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Intervention is critical to stopping rise in suspected Pa. child abuse cases: PFSA CEO

Mandated reporters responsible for majority of abuse reports, according to annual DHS report

HARRISBURG, Pa. – The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services this week released its [2022 Child Protective Services Report](#), which shows a slight increase from 2021 to 2022 in suspected child abuse cases. Stopping the numbers from increasing any further begins with intervention and helping families before it's tragically too late, according to the Pa Family Support Alliance, the commonwealth's leading statewide child abuse prevention organization.

"Parental stress can increase the likelihood of child maltreatment. It is critical we acknowledge this and connect families to community services, supports and resources to address the specific stressors within families before situations escalate," said Angela Liddle, PFSA President and CEO. "The aftereffects of the pandemic continue as many Pennsylvanians continue to manage the challenges associated with limited access to mental health services, affordable childcare, and the high prices of food and housing. The maltreatment of children is most certainly more than a family matter."

Liddle said every Pennsylvanian has a role in "protecting our youngest and most vulnerable citizens from abuse and neglect." [The Front Porch Project®](#) from PFSA is a community-based primary prevention initiative that trains neighbors and community members on how to protect and support their community's children and families.

Mandated reporters — those required by Pennsylvania's Child Protective Service Law to report suspected child abuse and neglect — are often the only link between a child and safety from abuse, according to Liddle. The DHS report showed that mandated reporters were the source of 82% of all suspected child abuse reports in 2022, a 2.8% increase from the previous year.

Training available for mandated reporters

Continued, regular training for mandated reporters is essential to protecting Pennsylvania's children, Liddle said. With child neglect on the rise in Pennsylvania and across the nation, PFSA is hosting three-hour [Recognizing and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect trainings](#) throughout August at no cost to mandated reporters. These trainings, Liddle said, along with PFSA's training on Responding to Disclosures of Child Abuse, are essential for anyone who works with children, volunteer or otherwise.

"These advanced trainings give mandated reporters valuable information and guidance," Liddle said. "Mandated reporters must know how to recognize abuse and neglect, but also know how to properly respond to a disclosure of child abuse."

“While substantiated cases slightly declined, any child who is experiencing abuse and neglect is one too many. Education and vigilance are vital to ensuring that all children can thrive in an environment free of abuse and neglect.”

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About Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance

[Pa Family Support Alliance](#) prevents child abuse and protects children from harm by helping parents learn positive parenting techniques, educating professionals and volunteers who work with children to recognize and report child abuse, and helping community members learn how they can play a positive role in keeping children safe. To learn more about our programs, schedule a training, or donate, please visit pafsa.org, or call 800-448-4906.