

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**READY AND RESILIENT COUNTIES:
COMMISSIONERS RECOGNIZE APRIL AS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH**

The theme of this year's National County Government Month is Ready and Resilient Counties: Prepare. Respond. Thrive. To that end, this morning, the Franklin County Commissioners were joined by representatives from Franklin County Children Services (FCCS) and the Ohio Children's Trust Fund as they declared April Child Abuse Prevention Month in Franklin County to raise awareness about the prevalence of child abuse and neglect in our community and to empower the community to take action.

In Franklin County, about 30,000 children are served by Franklin County Children Services (FCCS) each year. These children are seen for a variety of maltreatment problems including physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect. In 2013, FCCS conducted 7,706 investigations of abuse and neglect - 6,014 for physical abuse, 1,465 for sexual abuse and 227 for emotional abuse. Overall the agency provided services to 30,264 children.

"We each play a role in ensuring the safety of our community's children," said Commission President Marilyn Brown who serves on the Board of the Center for Family Safety and Healing at Nationwide Children's Hospital. "From our local social-service agencies and schools to neighbors and community leaders, we need to do everything we can to prevent abuse and neglect. If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, report it."

Franklin County Children Services operates a 24-hour abuse and neglect hotline. Reports of suspected child abuse or neglect should be phoned in to 614-229-7000.

"Every child is a precious gift. Having strong family support is crucial, and additionally, all of us must care about the next generation's well-being," Commissioner Paula Brooks said. "Child abuse is a community-wide problem – it knows no boundaries. When each and every Franklin County child is respected and loved, our entire community will thrive. Families, friends, schools, neighbors, businesses, faith communities, and government agencies must ALL work together and ensure every child has a safe and secure environment, free from abuse."

"There are many ways to prevent child abuse in our community," said Commissioner John O'Grady. "If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, report it. If you know of a family under economic or other stress, offer to baby sit. If you know an adult who would be a great role model for a child or parent, tell them about volunteer opportunities with one of the local agencies or Children Services."

"Although Children Services has the mandate of child protection and abuse investigation – we are fully aware that we cannot do this work alone. We need active involvement from all aspects of the community," said Chip Spinning, Executive Director of Franklin County Children Services. "Whether you are a parent, a friend, teacher, community leader, public official or neighbor, you too can serve as the eyes and ears of a community committed to keeping children safe."

Tomorrow (April 9), all Franklin County residents are encouraged to “Wear Blue to Work” to support the efforts aimed at child abuse prevention. Commissioners will attend the annual Child Abuse Prevention Breakfast on Wednesday, April 16 at the Aladdin Shrine Center, 2850 Stelzer Rd., at 8 a.m. The program will highlight child abuse prevention efforts, and the accomplishments of social work professionals, FCCS families, youth and community advocates.

“April is a time to celebrate the important role that communities play in protecting children,” said Kristen Rost, Executive Director of the Ohio Children's Trust Fund. “Everyone’s participation is critical. This month, I encourage all Ohioans to find a way to make a difference in the lives of the children and families around them and help stop child abuse and neglect throughout Ohio.”

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