



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Raising Awareness about child abuse and neglect

THOMAS P. MORAHAN April 19, 2010

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month, a time to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect and encourage individuals and communities to support children and families. The consequences are wide-ranging and affect us all. Child abuse leads to other problems – long term health and mental health problems, drug addiction, runaways, juvenile violence and adult crime. Most violent prisoners in our jails were abused or neglected as children.

Child abuse is costly for society, as well as for its victims. New York State spends more than \$2.3 billion a year to deal with the immediate and long-term results of the abuse and neglect of our children. Child abuse includes physical abuse, physical neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse inflicted by a parent or other caretaker. Over the last ten years I have supported legislation that seeks to prevent and identify with acts of child abuse.

New York State law defines these types of abuses in the following ways:

Physical abuse is non-accidental physical injury of a child inflicted by a parent or caretaker which ranges from superficial bruises and welts to broken bones, burns, serious internal injuries and in some cases, death.

The definition of physical abuse includes actions that create a substantial risk of physical injury to the child.

Physical neglect is withholding, or failing to provide, adequate food, shelter, clothing, hygiene, medical care, education, and/or supervision, such that the child's physical, mental or emotional condition is impaired or at imminent risk of being impaired.

Sexual abuse is when a parent or caretaker commits a sexual offense against a child or allows a sexual offense to be committed, such as rape, sodomy, engaging a child in sexual activity, engaging a child in - or promoting a child's - sexual performance.

Emotional abuse includes parents' or caretakers' acts or omissions that cause or could cause serious conduct, cognitive, affective, or other mental disorders. For example, torture, close confinement or the constant use of verbally abusive language to harshly criticize and denigrate a child. It also includes emotional neglect - withholding physical and emotional contact to the detriment of the child's normal emotional development, and in extreme cases, physical development.

Child abuse and neglect cross all ethnic, social and economic lines. Child abuse and neglect stymie children's normal growth and development. Victims of child abuse suffer medical and developmental problems requiring long term health, mental health and special education services.

Reports of suspected child abuse or maltreatment should be made immediately -- at any time of the day and on any day of the week -- by telephone to the New York Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (sometimes referred to as the State Central Register or SCR). The Child Abuse Hotline Number is: 1-800-342-3720.