



Child Abuse Prevention Month

It is hard to fathom why or how someone could hurt an innocent child. For many people, parenthood is the most anticipated and desired event in life. Others do not share that need, or they have lost their way due to drugs, alcohol, mental illness, or life circumstances.

Every day over 16,000 children are abused, molested, belittled, or neglected by their parents and five of those will die. Approximately 78% of the abusers are biological parents and over 50% are women. Children who are four and under are at the greatest risk for severe injury or death. Substance abuse and domestic violence are the most common causes of abuse, but mental illness and anger are also major factors.

The statistics are staggering. To stop this trend from continuing, reporting signs of child abuse or maltreatment is key. Facesofchildabuse.org says that the signs of abuse include a fear of going home; numb to emotions; lack of personal care of hygiene; inappropriate sexual behaviors/knowledge; wary of adult contacts; lack of academic performance/ability to concentrate; long periods/constant crying; and injuries. In most cases, the child is unable or too afraid to report the abuse. Reporting abuse in many states may be done anonymously. Even if it is not, reporting is the right thing to do to potentially save a child's life. Contact the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-4 A Child (422-4453) or the National Hotline for Missing or Exploited Children is 800-843-5678 for more information or to report a case of abuse.

To raise awareness, Blue Ribbon Week is a week-long program of educational topics on child abuse prevention, self-esteem boosters, and empowering information for children. Blue Ribbon Week is geared mainly toward elementary age children, but can also be applied to those in middle and high school. In addition, many communities across the country take part in Blue Ribbon Week by displaying blue ribbons around town or changing porch lights to a blue bulb.

The more awareness is increased, the better the chances of adults taking action and reporting signs of abuse. For more information on Child Abuse Prevention or Blue Ribbon Week, please visit www.facesofchildabuse.org.

Highland Hospital provides inpatient behavioral health services to children and adolescents age 5 to 17. If you have a child or adolescent with behavioral health problems, contact Highland at 304-926-1600 (inpatient) or visit <http://highlandhosp.com/services/childrenadolescent/>