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Pa Family Support Alliance Predicts Child Abuse Reports in Pennsylvania Could Increase this Fall

Due to the pandemic, many children remained socially isolated; School personnel and community members need to learn the warning signs of abuse and neglect; anyone who suspects abuse and neglect should report it

Harrisburg, Pa.— As society seeks to transition back to normal and the school year is underway, Pa Family Support Alliance, the state’s leader in child abuse prevention, is sounding the alarm and encouraging anyone who suspects that a child is being abused or neglected to report it. Throughout the pandemic, many children were socially isolated and remained in environments where they were not safe.

“Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a situation where children were confined to their homes, and for some, that meant they were continually subjected to abuse and neglect,” said Angela Liddle, CEO and President of Pa Family Support Alliance. “When schools closed to protect children and their families from the coronavirus, we saw reports to ChildLine diminish. As we look toward the fall, child welfare professionals are preparing themselves for a dramatic increase in reports since children will once again be back in the presence of mandated reporters.”

Mandated reporters are required by Pennsylvania state law to report suspected cases of child abuse. Mandated reporters serve in a variety of roles like daycare workers, physicians, coaches, teachers, principals, bus drivers, and cafeteria workers. These individuals often interact with children on a daily basis and are in a position to notice when the signs of abuse and neglect are present.

Pennsylvania saw a decrease in the number of child abuse and neglect reports being made in 2020. The number of suspected abuse reports made in 2020 dropped about 22 percent from 2019. According to the 2020 Pennsylvania Department of Human Services’ Annual Child Protective Services Report, there were 4,593 substantiated cases of abuse, 115 near fatalities, and 73 fatalities. Substantiated cases are lower than what the state reported in 2019. During that period, 4,865 substantiated cases of abuse, 93 near fatalities, and 51 fatalities were reported.

What Pennsylvania experienced in 2020 is no different than what went on in other states. [The Washington Post](#) reported that child abuse and neglect reports decreased when the country shut down, with some hospitals reporting that the cases of child abuse were more severe. Organizations like Pa Family Support Alliance are concerned with abuse and neglect cases that have yet to be identified and reported. [CNN](#) reported that many experts within the child welfare space are warning it will be hard to determine what the true impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been on children who are being abused until months after society has completely reopened.

Pa Family Support Alliance is encouraging mandated reporters and the public to pay close attention to the children in their lives and keep a watchful eye on them as they transition back into school. While the number one source of child abuse and neglect reports in Pennsylvania is mandated reporters, anyone who suspects that a child is being abused or neglected **can and should** report it. The public can make reports anonymously to ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313. Because mandated reporters receive professional training in how to spot the warning signs of abuse and neglect and members of the public are not, Pa Family Support Alliance has created an online resource. This [guide](#) helps equip individuals with what the warning signs of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse are.

“As the adage says, if you see something, say something,” said Liddle. “Children depend on adults for their safety and survival, and we are imploring everyone to take action if you suspect that abuse or neglect is happening.”

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About Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance

[Pa Family Support Alliance](http://pafsa.org) 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.