

Friday, April 7, 2023

## DOH Recognizes National Child Abuse Prevention Month



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*Pinwheel planting event at the Florida Department of Health.*

**Tallahassee, Fla.**— Yesterday, the Florida Department of Health (Department) was proud to join the state in recognizing April as National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Pinwheels are the national symbol for child abuse prevention and serve as a reminder of the safe and nurturing environment desired for every child. Pinwheels for Prevention, coordinated by [Prevent Child Abuse \(PCA\) Florida](#), [Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida](#) and the [Florida Department of Children and Families \(DCF\)](#), is Florida’s statewide campaign that raises awareness of child abuse prevention.

“Protecting the health of Florida’s children is a priority for the Department, and we aspire to do all we can to ensure the well-being of every child,” **said State Surgeon General Dr. Joseph Ladapo.** “As both a dad and a physician, I take this role seriously and am proud to consider it one of my primary

goals. I encourage everyone to get engaged and find ways to support children and parents of young children in your community.”

“DCF is so thankful to our partners who understand the importance of families and communities working together to prevent child abuse and neglect,” **said DCF Secretary Shevaun Harris**. “We are thankful for the Florida Department of Health for helping to elevate this message and their commitment to supporting strong and resilient families.”

“Across Florida’s communities, pinwheels like the ones planted today, will display our commitment to healthy, happy, and carefree childhoods,” **said Agency for Health Care Administration Secretary Jason Weida**. “Success starts with our overall health which is why AHCA promotes transparency and accountability in our health care system. Children are the future of our state and nation, and they should be set up for a lifetime of success.”

“We all have a role in preventing child abuse within our neighborhoods and communities,” **said Florida Commissioner of Education Manny Diaz, Jr.** “Child Abuse Prevention Month reminds us that ensuring the welfare and prosperity of every child is vital to Florida’s future. The Florida Department of Education will continue to play our part to help children grow up in a safe and nurturing environment.”

“Thank you to Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo and the Florida Department of Health for bringing focus to the role that we all play in preventing child abuse,” **said Agency for Persons with Disabilities Director Taylor Hatch**. “We continue to work alongside our sister agencies and providers within the system of care to ensure constant pursuit of excellence for those who rely on our services and confirm our steadfast and unwavering commitment to protect Florida’s most vulnerable populations.”

“Prevention education can help everyone, no matter a caregiver’s background or life situation – and the best time for them to be empowered and educated is before a crisis occurs,” **said Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida President and CEO Jennifer L. Ohlsen**. “At the Ounce, we shape prevention policy and invest in innovative prevention programs that provide measurable benefits to families. We are proud to partner with the Florida Department of Health to improve the health and safety of our state’s children.”

Child abuse and neglect includes abandonment, physical or emotional harm, and sexual abuse or exploitation by a parent or caretaker. Child abuse is one aspect of what constitutes adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which can have a lasting negative impact on an individual’s health for the rest of their life. Children who have experienced many ACEs are more likely to experience common adult life-threatening health conditions like obesity, heart disease and substance abuse. Addressing ACEs at the community level can contribute to improvements in health outcomes over time.

The Department’s Children’s Medical Services Child Protection Teams (CPTs) are medically directed, multidisciplinary, community-based programs, which provide assessments that supplement the child protective investigation activities of DCF and designated sheriff offices. Each CPT is led by a board-certified physician in pediatrics or family medicine with expertise in child abuse and neglect. CPT staff also provide training sessions for DCF, local sheriff’s office staff, emergency room and other non-medical personnel and other local agencies responsible for the detection or providing child protective services.

Through the Department’s [Florida Healthy Babies Initiative](#), all 67 county health departments are engaged in identifying infant mortality disparities in their community and working with local partners to address these disparities through new or existing programs. This initiative represents the collective strength of these partners working together to improve the health and well-being of all Floridians.

If you suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, please call the [Florida Child Abuse Hotline](#) at 1-800-96-ABUSE (1-800-962-2873).

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

The Florida Department of Health, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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