

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEWS FROM: Prevent Child Abuse Virginia, part of Families Forward Virginia  
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### **April is Child Abuse Prevention Month in Virginia** Encouraging All Parents to Ask for Help & Support is Key to Prevention

Richmond, VA -- During Child Abuse Prevention Month, held annually in April, the focus is on prevention programs which strengthen Virginia communities and families so that all children can experience safe, nurturing childhoods.

“All parents need and benefit from resources, help and support. Parents and caregivers can call our 1-**800-CHILDREN** helpline (call 800.244.5373 or text 804.349.5595) for free, personalized information about any parenting-related topic or issue, anytime, day or night,” said Lisa Specter-Dunaway, CEO of Families Forward Virginia.

Families Forward Virginia was established in 2017 with the merger of Prevent Child Abuse Virginia, CHIP of Virginia and Early Impact Virginia. Families Forward has more than 50 local affiliated programs and organizations that support families and work to prevent child abuse.

More than 50,000 children in Virginia were reported to Child Protective Services for suspected child abuse or neglect in 2017, according to the Virginia Department of Social Services.

During April, Families Forward and Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond are displaying a massive garden of 3,500 pinwheels as part of the nationwide **Pinwheels for Prevention®** campaign. Pinwheels are the symbol of child abuse prevention and a visible reminder of the happy and healthy childhood that all children deserve. Through local affiliates of Families Forward, communities and businesses across Virginia are sponsoring pinwheel displays. In the Richmond area, pinwheels are available for purchase at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden’s gift shop and at all Village Bank locations. Proceeds benefit Families Forward. Order pinwheels online at [FamiliesForwardVA.org](http://FamiliesForwardVA.org).

Friday, April 6<sup>th</sup> is national **Wear Blue Day 2018**, a day dedicated to honoring child abuse prevention efforts and to highlight the ways that Virginians can support safe, nurturing childhoods across Virginia. Virginians are encouraged to share photos of blue pinwheels and Wear Blue Day attire on social media with hashtag #GoBlue4VAKids.

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“The root of child abuse and neglect is often related to lack of role models, limited education and not having reliable support systems. All parents want their children to be successful in school, life and work. Yet, parenting is not instinctive. Parents learn by the way they were parented,” said Johanna Schuchert, director of child abuse prevention at Families Forward. “Child abuse prevention programs succeed because of partnerships created among schools, faith communities, social service agencies, businesses, civic organizations and law enforcement.”

“If you are concerned about the abuse or neglect of a child or if a child tells you that they are the victim of neglect or abuse in Virginia, report it by calling **1-800-552-7096**,” said Ms. Specter-Dunaway. “While it helps, you do not have to give your name and you do not have to provide evidence when providing a report in Virginia. If a child is in immediate danger, call 911.”

Families Forward Virginia, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is Virginia’s leading organization dedicated to disrupting the cycles of child abuse, neglect and poverty. Working with Virginia parents and their children, Families Forward provides Home Visiting Programs, Family Support and Education, Professional Development, Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs, Advocacy and Public Awareness Education. Employing a team of 20 professionals, Families Forward is headquartered in Richmond, Virginia. Learn more at [FamiliesForwardVA.org](http://FamiliesForwardVA.org).

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