



Pennsylvania
Family Support Alliance™

Protecting children from abuse



January 20, 2018

“Not one person called us.”

That’s what human service officials in Perris, California told the media when asked why they had not intervened sooner to stop the alleged serial abuse and torture of 13 innocent children there.

Of course, this story is so inexplicably grotesque that it defies comprehension on any level. The depths of depravity to which people will plunge in their mistreatment of children, among our most precious and vulnerable members of society, is incalculable and unspeakable.

But speak, we must.

In 2016, according to the most updated numbers from the PA Department of Human Services, 46 children died of abuse in our commonwealth. Another 79 children nearly died, and 4,616 children were abused. Those are only the cases we know about. And we know about most of them because someone cared enough about these children to report their suspicions of abuse to ChildLine, the state’s 24/7 hotline.

Mandated reporters are required under PA’s Child Protective Services Law to report suspected abuse. But in 2016, more than 8,000 so-called “permissive reporters,” just regular, every day Pennsylvanians, picked up a phone and made a report to

ChildLine. Why? Because their gut and what they had heard or observed told them something just wasn't right about the way children were being treated. Or, a child told them something and they believed them and acted on it.

I listened, read, and watched news reports in absolute horror and unmitigated rage as neighbor after neighbor of that hell house in California recounted for the media how they witnessed the children at all hours of the night being marched back and forth as if they were army recruits. Did they call child welfare officials to report this bizarre behavior? NO! They recounted how the children would gather in their yard, speak to no one, appeared to be unwashed and malnourished, and devoid of any typical child-like emotions or enthusiasm. Did they call child welfare officials to report these concerns? NO!

Who speaks for the child?!

Each one of us must speak. We must become Champions for Safe Children. It's why we have launched our movement called PA Blue Ribbon Champions for Safe Kids. We want to empower every single Pennsylvanian to be a champion for kids and acknowledge all Pennsylvanians who stand up to protect children from abuse, neglect, and any form of harm.

You don't have to be a superhero. You don't have to be a member of law enforcement or the child welfare system. You don't even have to have powers of ESP. You just have to open your ears, eyes, and hearts to children. If something about how they are being treated does not feel right to you, call ChildLine. Make a report. Allow the professionals who are trained in these matters to take the investigation further. YOUR call can save a life.

If you don't call, perhaps no one will intervene to save that child from a dangerous, unhealthy, and potentially lethal situation. The children in Perris were only rescued reportedly when an older sibling escaped and called police.

If you know someone who has done something important to protect and celebrate children in Pennsylvania, nominate them for our award at pablueribbonchampion.org. And visit our website at pa-fsa.org where we have many valuable tips and free information about keeping kids safe in a multitude of situations.

If you know about a child who could be in danger, pick up the phone right now and call ChildLine – 800-932-0313. Every kid deserves a champion. Please, be one.



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