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Pa Family Support Alliance Raises Awareness about Child Abuse Prevention Across the Commonwealth

The organization will honor child advocates; debut videos from government and elected officials; host educational webinars for individuals to learn about child abuse prevention

Harrisburg, Pa.— The Pa Family Support Alliance (PFSA), the state's leader in child abuse prevention has brought together local child advocates, government and elected officials, members from the business community, and nationally recognized experts—all in an effort to raise awareness for National Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month.

"We all must work together to raise awareness about child abuse prevention and our month-long awareness campaign is a rallying cry," said Angela Liddle, President and CEO of PFSA. "From our elected officials to child advocates to everyday Pennsylvanians, each one of us has a unique role to play in the prevention and reporting of child abuse—the first step we must take is raising our voices to boldly confront this issue together."

Because of the pandemic, PFSA is not hosting their traditional ceremony in the Capitol rotunda. Rather, the organization has crafted a month-long #ProtectPA Kids awareness campaign. As part of the campaign, PFSA will honor five individuals as Blue-Ribbon Champions for Safe Kids recipients. Each individual was nominated for the award because of their efforts to go above and beyond the call of duty to protect Pennsylvania's children. The five individuals receiving the award are:

- **Lauren Burkert Lazzari, Johnstown | Parent Educator at Beginnings, Inc.**
Lauren works with families to build a sense of community and connects them with resources they might need. She serves as an in-home visitor, educates families on child sexual abuse prevention, and works with them through the reporting process.
- **Jeanine Rasky, Jeanette | System Integration Director at Allegheny County's Department of Human Services (newly retired)**
Jeanine worked to help fight child abuse for more than 20 years as she developed the county's Youth Support Partner Unit that encourages the hiring of young adults who had personal experience being in the child welfare system.
- **Casey Stokes-Rodriguez, Harrisburg | Licensed Social Worker at Harrisburg School District**
Casey serves as a School Culture, Climate, and Trauma Resource Specialist and works with high school students, their families, and faculty members to support interventions and address individual needs.
- **Leslie Holt, Malvern | Founder and Program Director of A Child's Light (Chester County)**
Leslie is a highly experienced Victim Advocate who specializes in working with children and teenagers who are victims of sexual assault. She connects them and their parents with mental health professionals who specialize in quality, trauma-informed therapy.
- **Lisa Gartner | former investigative journalist at the Philadelphia Inquirer (currently investigative editor at the San Francisco Chronicle)**
Lisa investigated and wrote about the abuse accusations at Glenn Mills School. Through Lisa's work, a spotlight was placed on a dark societal issue, resulting in longer term systemic change.

Additionally, PFSA will debut special video messages and photos on social media featuring Department of Human Services Secretary Teresa Miller, Department of Human Services Deputy Secretary Jonathan Rubin, Attorney General Josh Shapiro, Secretary of Education Noe Ortega, Second Lady Gisele Fetterman, State Senators Judy Ward and Maria Collett and State Representatives Sheryl Delozier and Pamela DeLissio. All of these government and elected officials were eager to lend their voice and position to call attention to this issue.

Finally, PFSA will host live webinars with nationally recognized abuse and trauma specialists including Victor Vieth from the Zero Abuse Project; Erin Merryn a childhood sexual abuse survivor, advocate, and founder of Erin's Law; LaCrisha Rose a Parent Partnership Associate for the Children's Trust Fund Alliance and co-chair of the Alliance National Parent Partnership Council; and William Zee, Attorney and Chair of the Education Law Group at Appel, Yost & Zee LLP.

The community-at-large is also playing a role in raising awareness during April. In Harrisburg, the Capitol and Market Street Bridge will be shining blue in honor of Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month.

According to the latest 2019 Pennsylvania Department of Human Services' Annual Child Protective Services Report, there were 4,865 substantiated cases of abuse, 93 near fatalities, and 51 fatalities—the most ever in a single year. While the 2020 report has not been released yet, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on Pennsylvania's children. From July 2020-December 2020, there was a 19 percent drop in the number of suspected abuse reports made. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many children continue to be socially isolated and they are not interacting with as many mandated reporters as they normally would.

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About Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance

[Pa Family Support Alliance](https://pa-fsa.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 pa-fsa.org, or call 800-448-4906.