

**NEWS RELEASE** | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | March 31, 2020

**Agencies promote community support as vital for growing a better tomorrow for children**  
*Wear Blue Day is April 1 to show support for Child Abuse Prevention Month*

BISMARCK, N.D. – Prevent Child Abuse North Dakota and the North Dakota Department of Human Services are recognizing the importance of community-based support for all children and families during Child Abuse Prevention Month in April. The agencies encourage North Dakotans to join them in wearing blue on Thursday, April 1, to show support for children and families and to demonstrate their commitment to “Growing a Better Tomorrow for All Children, Together.”

“Too often, our society thinks of raising healthy children as solely a parent’s or caregiver’s responsibility alone,” said PCAND Executive Director Sandy Tibke. “We can build healthier, safer, and thriving communities if groups of people work together to collectively support children and families, so children can grow up to become successful, contributing adults.”

PCAND, its parent organization and affiliated chapters, together with DHS and other partner agencies hope to spread this message: every day, we can each help positive childhood experiences take root. Supporting the health, well-being, and stability of families is key to prevention.

“Research shows that positive childhood experiences in nurturing environments provide fertile ground for physical and mental health, learning, and social skills,” explains Dr. Melissa Merrick, president and CEO of Prevent Child Abuse America. “By preventing child abuse and neglect, we aim to holistically improve the lives of all families and the communities in which they live.”

This is the second year CAP Month has been recognized during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The coronavirus outbreak and its subsequent losses have changed the world, and Tibke said prevention professionals are still working to understand the pandemic’s repercussions for incidents of child abuse and neglect.

To support prevention, PCAND is hosting two 30-minute virtual presentations by national experts on its Facebook page in April. On April 8, at 12 p.m. CDT, Danielle Vazquez, director of the Period of PURPLE Crying program for the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome will discuss the “Period of PURPLE Crying,” which describes the often-stressful period of inconsolable infant crying that babies may experience, which is a normal part of infant development. She will share information about crying periods, how to help soothe a crying baby, ways to stay calm when frustrated with crying, and the dangers of shaking a baby.

On April 22, PCAND will host a conversation at 12 p.m. CDT with Rick Griffen, Director of Training and Curriculum Development for Community Resilience Initiative, the nation's first community resilience network. Griffen will address COVID through the lens of trauma and resilience.

-MORE-

In addition, each Wednesday in April, PCAND intends to post short presentations on its Facebook page highlighting protective factors from the Strengthening Families framework developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy. These factors include parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and social and emotional competence of children.

Other activities are planned statewide in April with funding from the department. DHS contracts with PCAND to conduct and coordinate child abuse prevention efforts statewide that are funded through mini grants to local community agencies. There were 12 grants awarded this year.

Grantees are distributing materials and pinwheels – the symbol of child abuse prevention, promoting Wear Blue Day, and organizing awareness walks, a family fun fair, a rock the block event, drive-up bingo, a cooking with caregivers class, educational booths at community events, and other activities. Other grantees are hosting a parent/child make and take family day, a workshop on 40 Developmental Assets for Youth and their protective factors, mandated reporting training, and a presentation about preventing child sexual abuse.

Parenting classes and training opportunities supported by local partners include: Parenting the Love and Logic Way, Nurtured Heart Approach, Parenting in a Pandemic, Infant Massage, Love and Logic: Adults Supporting Youth with Challenging Pasts, Positive Indian Parenting, and Positive Discipline.

Here are other ways to help raise awareness and promote positive childhoods:

- Wear blue on Thursday, April 1, Wear Blue Day, to show support for children and families. Post a photo or video on social media and include the #WearBlueDay2021 hashtag.
- Participate in local Child Abuse Prevention Month activities. You can find details online on PCAND's website at [www.pcand.org](http://www.pcand.org).
- Follow PCAND on social media and share their posts throughout April and encourage friends and family to do the same. Use the hashtags #GrowingBetterTogether and #CAPMonth to signify your commitment to helping children, families, and entire communities to thrive.

During the last federal fiscal year, which ended Sept. 30, 2020, the state's human service system received 15,482 reports of suspected child abuse and neglect. Of those reports, child protection professionals confirmed 1,614 victims of child abuse and neglect, including five deaths.

The department's Children and Family Services Division contracts with PCAND to implement primary prevention strategies to support children and families and reduce child maltreatment. The division supports and funds numerous statewide child abuse and neglect prevention programs and activities in collaboration with PCAND, the North Dakota State University Extension Service – Parent Education Network and other public and private partners.

The department reminds individuals that if they suspect a child is being abused or neglected, they should call the statewide reporting line at **833-958-3500**, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. CDT (7 a.m. – 4 p.m. MDT), Monday-Friday. If a child is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1.

# # #

#### **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Heather Steffl – ND Department of Human Services		701-328-4933		<a href="mailto:hsteffl@nd.gov">hsteffl@nd.gov</a>
LuWanna Lawrence – ND Department of Human Services		701-328-1892		<a href="mailto:lklawrence@nd.gov">lklawrence@nd.gov</a>
Mary Lizakowski – Prevent Child Abuse North Dakota		701- 223-9052		<a href="mailto:mlizakowski@pcand.org">mlizakowski@pcand.org</a>