

UNION COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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News Release

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

April 1, 2013, Monroe, NC – April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, and the Union County Department of Social Services (DSS) wants to bring attention to the issue of child abuse in Union County.

Child abuse is the non-accidental physical, mental or sexual harm of a child by a parent or caretaker. Forms of child abuse include:

- **Physical abuse** - the non-accidental injury to a child.
- **Sexual abuse** - any activity with a child, before his age of legal consent that is for sexual gratification of the adult or significantly older child.
- **Emotional abuse** - rejection, criticism, isolation or terrorizing of children that erodes their self-esteem.
- **Neglect** - the failure to provide for a child's basic needs including physical care -- food, shelter, clothing and supervision.
- **Emotional neglect** - the failure to provide necessary emotional and psychological care.
- **Educational neglect** - the failure to provide access to education.
- **Medical neglect** - failure to provide proper treatment for medical conditions.

Close to 3 million reports of child abuse and neglect are made every year in the United States. Every six hours a child dies in this nation as a direct result of child abuse or child neglect. Only childhood accidents cause more child deaths than child abuse. These numbers also do not include the escalating problem of sexual abuse. Estimated annual cost of child abuse and neglect in the United States ranges from 124 to 585 billion dollars every year.

In 2012, Union County DSS received more than 1,909 reports of child abuse/neglect, or dependency. In 261 of these cases it was determined that there was abuse, neglect, or in services needed; 73 cases involved abuse or serious neglect. There were 58 children that were placed by the court system into the custody of DSS.

Child abuse occurs across all social, ethnic and income groups. The following are indicators for child abuse or neglect:

- **Physical Abuse** - unexplained or poorly explained bruises or injuries, sudden behavioral changes, lack of trust of an adult, low self-esteem and passive and aggressive behavior.
- **Sexual Abuse** - torn, stained or bloody undergarments, difficulty walking or sitting, sexual knowledge that is not age-appropriate and unexplained fears of a certain person or place.
- **Emotional Abuse** – often the child seems depressed, rejected, ignored, and/or angry. In some cases the victim child has few friends, seems to have more bumps or bruises than usual, is doing poorly in school and dresses in long sleeves and pants.

You can help stop child abuse. In North Carolina everyone is a mandated reporter. Anyone who has cause to believe that a child may be abused has a legal duty to make a report. If you know or suspect that a child is being harmed, call Union County DSS at 704-296-4300 to report your concerns or to get information related to abuse, neglect and dependency of a child.