

Clearfield County Newsletter

2020 Summer Newsletter



A note from the CAC-CC:

Special points of interest:

- Where to turn to report suspected child abuse
- Foster Children and the impact of COVID-19
- A Discussion on Health Boundaries and Consent
- Creating a safe community
- Family Fun Night at PSU-DuBois Campus
- Recent donation of clothing to the CAC-CC.

Well, we are halfway through 2020! It is hard to believe how fast the year has gone. That said, many things have changed within our society, and normal is a lot different than it was at the beginning of this year. The number of changes, we as a society have experienced, can be overwhelming when we think about it. From an adult's perspective, this year has been a lot, so imagine what it has been for children who do not have the same higher-order thinking that adults have!

At the CAC, we had to change how we functioned to meet the requirements of the pandemic. We had to remove many of the toys that were in our waiting rooms. We have had some incredible people and organizations reach out to donate supplies to our CAC. We have had three amazing quilters supply our CAC with all sizes of face masks! We received so many masks; we were able to share masks with four other CACs! Three of the CACs are in Pennsylvania, and one is in New York!

We also received donations from SCI Houtzdale of clothing, especially pajamas and blankets for children that visit our CAC. Clearfield CYS helped ensure that we have toiletries here for children in need and clothing for our teenagers that come to our CAC. Through the generous contributions from our donors, we can provide additional resources to the families that come to the CAC.

We continue to be amazed at the kindness of our county!

We still have some advertising slots available for the 2021 CAC calendar. If you are interested in sponsoring a month, please let us know!

The CAC-CC still has some online training seats available for the Darkness to Light Stewards Plus training. If you would like to register, please email cac@cenclear.org.



Where to Turn to Report Child Abuse

By: Brittany Meyer, CAC Intern

What do you do when you have been abused, but don't know who to tell? Tell someone you trust. Anyone can report abuse whether you are a mandated reporter or not. Individuals who work with children are required to be a mandated reporter, which means that if you tell them that you were abused they have to report it. Mandated reporters include daycare workers, teachers, doctors, dentists, foster care workers, therapists, etc. Some children may not realize that those individuals have to report so they don't say anything about their abuse. On the other hand, children may not feel comfortable talking about their abuse to other people.

If a child discloses abuse to a mandated reporter, they have to report it to Child Line. Child Line is a service in Pennsylvania that provides families with referral services, information, and counseling while also sending the allegations of abuse to the agencies that need to further investigate. The number for Child Line is 1-800-932-0313. This service is available 24/7, and is the source that mandated reporters use to report what a child has disclosed to them. If someone is not a mandated reporter, they can also report if a child discloses abuse to them. Neighbors, parents, cousins, siblings, and so many others can report abuse to Child Line.

Mandated reporters have to provide their name and contact information when they report abuse, but individuals who are not mandated reporters can remain anonymous. Children may disclose abuse to individuals who are not mandated reporters, but that doesn't mean they can't report it. If you are not a mandated reporter, it is just as easy for you to report abuse by calling Child Line. When children are home for the summer, there are less individuals that they can report abuse to so it may not make it to the agencies who can investigate it further.

With the most recent event of Covid-19, child abuse reports have reduced which may have been because of children being in their homes, and not knowing who to tell. If you aren't sure what to do, report the abuse. If you are scared, talk to someone you trust about it. If you aren't sure if what you experienced was abuse, report it anyway. If you are uncomfortable with telling someone about being abused, that is okay. Talking about abuse is hard and uncomfortable because it shouldn't happen, but it too often does. Taking the first step might be the hardest part, but reporting abuse could be beneficial to you as the child, your family, and anyone else who may be involved. No one should have to go through this alone, and many individuals want to help.

Foster Children and the Impact of COVID - 19

By: Sierra Hanes,
CAC Case Manager

In Europe, charities have released information on the soaring increase in child placement referrals and dramatic decrease in foster families. This 44% increase has caused a “state of emergency”.

Why are other countries seeing a decrease in foster families right now? COVID – 19 has been the cause of job loss, increased anxiety and stress, and for many that means reaching a point of crisis.

Currently in the United States, there are over 430,000 children in the foster care system. Children in the United States foster system have been impacted negatively by the current pandemic.



According to the Foster Club March 2020 survey, children in foster care are experiencing:

- Housing instability
- Food insecurity
- Increased mental health concerns
- Insufficient financial resources

Birth parent visits were restricted at the start of the pandemic, and in some areas, parents are still not allowed to visit with their biological children in person, due to the pandemic restrictions. This alone can cause increased mental health concerns for the children in the system.

Once all COVID – 19 restrictions are lifted, child abuse and foster care referrals are expected to have a dramatic increase. If you are 21 or over and have the means and time to become a foster parent, now is the time. Reach out to your local children and youth to get more information on becoming a foster parent. Pennsylvania has the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network where useful information can be found on fostering and adopting children.

For more information on how you can help, check out their website at <http://adoptpakids.org>.

Health Boundaries and Consent: Let's Talk About It?

During this COVID-19 pandemic, you may be wondering how you can make the most of this time with your children. Now is the perfect opportunity to start or continue conversations about healthy boundaries, consent, and how to say no. Here are some tips on how to do so.

