

The Alliance

SPRING 2018

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Mission

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance educates, informs and leads communities to action to protect children from abuse and neglect.

pa-fsa.org

Honoring Blue Ribbon Champions

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSA) presents the **2018 PA Blue Ribbon Champions for Safe Kids Awards** at a special ceremony at the State Capitol on April 4. This free event is open to everyone as we celebrate our greatest resource – our children – during National Child Abuse Prevention Month. The Awards Ceremony begins at 10:30 a.m. with music by youth groups including vocalists from the Capital Area School for the Arts in Harrisburg, and Innovation, a choir from Newport High School in Perry County. The official program, emceed by iHeartMedia Host R.J. Harris, and featuring Miss Pennsylvania 2017 Katie Schreckengast, 2015 Red Land Little League U.S. Champion Cole Wagner, and Harpist Linda Umstead, gets underway at 11:00 a.m. and includes a haunting tribute to the memory of children who lost their lives to abuse.

“We’re pleased to have an outstanding group of students, performers, and community leaders participating in our Awards Ceremony this year,” said Angela Liddle. “Together, we send a powerful message to every Pennsylvanian that they can be Champions for Safe Kids and that our children must be protected and allowed to grow and thrive free from abuse and neglect.”

Five individuals – two child welfare professionals, two volunteers, and one member of the media – will receive awards for their extraordinary work to keep kids safe. An independent panel of judges from across the state will make the honoree selections.



2017 Blue ribbon flags.



And, while you are in Harrisburg, be sure to visit State Street, at the front of the Capitol building, to see the display of 4,416 blue ribbon flags, each representing a Pennsylvania child harmed by abuse, and 46 black flags to honor the Pennsylvania children killed by abuse in one year.

The PA Blue Ribbon Champions for Safe Kids Awards campaign is made possible through the generous contributions of our sponsors including PSECU, LAMAR Advertising, the Outdoor Advertising Association of Pennsylvania, Deloitte, GIANT MARTIN'S, The Hall Foundation, Highmark, Ridge Policy Group, Waterday Foundation, and others listed at pablueribbonchampion.org. Join us on April 4 because **every kid needs a champion!** ●



Light the town blue on April 4!

April 4 is #WearBlueDay

The state Department of Human Services and PFSA encourage all Pennsylvanians to mark April 4 as #WearBlueDay by either wearing a blue ribbon or blue attire as a sign of support for child abuse prevention. The Capitol, the Market Street Bridge, the PA Turnpike Commission headquarters and other buildings in Harrisburg will be lit in blue and we encourage homeowners and businesses to use blue lights and ribbons throughout April to let children know we care. You'll probably see more than 130 billboards around the state promoting our message, #ProtectPAKids, thanks to generous support from the Outdoor Advertising Association of Pennsylvania. ●

Painting for Prevention: Community Art for Child Abuse Prevention

Sometimes, as time passes after an awareness event, we tend to forget the message of the day. With child abuse prevention, remembering that family support and intervention can mean the difference between life and death for a child makes awareness that much more important. PFSA's *Painting for Prevention* murals serve to raise awareness of child abuse prevention and help community members understand the importance of getting involved.

Since we began the program in 2008, 26 murals have been created in 18 counties, from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia to Uniontown to Harrisburg to Clarion to Scranton. The murals have been painted by families receiving child protective services, incarcerated parents, parents in recovery from addiction, as well as folks shopping on a Saturday at the local mall or farmer's market. We've partnered with early childhood programs, schools, universities, county agencies and our local affiliates.

Each mural has its own character and message. They serve as "ambassadors" delivering the message that **child abuse can be prevented**, throughout the year.

We partner with Heart to Art, a Scranton-based arts education group, to design the murals, which are then painted by children, families and community members in each of the locations. Each mural stays in the community in which it was created.

Most of the *Painting for Prevention* events are open to the public, free of charge. Participants can also receive parenting resources and information on local organizations that can help families. Blue ribbon pins, the nationally recognized symbol for child abuse prevention, are available at each of the events. We estimate that more than 4,000 people have been involved in creating the murals. This year, we will be working with community groups in Fulton County, Harrisburg and Berks County. ●



Last year's mural in Philadelphia.

Join us to paint for prevention!

- Thursday, April 5, in McConnellsburg, Fulton County
- Monday, April 16, in Harrisburg
- Friday, April 20 in Reading, Berks County

Check out our website and Facebook page for details.

