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National Child Abuse Prevention Month 2022

By Caitlin Bootsma

National Child Abuse Prevention Month draws attention to the tragic reality of child abuse here in our country. As caring adults, it can be difficult to even think about the startling statistics, but it is extremely necessary.

When we consider that in 2019, over 656,000 cases of child maltreatment were found by state agencies (with many more undetected or unreported), we know that it's crucial to take action.¹

Here are five ways to get started:

Educate Yourself: Where does child abuse happen and how can we recognize the signs? What can we do to advocate for children? You've encountered much of this material here through the *VIRTUS Protecting God's Children*® Program, but also can find more at www.childwelfare.gov/.

Raise Awareness: We can do more to protect children and youth—together. Share information like the information on the VIRTUS website and also about the National Child Abuse Protection Month with materials found [here](#).²

Ensuring Children's Safety: This month is the perfect time to review and check if, as a parent, you are confident in the child safety measures being taken when your child(ren) is in other people's care. Don't hesitate to have a conversation with your child's school, caretaker, or even relatives if more safety measures are needed. As a caring adult, this is also a great time to [review the safety protocols](#) within your organization to ensure it is as safe as possible for children and youth.³

Build Trust with Children in Your Care: So many instances of child maltreatment are unreported. Continue to



build a relationship of trust with your own children and other children in your care by actively listening to them. Help them to know that if there is anything ever wrong, or that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe, you are a safe person to come to and that you will help them.

Finally, this month, **pray**—especially for those who have been victims of abuse. We know that those wounds can run deep and that so many children and adults are in need of healing. Below is a great prayer that we can join together in offering:

Prayer for Healing of Victims of Abuse (USCCB)

God of endless love,
ever caring, ever strong,
always present, always just:
You gave your only Son
to save us by the blood of his cross.
Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,
join to your own suffering
the pain of all who have been hurt
in body, mind, and spirit
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.
Hear the cries of our brothers and sisters
who have been gravely harmed,
and the cries of those who love them.
Soothe their restless hearts with hope,
steady their shaken spirits with faith.
Grant them justice for their cause,
enlightened by your truth.
Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,
heal your people's wounds
and transform brokenness into wholeness.
Grant us the courage and wisdom,
humility and grace, to act with justice.
Breathe wisdom into our prayers and labors.
Grant that all harmed by abuse may find peace in justice.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

References

- 1 *Child Welfare Information Gateway*. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/statistics/can/>
- 2 <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/spread-the-word/>
- 3 <https://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/PreventingChildSexualAbuse-a.pdf>

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What is Your Opinion?

Have you ever used something you heard in the news to start an open dialogue with someone else about sexual abuse?

- Yes, all the time!
- Maybe once or twice.
- Never.
- I don't pay attention to the news.
- I'm not sure.

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