

DE Children's Department Launches Child Abuse Prevention Month

✘ Wilmington – The lighting of Legislative Hall in blue, the symbolic color of child abuse prevention, for the first week of April is just one of the activities scheduled for National Child Abuse Prevention Month. The Delaware Children's Department in partnership with the Attorney General's office, and child advocacy organizations such as the Child Protection Accountability Commission (CPAC), and the Child Death, Near Death and Stillbirth Commission (CDNDSC) is highlighting not only the importance of recognizing and reporting suspected child abuse and neglect, but the preventative steps that families can take to reduce the risk that such things will happen.

"We all have a responsibility to ensure our children are safe," said Governor Jack Markell. "Reporting suspected child abuse or neglect not only has the potential to save a life, but also gives a voice to vulnerable children in need."

"While we continue to raise awareness about the obligation to report any suspicions that a child is at risk of harm, we also believe it's important to support strategies and interventions to limit that risk in the first place." said DSCYF Cabinet Secretary Jennifer Ranji.

Other activities highlighting awareness in April include a meeting on April 8th to encourage youth serving organizations to sign up for Stewards of Children prevention training, and a Blue Bow awareness event and Proclamation Signing with Governor Jack Markell on April 25th in front of Legislative Hall in Dover. Stewards of Children, coordinated locally by Prevent Child Abuse Delaware, is a program for youth serving

and community organizations that teaches adults how to prevent, recognize, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse.

Both reporting and prevention will also be highlighted through radio ads airing on stations statewide in April. Governor Markell recorded a spot encouraging Delawareans to learn the signs of abuse and neglect by visiting www.iseethesigns.org, and make the call to the 24 hour Report Line at 1-800-292-9582 to report concerns. Billboards with the report line and website number will also be visible statewide. A second radio ad features prevention tips for parents.

With calls to the Report Line at historically high levels (over 16,000 calls were made to report suspected abuse and neglect in 2012), early identification of the risk of child abuse and providing prevention strategies for families is an important focus for the Children's Department.

That's why the Department's Division of Family Services is promoting awareness of Help Me Grow, coordinated by the Division of Public Health's Bureau of Maternal and Child Health. Help Me Grow is a multi-sector partnership that helps connect families of children ages birth through eight with a variety of services; including home visits by a trained professional with expertise in breastfeeding, nutrition, newborn care, child safety, and more. This can include new and expecting families who can benefit from home visiting services, or families facing multiple challenges that may need assistance accessing low income services and support (i.e. Purchase of Care child care subsidy, Medicaid, TANF), housing etc. Families can talk with a Help Me Grow call specialist by dialing 2-1-1, which is a free centralized phone line statewide.

"There is no one strategy that will prevent child abuse, as it takes a collective effort," said Division of Family Services Director Victoria Kelly. "The most important thing we can do

is to support a community norm that the well-being of our children is the foundation of a healthy society.”

According to the Child Welfare Information Gateway, by ensuring that parents have the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to care for their children, we can help promote children’s social and emotional well-being and prevent child maltreatment. Research shows that when parents possess six protective factors, the risk for neglect and abuse diminish. The six protective factors are: Nurturing and attachment; Knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development; Parental resilience; Social connections; Concrete supports for parents; Social and emotional developmental well-being. The Children’s Department is addressing these factors through its partnership with Help Me Grow. Additional hands on prevention tips for dealing with stress, and parenting babies, toddlers and teens can be now be found on www.iseethesigns.org as well.

The Delaware Children’s Department provides services to children who have been abused, neglected, are dependent, have mental health or substance problems, have been adjudicated delinquent by the Courts, as well as prevention services targeted toward all youth. For more information, please visit www.kids.delaware.gov.