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SEPTA would like to thank
Disability Services & Advocacy, LLC
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The Advocate

*“Every Child is Born with Wings...
Make it a Choice to Educate
and Advocate for the Chances for
All Children to Learn to Soar”*



Protecting Children From Abuse:

For Parents of Special Needs Children it is often a daunting task.

Inside this issue:	
<i>Protecting Children from Abuse</i>	1-2
<i>Resource Telephone Numbers</i>	3
<i>Signs of Abuse: Neglect, Physical, Emotional, and Sexual</i>	3
<i>News from the Web</i>	3
<i>Upcoming Events</i>	4

You have seen it in abundance lately on the TV news stations and in the local papers. At times the daily announcements of children being abused or abducted (sometimes from the security of their own beds!) can make parents feel uneasy and plain sick to their stomachs.

We sit back and wonder just what the heck is wrong with society that individuals feel the need to hurt, abuse and even kill innocent children at such an alarming increasing rates.

We comfort ourselves by reassuring ourselves that our child would come to us and report anything of this nature. We have discussed this topic openly and honestly—reassuring our child that we will be there for them.

Parents of children with special needs often face uncertainty of their child being able to recognize and report any type of abuse to them.

As parents we would like to believe that our child will be safe in the world outside our front door; that we keep a watchful eye on their whereabouts and drilled in the importance of strangers.

Now are you ready for some disturbing statistics concerning abuse and children with disabilities?

In 1993 and 1997 statistics repeatedly showed that children with disabilities are up to 3 times more likely to be abused and neglected.

Why are disabled children more prevalent to abuse?

According to Arline Oberst of Prevent Child Abuse NJ there are several contributing factors:

- Myths and beliefs that children with disabilities are less sensitive to suffering from physical or sexual abuse since they are perceived as infantile or asexual because of their disabilities.
- Often over stress family members are reluctant to file charges against a “care giver” if they are suspected of causing the abuse to the child.
- Children with disabilities are often considered “less credible” in reporting abuse to parents or

authority figures than their “non disabled” peers.

- Abuse in severely disabled children often goes unrecognized by parents till physical signs emerge (sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy and injuries) before the parent accepts that abuse is occurring—potentially leaving the child in a dangerous situation for years.

When most parents think of abuse most worry about sexual abuse. However abuse can takes other forms.

Each year DYFS receives about 80,000 calls of suspected child abuse and neglect a year. Of the calls received, roughly 37,000 of these calls result in referrals for case investigation and 8,700 result in DFYS charges and ongoing involvement.

61.2% of calls received by DYFS are reported by health care professionals, police, school personal and anonymous callers.

The Advocate

The Advocate is the free public newsletter of the Special Education PTA of South River.

Published monthly from August to June of each year by the Executive Board Members of the SEPTA - this newsletter is mailed directly to families of classified students of the South River Public School District from the Office of Special Education. Additional copies are available at the South River Public Library. Past editions of the Advocate can be downloaded from our website. Interested individuals may sign up for our electronic newsletter and a listing of other newsletters related to special education issues by visiting our website at:

www.specialeducationpta.org

Questions related to the Special Education PTA as an organization, the services we provide, and our calendar of events can be answered by telephone at: (732) 651-7157 or by email at info@specialeducationpta.org

If you would like to submit letters or articles, post information or contribute pictures to be included in future editions of the Advocate please contact our newsletter by email at: SRPTAAdvocate@aol.com

Protecting Children From Abuse:*For Parents of Special Needs Children it is often a daunting task. Continued...*

Continue to page 2

There are four different types of abuse children suffer:

- **Physical**
- **Emotional**
- **Neglect**
- **Sexual**

Of the percentage of actual case loads that DYFS oversees, 79.4% are child abuse /neglect cases.

In 30-40% of the active cases in the DYFS system domestic violence is present and/or a contributing factor to the abuse/neglect of the child.

Most shocking is that the primary perpetrators of abuse in 7-10 cases are females in their early thirties.

Nationwide, there are approximately 3 million cases reported a year with the cost of responding to child maltreatment at over \$94 billion dollars.

What are the contributing factors for people to become abusers?

