

## THE FACTS AND COSTS OF CHILD ABUSE IN FLORIDA

- Florida ranks third in the nation behind Kentucky and South Dakota for the highest rate of child death by maltreatment/abuse/neglect.
- In the past six years, preventable child deaths in Hillsborough County would fill three elementary school classrooms. Ninety-three child deaths since 2003.
- There were 11,826 calls last year reporting child abuse to the Hillsborough County Child Abuse Hotline operated by the Sheriff's office. National statistics substantiate that the majority of child abuse incidences go unreported.

(Sources: Florida Department of Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

### The Cost of Child Abuse and Neglect to Taxpayers

Nationally:

- The annual cost of child abuse and neglect in 2007 was approximately \$103.8 billion.
- The average direct cost per child abuse case in 1999 dollars was \$17,319 with indirect costs of \$40,143.
- The Cost of Foster/Residential Group Care
  - Average annual costs to serve a child in:

Foster Care	\$11,420
Residential Group Care	\$38,276
- It can cost Florida Taxpayers \$64,377 a year to care for an abused or neglected child, while Healthy Families Florida prevents child abuse and neglect for about \$1,671 a year per child.

(Wang & Holton, 2007; Conrad, 2006; Co9hen, 1998, Bureau of Justice Statistics.1994, Daro, 1998)

- **Who pays the bill?** We all do. Costs include operating the criminal justice system (police, prosecution, courts, probation, incarceration); medical costs to individuals and government, property stolen or damaged, loss of property values, and loss of work time and productivity by victims.

(Wang & Holton, 2007; Conrad, 2006; Co9hen, 1998, Bureau of Justice Statistics.1994)

## **Child Safety Public Education Campaign**

**Conducted in partnership with the Children's Board, Department of Children and Families, the Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough County; the Hillsborough County Water Safety Team.**

### **Why a public awareness and education campaign in Hillsborough County promoting child safety?**

- The idea for an awareness campaign in Hillsborough County came at the request of Nick Cox, Suncoast Regional Director for DCF, and Children's Board member. DCF receives detailed monthly statistics on child deaths, abuse, injury and neglect in Hillsborough County. DCF was concerned to find that many of these deaths and tragic injuries in Hillsborough County were, in fact preventable. The fact that the equivalent of more than three elementary school classrooms full of children have died during the past six years in Hillsborough County – all from preventable causes was only one example.
- Risk factors for child death and injury may include inexperienced caregivers, domestic violence, economic instability (job loss, loss of daycare), lack of parenting skills and use of excessive discipline.
- Because of the Children's Board's history of leading effective countywide community education campaigns, DCF approached the Children's Board and asked that together they develop a collaborative community education campaign involving multiple partners – both public and private – that would span Hillsborough County.

### **Purpose of Child Safety Public Education Campaign**

To educate and motivate Hillsborough County citizens to practice safe childcare to promote universal access to Hillsborough County's existing primary prevention services utilizing a countywide website.

### **Campaign Partners**

- Initial partners included the Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough County – a county agency that works to decrease infant mortality through prevention immediately joined the campaign and pledged to leverage their future outreach initiatives to work in tandem with the countywide child safety campaign.
- Every Hillsborough County hospital where babies are born (for a total of appx. 18,000 annual births) joined the campaign and supported it with in an initiative to reach new

mothers with critical parenting education and resources at all county hospitals with a maternity ward.

- The campaign utilizes hospital partnerships to reach new mothers with critical parenting education and resources. Hospital-based parent education models are proven to significantly reduce the incidence of abusive head trauma in children and equip parents to better protect their baby from preventable causes of injury and death.

### **What we've learned from Healthy Start's Past Community Education Programs in Hillsborough County:**

Since Healthy Start began its community education programs in Hillsborough County, we have seen:

- 30% decrease in infant mortality
- 11% decrease in very low birth weight babies
- 37% decrease in repeat births among teenagers
- 28% decrease in infants who die within the first 28 days of life

### **How is the public awareness and education campaign being carried out?**

The Child Safety and Awareness Campaign launch began in 2009 with broad-based community messages promoting awareness that address the leading causes of preventable child death and injury in Hillsborough County. Partnerships with public and private industry to spread the collaborative message of prevention to all corners of our community.

- CBS Outdoor joined as a campaign partner developing public education billboards that rotate countywide with different child safety messages. The intent of the boards is to call attention to some simple practices that can prevent a child safety emergency.
- Hartline Buses joined the campaign developing display ads running the length of their buses that travel all routes and cover all sectors of Hillsborough County.
- La Gaceta and Florida Sentinel joined and feature editorial and display ads in their newspapers with prevention messages.
- Tampa Bay Parenting Magazine joined the partnership with a monthly ad highlighting awareness. All collaborative partners pledged to maintain a strong electronic presence on their websites relating to children and child safety.

- As part of the awareness campaign, the Children's Board joined with the Healthy Start Coalition's Safe Baby Campaign to fund new education and training materials that are distributed to every new mother in every hospital in Hillsborough County. The safety curriculum developed is implemented by nurses and features an educational DVD and other learning materials for parents and caregivers.
- The Children's Board partnered with our community's five Family Support and Resource Centers (FSRC), located throughout Hillsborough County, as neighborhood access points for education and outreach about child safety, awareness and prevention. Located in neighborhoods throughout the county (Brandon, Central Tampa, North Tampa, Ruskin and Town & Country), FSRCs are staffed by neighborhood residents and provide support services to approximately 60,000 families annually.