A Passion for Protecting Kids

Meet **Cindi Horshaw, MSW, LSW, PFSA Mandated Reporter Trainer**. Cindi's passion is protecting children from abuse and helping parents nurture their kids and keep them safe. As a young caseworker for Dauphin County Social Services for Children and Youth in her early twenties, Cindi ventured into troubled homes, working with mothers and fathers to develop their parenting skills. She wasn't married then and had no children. Looking back on those early career days, she wonders how she was able to grow the seeds of good parenting in families and strengthen their ability to care for their children.

"I initially provided in-home services to families and children and then moved on to conducting General Protective Services (GPS) assessments for cases alleging neglect," Cindi says. "I still have relationships with some of the families. I honestly can say that I never had a negative experience with any children or families that I have worked with."

Eventually leaving casework, Cindi moved to the state Department of Human Services beginning as a program specialist and later moving on to become a supervisor and eventually a bureau director. Over the years, she came to appreciate the work of PFSA. When Cindi started a new job in early 2017 with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in Washington, D.C., she wanted to stay connected to child welfare in Pennsylvania. She found a meaningful way to do so – becoming an expert trainer for PFSA's highly-acclaimed "Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse" Mandated Reporter Training program.

"Many mandated reporters don't know what to look for, and the training is critical to help them understand some of the indicators while also educating them about their legal obligations to report suspected abuse. This is particularly important because of the significant changes to the law in 2014," Cindi noted. "They also don't understand that often what they are encountering is neglect rather than abuse. When they know what neglect looks like, and when they should make report, we can stop children who are neglected from becoming victims of abuse"

"My entire career has been in child welfare. This is my passion."



"I became a trainer with PFSA because I have been in the field of child welfare for my entire career and I want to do my small part to make Pennsylvania a better, safer place for children to grow and live," Cindi explained. "I believe that educating mandated reporters about their legal responsibilities, while helping them become familiar with the warning signs of child abuse, can make a lasting impression and provide a more extensive safety net for children."

The most challenging aspect of training is helping mandated reporters, particularly volunteers, overcome their fear of reporting suspected abuse to ChildLine. Lawmakers added volunteers as mandated reporters when they bolstered the Child Protective Services Law in 2014. "That has been hard for older adults, particularly within faith-based organizations who volunteer with children. They worry about reporting something that turns out not to be child abuse and the intrusion it causes in a family's life. Many people associate an unfounded report with a false report, which is not the case. My job as a trainer is to help them understand what abuse is and is not, what their legal obligations are, how to report it, and to have the courage to actually make the report," she said.

To schedule a free in-person Mandated Reporter Training workshop, please contact PFSA at 800-448-4906, or www.pa-fsa.org. ●

Mandated Reporter Training Sessions

This training is free and open to any mandated reporter. Register in advance at www.pa-fsa.org.

- April 27, 2018
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Pittsburgh
- May 23, 2018
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
West Chester
- May 24, 2018
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Harrisburg
- May 25, 2018
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Erie

Train-the-Trainer Program

PFSA offers its “Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse” curriculum to professionals (called organizational trainers) through a Train-the-Trainer program (TTT). Many schools, service agencies and other organizations across the state have benefited from this program, which helps build and expand in-house expertise and capabilities to offer Mandated Reporter Training.

- Organizational trainers are **fully prepared to provide training** after attending a two-day comprehensive training that includes instruction and practice sessions. These trainers then provide PFSA’s training to colleagues within their organization.
- PFSA offers **free updates** regarding changes to the CPSL, ongoing technical assistance and trainer development teleconferences.

What does an organizational trainer do?

The organizational trainer teaches PFSA’s “Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse” course content to his/her colleagues within their organization. The trainer helps participants complete the activities and answers questions, especially regarding specific situations that come up within their organization. Staff with experience working with the child welfare system and who possess a high comfort level training colleagues makes excellent candidates for TTT.

How does PFSA prepare organizational trainers for this important role?

Our TTT session is two full days of instruction, practice sessions and review of our comprehensive Trainer’s Guide. TTT is taught

“Although PFSA’s two-day training covered everything I needed to know to start training mandated reporters, I have found the ongoing support by PFSA staff to be very beneficial in helping me answer additional questions that have come up since that initial two-day training.”

