



Saint Louis County

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NEWS RELEASE

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Community reminded to always be watchful for signs of maltreatment
April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

Child abuse and neglect are too often unreported, protected by a syndrome of secrecy. Whether physical, sexual or emotional in nature, the maltreatment of young victims causes trauma that often carries over to later generations. Putting a halt to this cycle of violence requires awareness and participation from the greater community.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. This month and throughout the year, St. Louis County Public Health and Human Services encourages all individuals and organizations to play a role in making our region a better place for children and families.

Through the child maltreatment response, St. Louis County child protection social workers seek to ensure child safety and increase family support early on in hopes of preventing situations that lead to a child being removed from the home. This safety oriented approach reaches out to and involves the extended family, informal supports and formal supports in developing individualized solutions. By building partnerships with families, children and extended families, social workers can better assess risk factors and existing strengths to focus on ways to protect children, strengthen parenting skills and create healthier families.

Ensuring that parents have the knowledge, skills and resources they need to care for their children helps promote children's social and emotional well-being and prevents child maltreatment within families and communities.

Research shows that when parents possess six protective factors, the risk for neglect and abuse diminishes and optimal outcomes for children, youth and families are promoted. The six protective factors include: nurturing and attachment; knowledge of parenting and of child and youth

development; parental resilience; social connections; concrete supports for parents; and social, emotional and developmental well-being.

Despite the efforts of this safety oriented, strength-based strategy, the sad reality is that child abuse and neglect are still serious issues in St. Louis County. Last year in St. Louis County, child protection social workers responded to 1,376 cases that met child maltreatment state screening guidelines; this was up from 1,211 cases that met criteria in 2011.

Warning signs of maltreatment can include changes in behavior, school performance, eating or sleeping; unexplained injuries, regression in development, fear of going home, and risk-taking behaviors. Anyone who suspects a child is being abused or neglected is encouraged to contact St. Louis County's Initial Intervention Unit. In southern St. Louis County, the phone number is 218-726-2012. In northern St. Louis County, call 218-749-7128. If calling after hours, leave a message and it will be returned the next day. In emergency situations, call 9-1-1. Voluntary reports can remain anonymous.

Child protective services are mandated by state and federal law. The Minnesota Department of Human Services defines the purpose of the child protection system as to help protect children from physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect, and to help families get the services they need to end abusive behavior and/or provide for their children's needs.

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