

APRIL IS NATIONAL Child Abuse Prevention Month

By **Damon Stone**
Staff Writer

The month of April has been designated as Child Abuse Prevention Month, with organizations across the state and country working to help prevent those who are more vulnerable in society from abuse.

Two of the vital components of helping to prevent child abuse are to help strengthen families, and to connect to reduce parental stressors.

To help strengthen families, several organizations and individuals have helped to provide support and resources to parents to improve their parenting.

Hallye Arterburn, the Allen County Attorney, works with Allen County Child Support Services, which helps to collect child support payments on behalf of mothers or fathers in the county, depending on who is owed child support.

“One of the benefits our office provides is that if somebody is not paying support as ordered by the court, we can take them to court, file a motion for contempt, and impose jail sanctions,” Arterburn said. “If somebody is ordered to pay support in a divorce, it’s not nearly as easy to get contempt as a private individual, as it would be for our office to go in and file for contempt.”

Arterburn gave an example of strengthening families with a hypothetical scenario of a child being removed from a home due to both parents abusing substances.

“Social Services can make referrals to mental health counseling, to substance abuse counseling,” Arterburn explained. “Oftentimes, even to in-patient treatment, after they completed treatment, they can direct the parents on how to go about finding a job, they can direct them about housing and make referrals for different housing agencies. I think, really and truly strengthening families means providing resources to parents to allow them to be better for themselves and for their children.”

Arterburn explained that whenever a child is removed from a home, it is always the goal to ultimately return the child to the parents after rehabilitation of some kind, in order to provide a better home for the child, with social services providing every resource possible to achieve that goal.

“(Child abuse in Allen County is) a much bigger issue than the lay person would think,” Arterburn said. “We’re not just talking about physical abuse here, we’re also talking about mental

abuse, and emotional abuse. Most people think of emotional abuse as a parent being derogatory to a child, yelling at a child, calling the child names, exposing children to things like domestic violence between the parents.”

According to the Lexington Court Appointed Special Advocates, or CASA, utilizing data from the 2020 census, 2021 saw a state average of 15 cases of child abuse per 1,000 children.

During this study, CASA determined that Allen County saw 132 cases of neglect and abuse among 4,735 children, with a rate of 27.9.

For comparison, Barren County saw 288 cases of neglect and abuse among 10,454 children, with a rate of 27.5, Butler County saw 65 cases of neglect and abuse among 2,808 children, with a rate of 23.1, Cumberland County saw 29 cases of neglect and abuse among 1,236 children, with a rate of 23.5.

Furthermore, Edmonson County saw 59 cases of neglect and abuse among 2,158 children, with a rate of 27.3, Hart County saw 93 cases of neglect and abuse among 4,745 children, with a rate of 19.6, Metcalfe County saw 77 cases of neglect and abuse among 2,407 children, with a rate of 32.0, and Russell County saw 71 cases of neglect and abuse among 4,084 children, with a rate of 17.4.

Arterburn added that, for her, a great deal of the mental and emotional abuse comes from unclean homes, with children not receiving the proper hygiene, or coming from homes infested with bugs or vermin, with them being isolated from their peers at school because of poor hygiene.

“If something looks bad, tell somebody,” Arterburn said. “Like when you walk into an airport, if something looks suspicious, go get TSA. If you see a child that has bruising, and you see a child that comes to school every day with matted hair, dirty clothes, very unkempt and things aren’t changing and you’re seeing a cycle, tell somebody.”

Arterburn explained that if a child knows that they are being abused, they should speak with people that they trust, like teachers or any other staff at the school.

“It’s hard for a child when they’re in an abusive family situation, because at the end of the day, they love their parents,” Arterburn expressed. “Their parents may not be their safe space, but they’re supposed to be their safe space, and they don’t want to get their parents in trouble. It’s very

hard for children a lot of times to come out and say, ‘my parents are doing something wrong.’”

In the state of Kentucky, there are mandatory reporting laws, in which if a child reports that they are being abused, that those informed are mandated to report it to law enforcement.

In terms of reducing parental stressors, several organizations can help with doing so, such as social services groups.

Holly Francis, the office supervisor at Allen County Social Services, which investigates child abuse and neglect, and conducts investigations to determine whether services are needed for the family, works with kids in the home or kids in foster care.

“With regards to what services we offer, (connecting to reduce parental stress) provides information to parents,” Francis said. “I know that the state does that, and in Child Abuse Prevention Month, they filter some of that information out online, but also, there’s other methods as far as depending on what the family’s needs are, and where that stress is coming from.”

Francis explained that some stressors that contribute, include financial struggles, finding ways to parent a child with autism, issues with discipline or technology, and any other stressor that comes from raising a child.

“Parental stress would be related to the child, and parenting the child, whereas regular



stress could be work-related stress, or things of that nature,” Francis clarified.

Francis explained that finding the root cause of the stress, and tackling the issue on a case-by-case basis is the best way to reduce these stresses.

“(Too much of this stress) can lead to a breakdown of families in regards to communication,” Francis said. “Sometimes it can lead to issues with the children behaviorally, emotionally, and ultimately, sometimes it can lead to abuse or neglect.”

Francis explained that if there is abuse or neglect going on, reports can be made to the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services and law enforcement, and if it meets the accepted criteria, their organization will investigate to make that determination.

Note: Information from Hallye Arterburn and Holly Francis previously appeared in articles for The Citizen-Times in the

April 4, 2024 and April 10, 2024 editions.

Allen County Social Services can be reached at 270-237-3101, and Allen

County Child Support can be reached at 270-237-4450, with CASA being reachable at <https://www.kentuckycasanetwork.org/>.

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Amish CONSIGNMENT AUCTION

SATURDAY • APRIL 12, 2025 • 9 AM CDT

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EVERYONE IS INVITED TO CONSIGN OR BUY: Consignment items should be delivered to the sale site from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. on Thursday or Friday or by 8:30 A.M. on sale day. Consignors are responsible for making sure all items are properly checked in, tagged and numbered. All persons consigning small animals must provide cages, coops or boxes. We will be using a Number System; please obtain number upon arrival. All items sold privately on grounds subject to commission. Dealers who wish to set up on grounds should make prior arrangements with sale committee. We will not consign hand guns, ammunition or holiday decorations. Chickens & ducks need to be tested if they come from out of state. **JUNK WILL BE TURNED AWAY!**

WE ARE EXPECTING CONSIGNMENTS OF: Gas & diesel engines, lots of horse & tractor drawn farm machinery & tools, new & used hand tools, household items, collectibles, & primitives. Tractors welcome. We have sorted items such as furniture, quilts, antiques, flowers, shrubs, trees, lawn & garden tools, crafts made by members of The Amish Community. Large assortment of sporting goods, lots of small animals, tack, horse eveners, neck yokes, double trees, new & used harnesses & buggies, jog carts, wagons, many more items too numerous to mention. Sale time will be announced for each.

COMMISSION:
25% on items \$30.00 and under
15% on items \$30.01 - \$250.00
10% on items \$250.01 - \$500.00
8% on items \$500.01 & over (max. commission \$150.00 per item)
5% No-Sale Fee (max. No-Sale Fee \$15.00 per item)

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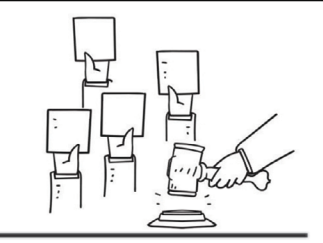
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