



April is Child Abuse Prevention Month



Be a Part of the Child Abuse Prevention Solution

Child abuse evokes varied emotions and responses from each of us. Startling images of children who have been harmed or killed are readily available in daily news reports. Enter the terms “child abuse” on any internet search engine and thousands of sites will pop up generally full of heart-rendering stories. The causes of child abuse, whether it is physical or emotional abuse, are hard for many people to understand. Numerous research efforts are made to evaluate the root causes of child abuse. Research seems to indicate common causes of child abuse are traced to either a caregiver who is stressed out by life’s circumstances, or are traced to caregivers who find managing their own anger challenging, and whose responses to children are often aggressive and forceful.

So what can we as a tribe do to become part of a solution to preventing child abuse amongst our people? Historically, Indian peoples have placed a high value on family, and native tribes understood children to be their hope of both their physical survival and future posterity. We must return to our historical principals of making our children and families our collective priority. If we took the time to focus our priorities on our children and families, we will learn many of our other priorities have little long-lasting value or impact.

The next step in the process of becoming a part of the solution to child abuse is to begin to be concerned about the realm of influence on our children. In other words, we must become involved in the lives of our children and in our community. We can refuse to allow child abuse to be a part of our individual homes and in our community at large. We can and must take an active role in developing healthy relationships with each other and in guiding our children into healthy relationships with people around them. Become a mentor to a child or family who is having difficulty and work together to improve their life. Individually take an active part of preventing child abuse by becoming our “brother’s keeper” and reporting any suspected abuse or neglect to the proper authorities.

If you have any concerns or suspicions about any child who may be being abused, please contact us at the Family Services Department at (251)-368-9136. We will be happy to help make appropriate referrals as needed. It is the hope of the Family Services Department that we all work to make our tribe a sanctuary for the future success of our children. As the generations before us understood, children who live in safe nurturing environments will develop into emotionally healthy adults who can prevent child abuse for their generation and who will bring long-term posterity to this tribe!

April is also **Sexual Assault** Awareness Month

Sexual assault and abuse is any type of sexual activity you do not agree to, including: inappropriate touching; child molestation; vaginal, anal, or oral penetration; sexual intercourse that you say no to; attempted rape; and rape.

Sexual assault can be verbal, visual, or anything that forces a person to join in unwanted sexual contact or attention. Examples of this are voyeurism (when someone watches private sexual acts), exhibitionism (when someone exposes him/herself in public), incest (sexual contact between family members), and sexual harassment. It can happen in different situations such as in the home by someone you know, on a date, or by a stranger in an isolated place.

Rape is a common form of sexual assault. It is committed in many situations—on a date, by a friend or an acquaintance, or when you think you are alone. Educate yourself on “date rape” drugs. They can be slipped into a drink when a victim is not looking. **Never** leave your drink unattended—no matter where you are. Attackers use date rape drugs to make a person unable to resist assault. These drugs can also cause memory loss so the victim doesn’t know what happened.

Rape and sexual assault are never the victim’s fault, no matter where or how it happens. If you or anyone you know experiences a sexual assault, contact law enforcement and the Family Services Department.

The Family Services Department

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