Tell your child: You are the boss of your own body!

Bodily autonomy is a great first step for raising a confident individual. This just means helping your child understand that no one has the right to touch them or make them feel uncomfortable (including family and friends). If grandma wants to hug your child and they aren't in the mood, try to encourage other greetings like a high-five or a wave. Practice how to say "no" *like you mean it* with your child, by standing up straight, shoulders back, and speaking with a strong but respectful voice. After practicing this kind of "no," help your child think of adults that they can trust to tell about what happened (especially if the person doesn't respect the boundaries that they've attempted to set in place).

These conversations can become awkward with close family and friends, but know that they don't have to be! Clearly state that you are trying to teach your child that they have the right to say no to any touch that they don't want. Explain to your friends and family that you are teaching your child physical boundaries and by doing this, it can help prevent your child from feeling like they have to say yes to touches that may not seem harmful to them, but are still abusive or grooming behavior. Kindly ask family and friends if they will join you in this practice to keep the child that you all love safe.

Encourage your child to speak up.

When a child is being hurt, we want to believe that they will tell someone right away and that the hurting will stop. Unfortunately, it's just not that simple. There are several reasons why a child may not disclose abuse, including confusion, mistrust in adults, fear of making things worse, or just not knowing that anything is wrong. When a child knows that they will be believed and taken seriously by even one caring adult, it gives them the courage to speak up when something isn't right. Simply telling your child that you are there for them to talk about anything and following through can lay that foundation of trust.

Also, teaching your child about their bodies and using anatomically correct words gives them the correct language to verbalize anything that may happen. Perpetrators of sexual abuse can manipulate a child into using incorrect names for private body parts, like "flower," "cookie," or "toy." This manipulation may take place so that if the child victim ever does try to tell someone about what is being done to them, they are less likely to be believed.

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Be present and aware.

One of the most prevalent warning signs of child abuse is unexplained changes in behavior. As a parent or caregiver, you know your child's behaviors best. You know when they are having an off day, when they're getting sick, or when they just need some alone time. Changes in behavior to be aware of are:

- Sleeping less or more
- Excessive talk or knowledge of sexual topics
- Regression to age inappropriate behaviors (i.e. thumb sucking, baby talk, bedwetting)
- Excessive touching of the genital area (i.e. scratching, rubbing, hands down the pants)
- Excessive worry or mood swings

If you do notice any of these warning signs, talk with your child about what might be bothering them. Tell them that you are there to love, support, and believe them. Tell them that this is not their fault. Tell them that they deserve to feel safe. PASSAGES, Inc. is also here to support you and your family with any questions or concerns regarding your child's wellbeing. We provide free and confidential sexual assault counseling, legal/medical advocacy, prevention education programs, and volunteer opportunities. You can reach us by calling our toll-free 24-hour hotline: 1 (800) 793-3620.

For more on how to start these conversations with your child, visit <themamabeareffect.org>

Alaina Shaffer

Prevention Education Coordinator/ PASSAGES, Inc.

Hold Tight to Your Dreams

Angela Hassinger, CAC

I love to hear about lessons that change the course of people's lives. So, I thought I would share one of mine in hopes that it stirs something inside of you and gives you courage to keep your dreams alive and act of them!

So, here goes! I graduated from college with my bachelor's degree in Social Work many years ago, knowing what I wanted to be as a grown-up! Well, I did for many years, I contently worked in human service agencies primarily with children and families. Unfortunately, over those years I slowly started to forget about my dream of one day having my master's degree in Social Work. That was until the day my friend informed me she was returning to school for her master's degree. This motivated me and suddenly I wanted to go too!

So, at the age of 48, I brushed up on my computer skills and enrolled at the University of Edinboro to get my online master's degree in Social Work. My dream will become a reality in August 2020, the one I almost forgot about while living daily life. I hope you are inspired by my life lesson and continue to hold tight to your dreams and make them reality!

Two Sisters Donate Clothing to CAC-CC!

Mary Tatum, CAC



The CAC-CC is fortunate to have a supportive county surrounding them. Whenever there is a need, the need is met often by donors and gracious volunteers. One of those donors/volunteers is the Peachman's, who regularly donate supplies and time to complete different projects at the CAC. Most recently, the Peachman sisters gave packs of underwear for the CAC to keep on-site for children in need.

Madelyn Peachman has donated her time to stuff envelopes for the CAC for surveys that families receive after they visit the CAC. Madelyn stuffs the envelopes with a form letter, return self-addressed stamped envelope, and survey. She hand wrote the CAC's mailing address on every envelope that she stuffed. She donated over 6 hours of her time to complete this task.

The Peachman family also coordinated finding a seamstress to sew masks to create the initial supply housed at the CAC. They donated over ten masks in a variety of sizes to ensure when the CAC opened their doors during COVID-19, there would be masks to fit each child that came to the center.

Without donors and volunteers like the Peachman's, the CAC-CC would not run as smoothly as it does. The CAC-CC is thankful for the Peachman's and all of the friends of the CAC-CC!

*Are you interested in volunteering or being a Friend of the CAC-CC?
Please contact cac@cenclear.org or by calling: 814-768-3155*