Administrator

by our corps of master trainers, professionals with decades of experience who have been providing PFSA’s training in the field. The Trainer’s Guide, included in the TTT session, is an organizational tool for arranging facilities, people, time, and materials for training. It also presents information to improve general training skills. During the TTT, participants will learn how to use the guide when facilitating organizational trainings. After participating in the TTT Program, trainers will have knowledge and experience to keep everyone up-to-date on mandated reporter requirements.

“As an organizational trainer, I am able to provide this mandated reporter training to all my new staff as part of their new-hire orientation. This way we know all our new staff have the training within their first week, before they have contact with children.”

Human Resources Director

What happens after the TTT session?

If you’ve ever had the experience of attending training, but not having support to actually use the training when it’s needed on the job, you understand the importance of ongoing technical assistance. PFSA views the TTT session as just the beginning of equipping mandated reporters with the skills they need to protect kids. In addition to the comprehensive training session and guide, we provide free update trainings whenever there are amendments to the CPSL, ongoing technical assistance regarding mandated reporting (when you call our toll-free number, you speak directly with our expert staff) and trainer development teleconferences to increase the skill and expertise of the organizational trainers. Your organization will enter into a three-year partnership with PFSA in order to insure continuity of training and availability of resources.

You can find out more about the TTT program by calling PFSA at 800-448-4906. Our staff can give you all the information you need to provide our expert training to your staff and volunteers. ●

ChildLine
1-800-932-0313

Child abuse hotline available 24 hours a day

ChildLine provides information, counseling, and referral services for families and children to ensure the safety and well-being of the children of Pennsylvania. The toll-free intake line, 1-800-932-0313, is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week to receive reports of suspected child abuse. Callers, other than mandated reporters, may remain anonymous.

Helping Children After Exposure to Violence

With the recent tragic events in Parkland, Florida, many are left saddened and asking “Why?” Adults find ways to cope with unimaginable violent events. Children tend to lack the coping skills necessary to even gain some understanding of these types of events. Confusion, being frightened, and loss of trust are just a few ways children respond to these events.

Adults need to remember is that children are not always witness to such severe, unnecessary acts of violence. What occurs most often for children is continuous violence witnessed every day in their homes, community, and through media (TV, video games, music). Gaining a better understanding of how exposure to violence affects children and learning effective ways to respond, can help you to be prepared when you and/or your children are exposed to violence.

Keeping this in mind, take a moment to think about what children learn from repeated exposure to violence. Imagine for a minute that you are a four-year-old child playing in your yard on the first spring day. Then your mom and dad burst out of the house, screaming at each other. A crowd gathers round and a friend of your mom starts yelling at your dad too. How are you feeling?

Now, draw a figure of a paper doll and think about this question, “What were some violent situations, words, or things that have hurt you or a child?” Every time you think of a violent act, put an X on the doll. Then think of ways you can help this child heal from or deal with the violent experience. Every time you do, place a smiley face over an X.

This exercise, adapted from the ACT Raising Safe Kids program, is a way to understand that experiences, both positive and negative, leave marks on people. Negative experiences hurt and leave scars but positive experiences can be healing and helpful. It is important to understand how we can help children cope and deal with violence that may continuously be a part of their lives. Keeping in mind that although the children are experiencing these violent acts, most likely parents are too. It is important to take care of yourself as you help your children through the process of healing and coping.

ACT Raising Safe Kids is an international program that teaches parents about the impact of violence on children and ways to respond when violence occurs. To find out more about ACT, contact PFSA. ●

Talking to Children About Violence

Information from Allegheny County Safe Start program/ACT Raising Safe Kids

Reassure children that they are safe.

- Validate and talk about feelings.
- Help them to express feelings appropriately.

Make time to talk.

- Be patient and let kids ask you questions.
- Look for cues that your children want to talk.
- Try writing, drawing, books and play to work through feelings.

Maintain a normal routine.

- A regular schedule can be reassuring and help children feel normal.
- Don't push to keep up extracurricular activities if they don't want to participate.

Limit television and viewing of violent images

- Be mindful of your conversations about violent events.
- Constant viewing of violent events can cause anxiety or confusion.

Review safety tips and procedures.

- Check first before they go anywhere with anyone.
- Identify a trusted adult that the child can go to if they need help. ●

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Protecting children from abuse

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The official registration and financial information of PA Family Support Alliance may be obtained by from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999.

Registration does not imply endorsement.

Blog at www.protectpakids.org

Visit us at www.pa-fsa.org

“We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It’s easy to say, ‘It’s not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.’ Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes.”

— *Fred Rogers*

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