

April is  
Child Abuse  
Awareness &  
Prevention Month

# PROTECTING CHILDREN IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

## It's the law

By law, everyone in North Carolina has an obligation to report suspected child abuse or neglect. State law says that "any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected...or has

died as the result of maltreatment, shall report the case of that juvenile to the director of the department of social services in the county where the juvenile resides or is found."

In Mecklenburg County, more than 70 percent of child maltreatment reports are made by community professionals who have contact with children and families. Fewer than 30 percent of reports are made by relatives, friends, neighbors or parents. Less than 1 percent of reports are made by the victims themselves. That means Mecklenburg County school personnel who work with students on a daily basis are on the front lines of reporting child abuse.

## Raising awareness

Since 1983, April has been designated as Child Abuse Awareness & Prevention Month. In Mecklenburg County, a team of agencies charged with helping children join forces to create a public awareness campaign to spread the word about the critical issue of child abuse and the importance of reporting suspected abuse. The Mecklenburg Child Abuse Prevention Team plans events and raises awareness through community outreach and social media to inform the public about the responsibility to report abuse.

The team has adopted the pinwheel, which is used across the country as a symbol of child abuse awareness. Shining in the sun, the pinwheel is reflective of the bright future that all children deserve.

## Do you know the signs?

Children who are neglected or physically or sexually abused may:

- Have unexplained bruises or injuries
- Be nervous around adults
- Be unable to concentrate
- Find physical contact frightening
- Have difficulty learning to talk



- Have sleep disturbances or nightmares
- Have poor hygiene or lack appropriate clothes for the weather
- Have self-destructive behaviors
- Be withdrawn and passive or aggressive and delinquent, or show signs of depression
- Exhibit inappropriate sexual behaviors
- Have delayed physical or emotional development
- Have unattended medical needs

## Make a difference

There are simple steps that parents, caregivers and anyone in the community can take to help prevent child abuse.

- Teach young children the names of their body parts and explain which ones are private. Teach them the difference between an "okay touch" and a "not okay or confusing touch."
- Help kids identify trustworthy adults whom they can turn to when they need to confide in someone.
- Learn how to manage your stress to prevent lashing out at your children. When you're feeling upset, angry or frustrated, don't be afraid to ask a trusted friend or relative for help.
- Help a family under stress. Offer to babysit or help with chores and errands.
- Pay attention to the children around you, even if they aren't yours.
- Report any suspected abuse or neglect.

## Resources in Mecklenburg County

24-hour abuse/neglect hotline.....704-336-2273  
Department of Social Services.....704-336-3000  
Pat's Place Child Advocacy Center.....704-335-2760  
Safe Alliance.....704-332-9034  
24-hour domestic violence hotline...704-332-2513  
Thompson Child & Family Focus.....704-536-0375  
Council for Children's Rights.....704-372-7961  
District Attorney's Office.....704-686-0700  
Teen Health Connection.....704-381-8336  
Guardian ad Litem's Office.....704-686-0075  
Children's Home Society.....704-334-9955  
Levine Children's Hospital.....704-381-2000  
Hemby Children's Hospital.....704-384-4021

Did you know that, under North Carolina law, anyone who has cause to suspect that a child is being abused or neglected has an obligation to report the abuse?

Speak up.

Protect a child's life.

To report abuse or neglect, call Mecklenburg County's 24-hour hotline:  
**704-336-CARE (2273)**

Brought to you by the Mecklenburg Child Abuse Prevention Team.  
For more information and ways to help, visit [www.cfcrights.org](http://www.cfcrights.org) or find us on social media!  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/MecklenburgChildAbuseAwareness](http://www.facebook.com/MecklenburgChildAbuseAwareness)  
Twitter: @Meck4Kids