

# PREVENT CHILD ABUSE Sonoma County

## Annual Report: 2008-2009

The mission of Prevent Child Abuse Sonoma County (PCA-SC) is to establish an effective, cooperative and coordinated response to end child abuse.

advocate, author and actor presented *About a Private Family Matter*. "This is a story about how I was saved by love at a time when most people considered me beyond rescue." Victor shared how he escaped the war zone of family violence. Over 195 people attended that event.

In addition to the community event, free parenting classes are offered throughout the community in both English and Spanish. These classes focus on topics including Discipline Without Shouting or Spanking and How Family Violence Impacts the Development of Children. Importantly, this year a class on Assets and Resources was added due to the economic downturn, which helped families in economic stress continue their important job of parenting.

### Goal 3—Advocacy:

Serve as a unified voice to influence public policy decisions at the state, community and county level for prevention funding, policies and innovative programs focused on reducing the incident of child abuse and neglect.

### We accomplished the following:

In October, Prevent Child Abuse Sonoma County hosted a Candidates' Forum on Children's Issues which was in part supported by United Way of the Wine Country. The forum drew the participation of all ballot-listed candidates for Sonoma County Supervisors as well as over 60 attendees. The Press Democrat gave the forum extensive coverage the following day, quoting candidates responses to a range of strong questions raised by audience members. Weeks after the election, Prevent Child Abuse Sonoma County continued to hear about the forum from local citizens who appreciated the pre-election focus on future policy decisions that impact local children. Citizens were alerted to the event through circulation of e-newsletters, along with flyers and press releases distributed to family service agencies, schools and local

media. Our experience with this forum has inspired Prevent Child Abuse Sonoma County to plan other policy-focused events on issues related to the health and welfare of Sonoma County children.

In April 2009, Robin Bowen participated in Advocacy Day in Sacramento. This event is hosted by Prevent Child Abuse California. Robin met with both Assemblywoman Noreen Evans and Senator Pat Wiggins. The purpose of the meeting was to express concerns regarding proposed legislation AB 52 (to increase fees for birth certificates for cord blood donations) and SB 635 (to increase fees for birth certificates for domestic violence coordination).

### 2009-2010 Goals

- Continue to provide public education and professional training opportunities for local practitioners and mandated reporters.
- Formalize working agreements and protocols between stakeholder agencies.
- Continue to build advocacy and best practice sharing efforts at the state, regional, and local levels.
- Plan and implement the 2010 Blue Ribbon Campaign including media, proclamations, and identifying and promoting campaign leaders and champions.

### Acknowledgements

The California Parenting Institute and the Prevent Child Abuse Sonoma County Coordinating Council would like to thank the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and the Human Services Commission for its ongoing support in preventing child abuse and neglect in Sonoma County.

Additionally, Prevent Child Abuse Sonoma County relies tremendously on the dedication of time and work of its members and would like to thank them for their continued participation and support.

Every year in the United States, more than one out of every hundred children are victims of substantiated child abuse and neglect. In 2006, nearly 1 million maltreatment claims were substantiated meaning that the investigation confirmed that the alleged child maltreatment occurred. These rates have held steady during the following years.<sup>1</sup>

Children under the age of one are the most common victims of child abuse and neglect, with about 24 out of 1,000 being victims of maltreatment. Parents are by far the most common perpetrators – 83 percent of perpetrators are parents.<sup>2</sup>

Child abuse and neglect is widely spread through a well understood cycle of violence. Research has identified factors that are associated with greater risk of being maltreated.

### Risk Factors:

These risk factors include characteristics of the individual, family, community, and greater society.

