



Buckeye Neighbors Helping Neighbors



COVID-19 and joblessness have put a strain on millions of Ohio families. When households are under stress, it's often children who suffer most. Today, however, it has become more difficult to identify cases of child abuse and neglect because **Ohio's mandated reporters** have had little contact with the children they used to see often. Since March, such reports have declined by as much as 50%.

Reporting these instances, however, is just one thing we can all do to keep children safe. Communities of support are essential to strengthening children and families and must consider their diverse racial, cultural and economic realities. We can all be part of this by watching out for our neighbors in ways that ease their stress and help them find resources.

What is a mandated reporter?

Certain Ohioans in positions of authority are required by Ohio law to report instances of child abuse and neglect if they see or suspect it is happening. They include those who are routinely in contact with families and children, such as:

- Health care professionals
- Social workers
- Child care workers, teachers and other school authorities
- Foster caregivers
- Marriage and family therapists

For a full list, please visit <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/2151.421>

What can I do?

It's easy to confuse poverty with neglect. Children who are ill-clothed or underfed may be so because the family lacks needed resources. We all can watch out for our neighbors and offer help in respectful ways. For example, your children's outgrown clothing may be just what another family needs. Or, if you've been to the farmers market and bought extra produce, you might share it with your neighbor. While some adults are mandated reporters, all of us can lend a helping hand as situations present themselves. *For suggestions, please see the next page.*



As neighbors, we can ...

- Offer to babysit to give parents a break
- Be a listening ear for a struggling neighbor
- Coordinate a meal sign-up calendar for new parents or a family in need
- Organize a block party so families can meet each other
- Start or participate in a carpool to help families
- Introduce ourselves to a new neighbor or greet your neighbors by name when we see them
- Get to know our neighborhood children and ask them how they are doing
- Ask a family if they need something the next time we go to the store
- Run an errand, shovel snow, or do yardwork for a parent in the neighborhood
- Invite a neighborhood family to our home for dinner
- Donate lightly used children's clothing, furniture and toys



As employers, we can ...

- Check with parents to see how they are doing
- Promote a culture in which it is OK for employees to ask for help
- Participate in an employee assistance program or create a list of available family resources
- Allow for flexible scheduling, when possible
- Work with employees to manage workloads in times of added stress
- Support maternity/paternity leave for new parents (*including adoptive and foster parents*)
- Offer "lunch and learns" for employees wanting to learn more about child development
- Involve our businesses in community events
- Sponsor a service day allowing employees to volunteer for programs that strengthen families



As faith communities, we can ...

- Remind parents that it's OK not to know how to do everything
- Learn the signs of postpartum depression and how to help
- Share parenting tips in our newsletters
- Encourage and support parents in increasing their connections
- Make it a tradition to bring new parents meals to help the transition to parenthood
- Offer financial or material support to struggling families
- Host family-friendly events
- Train staff and volunteers to create safe environments for children
- Offer space for parenting classes or support groups
- Help develop needed services in our community
- Support youth who are leaving the foster care system
- Become mentors for a young mother or father
- Conduct a parenting book drive for the local library

Resources

Child abuse and neglect are real problems in Ohio, but Ohioans care about each other and are willing to lend a helping hand, when we can. Ohio has a number of resources to answer your questions and help you take the appropriate steps. Below is a partial list.

- Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention Fact Sheet: https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/can/CAN-factsheet_2020.pdf
- Building Community Commitment for Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships and Environments: <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/30813>
- Strengthen Your Prevention Toolkit: Tools and Trainings <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/main/tools-and-trainings>