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**Work against abuse perpetually**[Print Page](#)

Published: Friday, April 29, 2011 2:04 AM EDT

As we end April, the month in which we recognize our community battle against child abuse, it is crucial that the heartrending emotions surrounding harm to the defenseless among us translate to action. Steps must be taken, not by advocates and educators, but by those closest to the abuse. Preventing child abuse must be an everyday activity, not something we think about when victim service organizations have our attention in a given month and then forget about as soon as the calendar turns.

Yet, many people fail to report abuse. People who look the other way have many reasons for their actions, some perfectly understandable. Excuses can range from not wanting to get involved in someone else's family or be responsible for breaking up a home to fear the family will know who reported them to resignation that nothing they do will make a difference. Rare is the person who wants to cause pain and hardship by breaking up a family, but as a society we have an obligation to protect our children. We should not place the burden of ending abuse within families on the victims by expecting them to always come forward.

The best way for community members to help is to know the symptoms of abuse. It can be easy to see the signs of physical abuse: bruises, cuts, broken bones, burns and welts. Identifying emotional abuse and neglect is more difficult. According to Prevent Child Abuse Indiana, some physical signs of neglect include flat, bald spots on an infant's head; dirty, foul smelling clothing or clothes not appropriate for the weather; and developmental lags. Emotional abuse is likely the hardest for outside observers to detect because the behavior it causes in children (low self-esteem, depression, etc.) can be caused by so many different struggles children face. In those cases, a good path ahead is simply to become involved with the family and the child. Sometimes that assistance can soothe a stressful situation or environment and improve conditions for both the parent or parents and the child.

We encourage anyone who suspects a child is being abused to call the Child Protective Services 24-hour hotline: (800) 800-5556 or the crisis hotline at Family Service Society 664-0701. It might not feel like you're doing much, but it is that all important first step that is far too often ignored.

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