



## KENDALL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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### Child Abuse Prevention Month

Each year in April, the President of the United States issues a proclamation to announce National Child Abuse Prevention Month and releases the most current U.S. statistics on child abuse and neglect. The Kendall County Health Department would like to take this time and call upon residents to observe this month and join in the fight against child abuse.

According to the National Child Maltreatment Report from 2008, an estimated 772,000 children were victims of maltreatment. Nearly 33 percent of all victims of maltreatment were younger than 4 years of age, 23.6 percent were 4-7 years, and 18.9 percent were 8-11 years. Based on this same data, an estimated 1,740 children nationally died from abuse or neglect in 2008.

The Illinois Department of Child and Family Services define child abuse as the mistreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caretaker, someone living in their home or someone who works with or around children. The abuse must cause injury or put the child at risk of physical injury; neglect is when a parent or responsible caretaker fails to provide adequate supervision, food, clothing, shelter or other basics for a child. *Emotional abuse*, which includes constant criticism, threats and rejection, are all patterns of behavior that hinders a child's ability to develop emotionally as well as their ability to develop a strong sense of self-worth.

In order to help with the fight against child abuse, the Kendall County Health Department believes all residents should be aware of the warning signs. Here are just a few signs that a child you know may be suffering from neglect or abuse:

- Signs of malnutrition, poor hygiene as well as untreated medical or physical problems.
- Unexplained bruises or burns
- Child appears to be afraid of a parent or caregiver

Sexual abuse is any situation where a child is used for sexual gratification. Warning signs that a child may be the victim of sexual abuse are:

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- Pain, bleeding, redness or swelling in anal or genital area
- Age-inappropriate sexual play with toys, others or alone
- Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge

If you know or suspect a child is being abused, take immediate action. Anyone can report suspected child abuse by calling the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services 24 hour child abuse hotline at **1-800-25-Abuse** or **(217) 524-2606**.

For additional information contact the Kendall County Health Department at (630) 553-9100 or visit the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services online at <http://www.state.il.us/dcfs/index.shtml>.

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