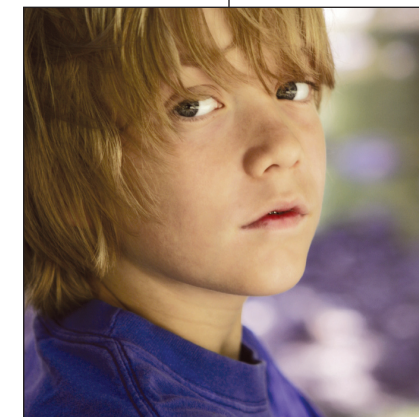
- Disabilities in children
- Social isolation of families
- Parents' lack of understanding of children's needs and child development
- Poverty and other socioeconomic disadvantage, such as unemployment
- Family disorganization, dissolution, and violence including intimate partner violence
- Lack of family cohesion
- Substance abuse in family
- Parental stress and distress, including depression or other mental health conditions
- Community violence<sup>3</sup>

### Promotion of Protective Factors:

Research has shown that integrating Protective Factors into both prevention and intervention programs have created the most successful outcomes for reducing child abuse.

- Supportive family environment
- Nurturing parenting skills
- Stable family relationships
- Having household rules and parental monitoring of the child
- Parental employment and high parental education
- Adequate housing
- Access to health care and social services
- Communities that support parents and take responsibility for preventing abuse<sup>4</sup>

Throughout California, we are facing a budget crisis of significant magnitude. Multiple years of state funding reductions have undermined critical programs, including Child Welfare Services. Additionally, counties have reduced spending on contracts with community-based organizations. Many of these county contracts are with community partners who extend the reach of programs that assist vulnerable children and families. Therefore counties are finding that there are vital missing services for prevention and case management, leaving many counties only able to work on crisis management with the highest risk families.



<sup>1</sup>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families. Child Maltreatment 2006 (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 2008).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid

<sup>3</sup>Child Trends, The Multiple Dimensions of Child Abuse and Neglect: New Insights into an Old Problem, May 2002.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid

<sup>5</sup>Child Abuse in Sonoma County. Data extracted February 28, 2009. For more information, please call Katie Greaves, 565-4261.

"Happy Childhoods Last a Lifetime"

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## Child Abuse in Sonoma County

All reports of child abuse are received by Sonoma County Child Protective Services. Social workers are available 24 hours a day to provide risk assessment and support to callers who are reporting suspected child abuse and to make immediate in-person response if necessary. If the risk of abuse is severe, social workers coordinate with Law Enforcement to have the child(ren) removed from the home and placed, ideally with siblings, in a safe relative home or in foster care.

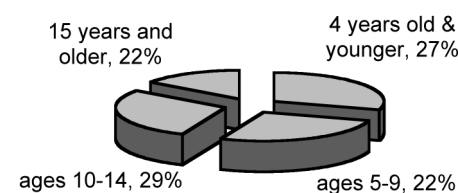
### In 2008 there were:

- 10,051 calls to the child abuse hotline with questions and reports of child abuse
- 2,638 reports of child abuse were serious enough to require a face-to-face investigation to determine if allegations of abuse were substantiated
- 174 children were removed from unsafe and abusive homes

### As of February 28, 2009, in Sonoma County there are:<sup>5</sup>

- 772 active child welfare cases
- 248 children living at home while their families work with a social worker to provide a safe and stable home
- 524 foster children living with a safe relative, in a foster home or in a group home:
  - 160 children living in safe relative/extended family homes
  - 209 children living in licensed foster homes or with guardians
  - 120 children living in group homes
  - 35 children staying temporarily at Valley of the Moon Children's Home
- 65% foster children with siblings are living with at least one sibling
- 49% of active child welfare cases involved at least one family member who abuses (or used to abuse) methamphetamine.

### Age Distribution in Active Cases



### Types of Child Abuse Referrals

Child abuse allegations fall into 5 general categories: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and substantial risk. In 2008, there were 855 substantiated allegations of abuse.

- Substantial Risk: 26%
- Neglect: 41%
- Emotional Abuse: 17%
- Physical Abuse: 12%
- Sexual Abuse: 4%

The California Budget Project report, "2008 Stretched Thin" addressed issues regarding increasing caseloads paralleled with decreasing funding of Child Welfare Services Programs. It reported that in Sonoma County between July 2004 and July 2007, caseloads increased by 12.4%. Sonoma County was quoted as saying, "By providing less outreach and community education, child protection services becomes a last resort, instead of an early resource that contributes to the prevention of removing children from their families." As the Prevent Child Abuse Sonoma County Coalition continues to work through the next few years, it is becoming evident that the work we do within our local communities of creating public awareness and ensuring safe communities will become even more important with dwindling resources.

