

## **Especially During the Summer - It Takes a Community to Keep Kids Safe**

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During summer months, children are away from their routines, activities and school personnel that can be their safety net. Summer camps and childcare are added expenses for families, and many children will be left unsupervised. Also, for children and families that rely on school resources for breakfast and lunch, the summer can be a time of hunger and food insecurity.

For many reasons, during the summer it is even more important for community members to step in and support children and families in our Adams County neighborhoods. Children's lives can be positively changed and even saved by active and aware community members making the critically important decision to ask more questions and to offer help. Many situations and conditions are preventable once community programs and systems are engaged to support families.

### **Please - Get Involved**

Children thrive with regular interactions with responsive, caring adults. These positive childhood experiences can promote healthy brain development and build resilience in families. Unfortunately, neglect is the most reported form of child mistreatment, and is more likely in families overwhelmed with stress and financial hardships. The most important thing we can do to help children is to support families before they reach a crisis.

### **How You Can Help**

It is often really hard to know if a child is being harmed. Sometimes we see it happening before our eyes, but other times may only see possible signs of abuse or neglect. How community members can help:

1. Know the signs of abuse and neglect, such as: Malnourishment, poor personal hygiene, unexplained bruises, welts or marks, significant changes in behavior, such as becoming withdrawn or fearful. Children who appear too young to stay home alone or in homes with safety hazards or unsanitary conditions.
2. Take eight minutes to watch our "Recognize, React, Respond" video that tells what to look for and how to react and respond if they suspect child abuse or neglect, [www.kidsagaincac.org/prevention](http://www.kidsagaincac.org/prevention).
3. If you suspect abuse or neglect, PLEASE call ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313. Your call is confidential, and you do not need to confirm or investigate the abuse.
4. Summer schedules may add the use of new caregivers such as babysitters, summer camps, playdates, carpools and extended visits with family. There are likely to be more and new people children will have contact with, which means it's important for adults to remain vigilant and talk to children about body safety. This helps to ensure they feel safe and are not afraid or uncomfortable under the care of any of these people.

5. Body safety topics include letting kids know their body belongs to them and no one has the right to touch or take pictures of them without their consent, no matter how young they are. This includes hugs, sitting on laps, kisses and other physical interactions with family members, neighbors, friends and caregivers. Also it is important to let their safe adult know if and when they feel uncomfortable. There should also be no “secrets” when it comes to others touching their body. Find more tips about body safety and other prevention topics to discuss with children at [www.kidsagaincac.org/prevention](http://www.kidsagaincac.org/prevention).

### **It Takes Our Adams County Community to Keep Kids Safe**

It truly takes the eyes and ears of everyone in our Adams County community to keep our kids safe, during the summer and throughout the year. Please, you can make a difference by being a safe and caring adult in a child’s life and also by providing support and encouragement to struggling parents. Find more resources at [www.kidsagaincac.org](http://www.kidsagaincac.org). Thank you for caring about Adams County kids!