

Who Does Child Abuse Happen To?

by: Irene Powell, Board Secretary, Adams County CAC

Do you think that child abuse happens to “others”? Other families, neighborhoods, income levels, religious backgrounds or ethnicities? In rural vs. urban environments? The facts according to the most recent Pennsylvania Statewide Child Abuse Report (2022) reveals that the average rate of *valid* allegations of child abuse per 1,000 children for rural counties, such as Adams, was 38.2 compared to urban counties at 15.9. Are you surprised? Even more surprising is that our community, Adams County scored 42.3, well above the state average.

At the Adams County Children’s Advocacy Center (ACCAC) we know this to be true because we supported 219 child victims of abuse in our previous fiscal year 23/24. We served 186 sexual abuse victims, 134 child victims aged 3-12, 142 girls and 75 boys and 138 of the children served were victims of multiple types of abuse including sexual, physical, neglect, kidnapping, witnesses to violence, including murder, amongst other types of abuse.

The Adams County Children’s Advocacy Center Staff and Board of Directors are, and have been, working hard for the last 18 years, to ensure that children in our community are safe from abuse and that child victims are nurtured towards healing. We invite you to help us. Did you know there are many ways that you can both help prevent child abuse and provide a brighter tomorrow for child victims?

While much effort is spent tending to the critical needs of child victims of abuse, there is a corresponding effort spent on prevention! Almost every elementary student in Adams County has met our Prevention Educator when she teaches the five safety rules in county classrooms and daycares, over 5,000 Adams County kids last year. The ACCAC also provides FREE adult prevention training to organizations, businesses and church groups upon request.

Did you know that researchers believe if just 5% of a community’s adults learn about child abuse prevention the number of child abuse cases is reduced? Adults are responsible for keeping kids safe and with over 5,000 Adams County school children learning the five safety rules each year, the kids are doing their part, now we hope the adults will do theirs. Will you?

We believe that the more citizens and neighbors who learn about child abuse and prevention in our community, the greater our opportunities for reducing child abuse and the accompanying trauma and long-term health consequences and expenses.

How can you help? Visit our website www.kidsagaincac.org

For adults in our community:

Take the 5% Challenge and learn how to recognize, react and respond. We hope you never have to hear a child disclose abuse, but if a child is brave enough to speak up and tell you, we hope you will be ready to respond appropriately as their safe adult.

For parents: Find a multitude of resources for body safety, prevention, positive parenting and trauma support tips.

Everyone can do something to help support our kids. After all, Adams County is OUR Community and they are OUR Kids and it will take all of us to ensure brighter tomorrows for our children.