/families.html.

REMINDER: Individuals are reminded that if they suspect a child is being abused or neglected, they should call their local human service zone office. Contact information is available online at www.nd.gov/dhs/locations/countysocialserv. **If a child is in immediate danger, contact law enforcement.**

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