



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

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NEWS RELEASE--FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Reporting suspected child abuse can help save a child's life

Life-threatening and emergency child protection calls are increasing in Idaho, prompting child welfare workers to urge anyone who suspects child abuse or neglect to report it as soon as possible to help keep children safe.

"We are very concerned about the increase in severity of child welfare situations we are being called in on," says Department of Health and Welfare Child Welfare Program Manager Shirley Alexander. "Being a parent is always a difficult job. We can't be sure what is causing the increase, but certainly financial insecurity and other factors can strain families. It's everyone's responsibility to take the time to report suspected child abuse or neglect to law enforcement or the Idaho CareLine at 211."

The total number of child protection referrals remained steady across the state last year. However, the number of cases in which a child is in immediate danger increased 9%. In Southwest Idaho, reports of emergency or life-threatening injury to children have increased by 15% in the Nampa/Caldwell area and 13% in the Boise area.

Alexander says that in many of the most severe cases, child protection services have not had previous involvement with the families, even though it's likely many of them were struggling before there was immediate danger to the child. Child welfare workers do not know what is causing the increase in serious abuse or neglect cases, but suspect the stresses of increased poverty and unemployment may be a factor.

"If we learn of a family who is just beginning to struggle, we can step in and work with them to keep children safe," say Alexander. "A report of suspected child abuse makes it possible for a family to get help."

The reasons to call to report potential child abuse include calling when a child:

- Has injuries like bruises, burns or broken bones with no appropriate explanation.
- Has had a pattern of repeated injuries.
- Is young and is left alone.
- Lives in a house where health or safety hazards are present.

- Has nothing to eat and appears underweight.

Child abuse or neglect calls are confidential and should be made within 24 hours of becoming aware of the abuse or neglect. More information on reporting child abuse is available [here](#).

The reminder of the importance of reporting child abuse coincides with Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month in April. DHW has developed a Public Service Announcement reminding Idahoans about the importance of reporting suspected abuse or neglect. A copy of the PSA is attached.

"No one wants to see children harmed," says Alexander. "If you see signs of abuse or neglect or suspect that something is wrong, care enough to call. Reporting child abuse is simple, it's easy and it's the right thing to do."

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