People become abusers for a variety of reasons: they have witnessed violence in their home growing up, they themselves were abused as a child, they have limited parenting skills, they have limited knowledge of a child's development or how a child develops and finally they may suffer from emotional or mental problems.

Other factors that contribute to a person perpetuating abuse against a child are:

- **Stress** from either financial, job related or from a relationship.
- **Substance Abuse** either from Alcohol or Drug use (this is the highest reason neglect is prevalent in NJ today)
- **Isolation**

So how are we to keep our children safe?

Arline Oberst offered some simple words of advise if your child comes

explainable injury or if you have a nagging feeling something is just not quite right with your child.

Rule of Thumb: What is "normal" for your child in behavior and actions? If your child's behavior or actions all of a sudden deviate from this "norm" or you suspect something is not right follow these simple steps:

- Observe the injury on your child (If you suspect your child may have suffered physical abuse.)
- Get a statement from your child as to how they received the injury.
- Compare your child's statement with the injury; is the explanation given consistent with the nature of the injury inflicted or suffered.
- Compare the explanation or the injury with your child's developmental or physical capabilities. If the explanation given for the injury involves an activity that physically you know your child is not capable of- this should be a "red flag" to you.
- Try and find a witness to the "accident" were your child received the "injury".
- Consult your child's pediatrician
- Child's Behavior (This is considered one of your best indicators as a drastic change in behavior or sudden phobias are a strong indicator that something is wrong and bears further investigating on your part.

Positive Ways to Respond to a Child Victim in the case of Abuse:

In her presentation, Arline Oberst gave some straight forward approaches when dealing with a child who has suffered abuse and neglect:

- Listen to the Child

Do not ask direct and pointed questions concerning the nature of the abuse-the investigators who will be taking the information are specially trained in asking these questions. Your job is to be supportive and emotionally available for the child.

- Reassure the child that they did nothing wrong and did the right thing in telling about the abuse.
- Never promise the child that you will not tell anyone.
- Be calm and in control of your emotions.
- Assess the child's immediate safety in the situation.
- Gather all the information you have, write it all down and call DYFS at 1-877-NJABUSE. This number is staffed 24 hours a day/7 days a week.

It is important that children who are in abusive situations get help. The abuse or neglect they suffer can cause them to perform poorly in school, commit crimes, experience emotional or substance abuse problems and abuse others.

So how are we to protect children from this growing epidemic occurring in society today?

Some simple ways concerned parents or community members can take an active position in preventing child abuse and neglect:

- Volunteer in the community
- Report suspected abuse or neglect of a child.
- Be a role model or mentor to a child.
- Advocate for family support programs in your community and state.
- Speak up for nonviolent programming in TV, Movies and Videogames.
- Support activities that raise awareness to prevent abuse.
- Help a friend, neighbor or relative that might be struggling with parental responsibilities.
- Help Yourself! If you feel overwhelmed or stressed ask for HELP from family members or seek out community help.

The Warning Signs of Abuse in Children:

Physical Abuse:

- Bruises or welts
- Unexplained: burns, fractures, and /or lacerations/ abrasions
- Weary of adults contact
- Aggression or withdrawal
- Frightened of parents or adults
- Afraid to go home
- Reports being injured by an adult

Sexual Abuse:

- Difficulty with walking or sitting
- Ripped or torn underwear
- Pain, itching, bruises or bleeding in the genital area
- Doesn't want to get dressed in front of adults
- Withdrawn or infantile behavior
- Bizarre, unusual or sophisticated behavior
- Poor peer relationships
- Delinquent or running away from home
- Reports sexual assaults
- Presence of STI or STD in young children

Emotional Abuse

- Habit Disorders (Biting, Sucking, Hair Pulling)
- Conduct Disorders /Destructive Behaviors
- Neurotic Trails (Sleep, Speech or Eating Disorders)
- Psychoneurotic Reaction (Hysteria, Obsessive/ Compulsive)
- Behavior Extremes (Passive/Aggressive)
- Overly adoptive behavior (either wants to be a baby or an adult)
- Developmental Lags: (Physical, Emotional or Mental)
- Depression or Attempted Suicide

Neglect

- Always Hungry / Poor Hygiene
- Consistent lack of Supervision
- Consistent fatigue or listlessness
- Unattended physical, medical or dental needs
- Abandonment
- Begging or Stealing Food
- Extended long stays at school or public places
- Falling asleep in class / Delinquency at school
- Stating there is no "care giver" at home.