### Prevent Child Abuse–Sonoma County: Our Local Council

In December 2008, the Child Abuse Council voted to change our name to Prevent Child Abuse Sonoma County (PCA-SC). The impetus was to align our local child abuse council efforts with both the federal and state efforts which are headed by Prevent Child Abuse America and Prevent Child Abuse California.

Currently, Robin Bowen, Executive Director of the California Parenting Institute is coordinating the efforts of our local council.

Prevent Child Abuse Sonoma County is authorized by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors under the authority of the Welfare and Institutions Code Section 18980, Chapter 12.5, Child Abuse Prevention Coordinating Council Act, whose primary purpose is to coordinate the community effort to prevent and respond to child abuse. The Human Services Commission provides funding for the Council. California Parenting Institute (CPI) has coordinated and led the council since July 2005.

## Prevent Child Abuse–Sonoma County: A Year in Review

### Goal 1 - Coordination & Prevention:

Coordinate the community's efforts to prevent and respond to child abuse and neglect. Provide a forum for inter-agency cooperation and coordination in the prevention, detection, and treatment of child abuse cases. In addition, convene regular meetings of the membership and the community to provide networking, education and professional training for those involved in child abuse prevention and intervention services. Additionally serve as a clearing house for prevention resources for the entire community focused on providing information and support for a wide variety of child abuse prevention services

### We accomplished the following:

Our general membership is open to the community, with meeting notices and legislative alerts going out via emails to over 6,000 individuals, service providers, businesses, county offices and staff as well as elected officials. We hold monthly meetings with presentations from resources throughout the community.

The convening of our meetings provide both trainings for our work in the field of child abuse prevention and treatment, advocacy efforts as well as providing awareness of local resources. The topics that were addressed this past year included:

Discussion of Council's Report to the Board of Supervisors (13 in attendance)

Tools to assist in the treatment of traumatized children (43 in attendance)

Candidate Forum (60+ attended)

Discussion on Local Childcare Issues (25 attended)

Development of local council's membership levels (11 attended)

Panel Presentation of Special Needs: Children & Services (24 attended)

Mental Health Services for Children & their families (26 attended)

A Private Family Matter: The Impact of Domestic Violence and Child Abuse on Families – Victor Rivas Rivers (195 attended)

Looking at Sonoma County's Response to Tox Positive Babies (106 attended)

Follow Up with Tox Positive Babies (66 attended)

Robin Bowen represents Sonoma County in the Greater Bay Area Regional Coalition as well as serving as the coordinator for that Coalition. Additionally, Ms. Bowen attends regional meetings for the State Child Death Review Team meetings as well as serving as representative on both the county's Child Death Review Team (CDRT) and the Fetal Infant Mortality Review team (FIMR).

### Goal 2 - Community Education and Outreach:

Increase public awareness about issues relating to child abuse and neglect. Build a community which protects healthy families. Raise community awareness and education to parents, professionals and community members through promoting social marketing campaigns around the prevention of child abuse and neglect as well as championing the local "Blue Ribbon" child abuse prevention campaign each April.

### We accomplished the following:

Prevent Child Abuse Sonoma County participated in many events throughout the year that supported dissemination of child abuse prevention materials, including mandated reporting booklets, blue ribbon pins, stickers and bookmarks.

As part of the local "Blue Ribbon" child abuse prevention campaign each April, Prevent Child Abuse Sonoma County hosted our Community Event on April 29, 2009 at the Mary Agatha Furth Center in Windsor. This annual event brings together policymakers, service providers, school administrators, law enforcement, community partners and professionals who work together to support families and provide both safe and nurturing communities for our children. This event featured both a training and a luncheon. Victor Rivas Rivers, who is a child