

STATE OF ALASKA



Executive Proclamation by *Governor Sean Parnell*

WHEREAS, every child is entitled to love, care, security, and protection from abuse, exploitation, and neglect. As Alaskans, we will protect our children's inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and

WHEREAS, child abuse is one of our society's most serious public health problems, affecting millions of children nationwide and thousands here at home. Sadly, over 90 percent of child abuse is perpetrated by people that the children know, love, and trust; and

WHEREAS, the devastating impacts of emotional, physical, sexual, and verbal child abuse go beyond the immediate trauma, often lasting well into adulthood. Studies have shown that victims of childhood abuse are at high-risk for chronic mental and physical health issues such as depression, eating disorders, substance abuse, obesity, heart disease, and more. They are also more likely to act violently in dating relationships and to develop poor emotion-coping mechanisms; and

WHEREAS, the trauma of living in a violent home can be just as harmful to a child as being physically or sexually abused. For example, research suggests that continually experiencing feelings of fear and insecurity will alter the normal development of a child's brain, leading to anxiety, difficulties in focusing, and aggressive behaviors; and

WHEREAS, social acceptance of myths about family violence and child abuse silences victims and encourages public denial about the true nature of this tragic epidemic. Raising awareness about the enormity of the issue is the first step in changing these harmful social norms; and

WHEREAS, further steps to reduce child abuse and neglect may include providing nurturing, safe, and supportive environments; aiding and supporting victims and at-risk families; and holding offenders fully accountable for their actions; and

WHEREAS, by working together, we can stem the tide of abuse in our great state, strengthen our families and communities, and ensure that Alaska's children enjoy brighter futures and grow to their full potential as healthy, productive citizens.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Sean Parnell, Governor of the State of Alaska, do hereby proclaim April 2014 as:

Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month

in Alaska, and call upon all Alaskans to dedicate their energies to preventing child abuse and to support efforts to ensure the safety of every child. Please report any instances of known or suspected child abuse and neglect by immediately calling 911 or your local police department, along with the Office of Children's Services at 1-800-478-4444. Together, we will continue our efforts to provide safe homes and strong families throughout Alaska.

Dated: February 11, 2014



Sean Parnell

Sean Parnell, Governor
who has also authorized the
seal of the State of Alaska to
be affixed to this proclamation.