



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
May 12, 2010

Contact: Tom Christensen (619) 515-6535

## **RECENT CHILD ABUSE CASES REVEAL ALARMING TRENDS** *County Asks Community to Help Prevent Abuse*

The County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) has examined the most severe physical child abuse cases from the past 18 months and some alarming trends have surfaced. While the overall number of child abuse cases has decreased, the severity of the cases remains a concern. The victims of severe abuse tend to be young babies and the perpetrators are younger parents or caregivers.

The examination of 51 cases of severe physical abuse revealed:

- 10 fatalities, five of which are children four months old or younger
- 16 children had five or more broken bones
- Two children had 24 bone fractures
- Nearly 60 percent of children were three months of age or younger

“These findings are disturbing and disheartening,” said Chairwoman Pam Slater-Price, County of San Diego Board of Supervisors. “One child living in an abusive environment is one child too many.”

The examination also found that 45 percent of the female perpetrators and 35 percent of the male perpetrators were under the age of 22.

“Many young parents are experiencing new stresses in their lives and are not seeking support services,” said Nick Macchione, HHS Director. “These stressors include things like a recent job loss, financial difficulties or having more than one young child at home. These parents often tend to feel isolated and alone and have a very limited support system.”

“We are asking members of the community to help by watching for potential signs of child abuse or endangerment,” said Debra Zanders-Willis, Director, HHS Child Welfare Services. “Don’t be afraid to ask someone you know if they are feeling overwhelmed, stressed or if they could use some help.”

(more)



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Some of the potential warning signs of child abuse include:

- Spouse or partner jealous of a new baby in the home
- Spouse or partner exhibiting controlling behavior
- Any prior Child Welfare Services history
- Unwanted or Unplanned Pregnancy
- Spouse or partner exhibiting violence toward adults
- Domestic violence incidents within the past year

The County of San Diego Child Abuse Hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can call (858) 560-2191 or toll free 1-800-344-6000. The social worker who answers the call will do an immediate assessment.

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