



the power to prevent

PREVENT CHILD ABUSE ILLINOIS
NEWS AND EVENTS

a note from our Executive Director



Dear Friends,

In the midst of constant change, our responsibility to nurture and protect our children remains steady.

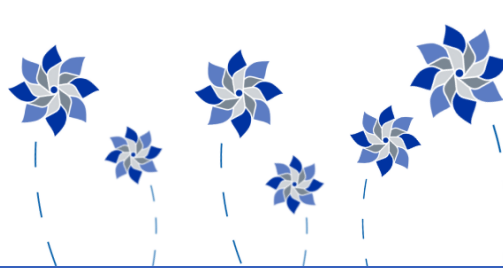
April is Child Abuse Prevention Month – a time to raise awareness, support families, and advocate for the safety and well-being of every child. This year's theme, "Powered by Hope, Strengthened by Prevention," reflects not only the challenges we face in preventing child abuse and neglect, but also the strength we draw from our shared belief that we can make a difference.

As I've often said, prevention happens in partnership. It takes all of us – parents, educators, advocates, neighbors – to build the kinds of systems, communities, and environments where children are protected, families are supported, and abuse and neglect are less likely to occur in the first place.

At PCA Illinois, we are proud to be part of that effort. Throughout this newsletter, you'll find highlights of the important work happening at PCA Illinois and ways you can get involved. Together, we can create a world where every child grows up safe, supported, and full of possibility.

Tarra Winters

Tarra Winters
Executive Director
Prevent Child Abuse Illinois



news at PCA Illinois

*PCA Illinois is excited to welcome our new
Central Region Prevention Specialist, Abby Behrens!*

Abby began working at PCA Illinois on April 1st and is excited to **get out in the communities to build and strengthen our partnerships!**

Abby has **9 years of experience working in direct service, helping children and families impacted by childhood trauma.** In the last 4 years, Abby has worked with survivors of domestic violence. Being a survivor of domestic violence has driven her passion for this field. Abby is trained in EmPath Mobility Mentoring, is 40-hour Domestic Violence trained, and is a Certified Car Seat Technician. She lives in Heyworth with her husband Cody, her two young boys Connor and Easton, and her fur children Cheeto and Schwarbs. In her free time, you will find Abby snuggled up on the couch with coffee and Gilmore Girls or exploring the world with her family!



knowledge is power

*April is Sexual Assault
Awareness Month*

Everyone has the responsibility to help keep children safe through **awareness, prevention education, and advocacy.** Prevent Child Abuse Illinois offers two **child sexual abuse prevention trainings.** The Prevent Child Abuse Illinois' Child Sexual Abuse Prevention training teaches participants how to recognize signs of child sexual abuse, how to respond appropriately, and how to prevent child sexual abuse.

The **Darkness to Light's 'Stewards of Children'** child sexual abuse prevention training is **delivered in a trauma-informed way** and teaches the **5 Steps to Protecting**



Children. The ‘Stewards of Children’ training includes a workbook that helps guide participants through the facilitated training.

Below are **resources** to learn more about this important topic:

- [Darkness to Light Description](#)
- [Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault](#)
- [Children's Advocacy Centers of Illinois](#)
- [NPR Article and Episode: “Beyond ‘Good’ Vs. ‘Bad’ Touch: 4 Lessons To Help Prevent Child Sexual Abuse](#)

If you are interested in scheduling a child sexual abuse prevention training, please get in touch with Jennifer Samartano, jsamartano@pcaillinois.org. For more information, see <https://www.preventchildabuseillinois.org/csap>

a call to action



Protecting Our Littlest Lives: Shaken Baby Syndrome Awareness Month

May is **Shaken Baby Syndrome Awareness Month**, a time to raise awareness about the dangers of violent shaking and the importance of prevention. SBS, or abusive head trauma, is a preventable tragedy that can lead to severe brain damage, paralysis, or even death.

Educating caregivers on safe soothing techniques, stress management, and the dangers of shaking can help protect infants from harm.

