



Eric J. Holcomb, Governor
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Indiana DCS kicks off Child Abuse Prevention Month

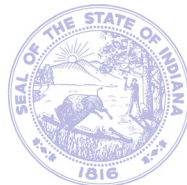
INDIANAPOLIS (April 1, 2021) – The Indiana Department of Child Services, in partnership with The Villages, kicked off Child Abuse Prevention Month with a virtual event featuring Gov. Eric J. Holcomb, Director Terry Stigdon, The Villages CEO/President Sharon Pierce, Prevent Child Abuse America CEO/President Dr. Melissa Merrick and special guest speaker Sharvonne Williams, who took guardianship of her little brother to prevent his entry to the child welfare system.

Presenters emphasized the impact child abuse has on all Hoosiers and our shared duty to ensure Indiana's children are safe.

“April is a time to celebrate and focus on the important role we all have to play in protecting children and supporting families,” Stigdon said. “Kids do best when they’re with their families, and families do best in strong, safe and supportive communities. This is a time for us to work together to make sure parents have what they need to help every child reach their full potential.”

Research shows that positive childhood experiences provide fertile ground for physical and mental health, learning and social skills, Merrick said.

“For this year’s Child Abuse Prevention Month, we’re using the metaphor of a garden to reinforce the message that every day, we help positive childhood experiences take root,” Merrick said. “By preventing child abuse and neglect before it happens, we aim to holistically improve the lives of all families and the communities they live in. We’re proud to collaborate with The Villages and DCS to extend this important and timely message across Indiana.”



Protecting our children, families and future

Throughout April, DCS and its community partners will host virtual events across the state to highlight ways everyone can help make Indiana a better place for Hoosier children to grow up.

"Imagine the impact Indiana children who are loved and nurtured in a family can have, in just a few years, in our neighborhoods, our schools, our communities, our businesses, our government and our state," Pierce said. "By treasuring and protecting each child, our vision for their bright future can, indeed, become a reality. What a powerful call to action this is for all of us!"

Click [here](#) for an interactive guide on child abuse prevention month events in your community.

Photos

- [Governor's proclamation](#)
- [Director Stigdon with pinwheel](#)
- [Pinwheels at the Statehouse](#)
- [Child with pinwheel](#)
- [Pinwheel word cloud from kickoff event](#)
- [Kickoff: Director Stigdon](#)
- [Kickoff: Governor Holcomb](#)
- [Kickoff: Sharon Pierce](#)
- [Kickoff: Melissa Merrick](#)
- [Kickoff: Sharvonne Williams](#)

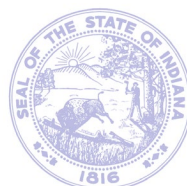
How can you help prevent abuse and neglect?

- If you suspect abuse or neglect, please call the Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-800-5556.
- Reach out to parents you know and offer a hand or emotional support.
- Volunteer time to programs that help parents.
- Let all of the children in your life know they can depend on you.
- Advocate for community services to help families.

For more information and resources on preventing child abuse and neglect, click [here](#).

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About Indiana DCS: *The Indiana Department of Child Services leads the state's response to allegations of child abuse and neglect and facilitates child support payments. We consider the needs and values of all we serve in our efforts to protect children while keeping families together whenever possible. Indiana Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline: 800.800.5556. Child Support Customer Service Kidsline: 800.840.8757 or 317.233.5437. www.in.gov/dcs*



Protecting our children, families and future