



State of Louisiana
Department of Social Services
Office of the Secretary

NEWS RELEASE

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Jindal Proclaims April as Child Abuse Prevention Month

BATON ROUGE – Governor Bobby Jindal has declared April to be Child Abuse Prevention Month in Louisiana to raise awareness that everyone must take responsibility for protecting our children.

“Each one of us can make a positive difference in preventing child abuse and neglect by working to strengthen families through engagement in our communities,” said Louisiana Department of Social Services Secretary Ann Silverberg Williamson.

Williamson emphasized, “In the event that child abuse or neglect is suspected, concerned citizens are encouraged to speak up and reach out because our children deserve a life of safe care and well-being.”

During State Fiscal Year 2007, the DSS Office of Community Services investigated 23,911 reported cases of child abuse and neglect. Of that number, 7,659, or 32 percent, were considered valid. A valid finding is one that meets the legal criteria for abuse. As of February 2008, the most recent month for which current data is available, OCS had 5,074 children under protective state custody in foster-care placements.

OCS Assistant Secretary Marketa Garner Gautreau said child-protection caseworkers usually witness a spike in reported cases of abuse and neglect in September, because mandatory reporters such as teachers, child-care workers and health professionals see more children as the school year begins. Another spike typically is seen in April, when the school year draws to a close.

“Mandatory reporters are required by law to report suspected abuse or neglect and they serve as an important resource for a child who is being abused,” Garner Gautreau said. “The effects are so long-lasting and devastating, all of us must do everything we can to prevent child abuse.”

Garner Gautreau emphasized that child abuse has no social boundaries and occurs within all income ranges. She said children most often are mistreated when caretakers become overwhelmed and don’t know how to cope.

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Prevent Child Abuse, Add 1

In observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month, OCS is partnering with Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana by selling pinwheels to convey the message that every child deserves the chance to be raised in a “healthy, safe and nurturing environment,” according to Garner Gautreau.

“We hope that a public display of the pinwheels will call attention to the tremendous need to protect thousands of Louisiana children suffering from abuse and neglect,” Garner Gautreau said.

A ceremony to display the pinwheels is scheduled for 1:30 p.m., April 7, in front of the Iberville State Office Building, 627 North 4th St., Baton Rouge. Pinwheels may be purchased through Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana at (225) 925-9520. Profits from sale of the pinwheels will be used to support prevention efforts.

To report suspected abuse or neglect, please call local law enforcement or your local DSS Office of Community Services. For OCS phone numbers, go to **www.dss.state.la.us** and click on “Office of Community Services,” then “OCS parish directory.” For prevention tips, click on “Preventing Child Abuse.”