Join us for a **FREE** virtual **Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Training on May 22, 2025, from 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM (CST) via Zoom**. While this is not a medical training, participants will gain crucial knowledge about the signs, causes, and lasting impact of SBS—empowering them to help prevent this devastating injury.

Keep an eye out for our webinar registration email!

prevention in partnership

Prevention in Partnership: Launch of the Investing in Prevention Advocacy Campaign

This quarter, we are proud to highlight the powerful collaboration with several of our most valued partners in the **launch of the Investing in Prevention: Building a Better Future for Children advocacy campaign**. Together, we’ve worked tirelessly to **develop impactful materials, connect with elected officials, and amplify the campaign** through the **networks of our partners**. Their dedication and support have been integral in ensuring that every child has the opportunity for a strong and healthy start in life. We would like to recognize and thank our partners from Start

Early, Brightpoint, Raising Illinois, We, the Village, Illinois Action for Children, The Alliance at University of Illinois Springfield, Children's Advocacy Centers of Illinois, Illinois Association for Infant Mental Health, ParentTEACH Institute, and the Illinois ACEs Response Collaborative.

We are deeply grateful for their ongoing commitment to prevention and their role in shaping a brighter future for all children. These partnerships not only help raise awareness but also drive meaningful change in our communities. We look forward to continuing this essential work together to create great childhoods for every child.



Investing in Prevention: Building a Better Future for Children



Children represent the future generation, underscoring the importance of prioritizing substantial and fair investments in primary prevention programs that cater to children and families at both local and state levels. By allocating resources to these initiatives, families and children throughout Illinois can access the necessary support. This primary prevention approach aims to mitigate the adversities faced by children, fostering an environment conducive to their growth and enabling them to mature into content and robust adults.

The *Investing in Prevention Campaign* was created out of an identified need for more education and awareness on the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and promoting positive childhood experiences (PCEs). Through the campaign, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois hopes to build partnerships with elected officials, local and state business leaders, and communities by providing education and resources on primary prevention policies.



To learn more about the campaign and our policy priorities, click on the buttons below!

Investing in Prevention
Campaign Overview

Policy Agenda 2025-
2027

expanding our impact

*Shining a Light on April Child Abuse Prevention Month:
Capturing Moments from Kick-Off Events and Wear Blue Day*



staff spotlight

Staff Spotlight: Rachel Chruszczyk

Earns Perinatal Mental Health Certification



We are proud to celebrate **Rachel Chruszczyk**, our **Southern Region Prevention Specialist**, who recently earned her **Perinatal Mental Health Certification (PMH-C)** through **Postpartum Support International!**

This certification recognizes her expertise in perinatal mental health, strengthening our efforts to support families across Illinois. Perinatal mood disorders—such as postpartum depression and anxiety—affect **1 in 5 birthing individuals**, impacting both parents and children. Early intervention is key, and Rachel's certification helps ensure more families receive the support they need.

May is **Maternal Mental Health Awareness Month**, making it the perfect time to spotlight Rachel's work. She will be leading a **FREE virtual training**, "**Introduction to Perinatal Mood Disorders**," on **Tuesday, May 6th from 10:00 am-12:00 pm**. This training will offer essential knowledge on recognizing and addressing these conditions. Keep an eye out for our webinar registration email!

Join us in celebrating Rachel's achievement, and stay tuned for details on the upcoming training!

[You can find Rachel on the Professional Directory for Postpartum Support International here](#)

SAVE THE DATE!

Webinars

- Introduction to Perinatal Mood Disorders Webinar May 6, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm
- Shaken Baby Syndrome Webinar May 22, 10:00 am - 11:30 pm
- Supporting LGBTQ Youth: The Why and How! June 18 10:00 am - 11:30 am

Events

- The Downtown Springfield Family Funfest September 6, 11 am - 3 pm
- 31st Annual Statewide Conference, Lisle, Illinois October 23 & 24



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