Resource Telephone Numbers

Family Help-line: 1-800-THE KIDS

Child Abuse Reporting Hotline: 1-877-NJ ABUSE

Safe Haven Infant Protection Hotline: 1-877-839-2339

The NJ Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect:
1-609-292-0888

Prevent Child Abuse– New Jersey: 1-800-CHILDREN

Website: www.PreventChildAbuseNJ.org

Parents Anonymous: 1-800-843-5437

Victim/Witness Hotline: 1-800-242-0804

Children's Trust Fund: 1-609-633-3992

Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-572-SAFE

Association For Children of NJ: 1-973-643-3876

NJ Child Assault Prevention (CAP) Project Educational
Information & Resource Center: 1-856-582-7000

NJ Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect website:

www.njtaskforcecan.org

NEWS FROM THE WEB:

Grotto Grip– Pencil Grips

These ingenious pencil grips assist children who have a problem with maintaining the correct finger placement to make writing successful. These pencil grips have grooves for the index and thumb finger and a groove underneath for the grip for the middle finger placement. A shield at the top of the grip prevents finger slippage and insures that the correct finger placement is maintained when writing. ***Best of all—they really work!!!***

As the company slogan states:

“Discover writing success, every pencil, every child, every day.”

Grotto Grips are sold in packages of 3 for approx. \$6.00 a pkg.
(They are also sold in teacher friendly packages of 25 or 100)

They can be purchased from the following specialty companies:

Integrations Telephone #1-800-622-0638
www.integrationscatalog.com

Therapro Telephone # 1-800-268-6624
www.theraproducts.com

The SEPTA of South River

81 Johnson Place
South River, New Jersey 08882
Information Line: (732) 651-7157
E-mail: info@specialeducationpta.org

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We're on the Web!

www.specialeducationpta.org

***"Every Child is Born with Wings....
Make it a Choice to Educate and
Advocate for the Chances for
All Children to Learn to Soar"***

*The SEPTA of South River was founded by a group of parents who
wished to promote the education and advocacy rights of the special needs
children of their community..*

By providing parents with the tools and effective advocacy skills ~

We endeavor to keep this goal a reality so that

***Every Child Will Fulfill Their Dreams
and Learn to Soar.***

Interested in
obtaining a copy of the
**SEPTA of
South River's
S. E. Resource CD-Rom?**

Contact SEPTA

At (732) 651-7157

Or Email us at:

info@specialeducationpta.org

Cost: \$7.50

(includes ship/handling fees)

Help Wanted:

Would you like to help with our
Newsletter, or Website?

Have you come across an
interesting book, article or
website that deals with
education, special ed., or
parenting that you'd like to
share with others? Write a
short summary and we'll love
to put it in our newsletter and
web page. Email it to:
SRPTAAadvocate@aol.com

Up Coming Events:

June:

June 1: 6:30 pm
SEPTA Board Meeting

So. River Public Library

- Award SEPTA 2005
Scholarship
- Nominations of new
officers for SEPTA
Board 2005-2007

Nominees: Pres. Barbara Malgioglio
V.P. Pat Borgstede
Sec. Bill England
Treasurer: Bill Sellar

**Nominees will also be
accepted from the floor.*

- **Agenda for 2005-2006
School Year :**
Upcoming Programs,
Holiday Party, Fundraise

Free Public Movies* at the South River Public Library in June:

June 6: Walt Disney's Love Bug 6:30pm

June 7: Spanglish 6:30pm

June 13: Winnie the Pooh's Heffalump
Movie 6:30pm

June 14: Lemony Snicket's: A Series of
Unfortunate Events 6:30pm

June 17: Winnie the Pooh's Heffalump
Movie 10:30 am
Lemony Snicket's: A Series of
Unfortunate Events 6:30pm

June 20: Meet the Fockers 11:15am

*Children under 8 years must be supervised by an adults at
all times. For more information call (732)254-2488.

Don't forget to join the South River Library's Summer
Reading Adventure "Dragons, Dreams and Daring Deeds" this Summer!