



Kentucky can...

## Strengthen Efforts to Support Children Who Have Experienced Abuse and Neglect

When children have experienced — or are at risk of experiencing — abuse or neglect, making policy changes and investing in programs that target prevention or family preservation can serve as a catalyst to safely keep families together or reunite families. When child abuse or neglect occurs, children need access to the best care in order to recover and heal and for their case to be investigated.

**Keeping children safe is an adult responsibility. Across the Commonwealth, too many children are victims of child abuse or neglect each year.**

### What does the data tell us?



In 2020, nearly **17,000 Kentucky children** were found to have experienced abuse or neglect.



There were **22 fatalities and 53 near fatalities** due to substantiated cases of abuse or neglect.

**Kentucky can make commonsense changes to state policy that would support kids who have experienced abuse or neglect:**

- **Modify mandated reporting law to disallow “chain of command” procedures** within public and private agencies. Keeping children safe is an adult responsibility. If maltreatment occurs, it must be reported accurately and in a timely manner directly to the proper authorities.
- A gap in state law allows agencies, such as the county attorney, to report a suspected incidence of child abuse and neglect by an employee to their own agency. **Closing this gap in reporting of suspected maltreatment** will ensure the report of child abuse or neglect is properly communicated to the appropriate external agencies, not only the agency who employs the adult suspected of abuse, and investigated.

**All Kentucky adults are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. Suspected child abuse and neglect should be reported to the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, local law enforcement, the Kentucky State Police, or the County or Commonwealth Attorney’s Office.**

**Call 1-877-KY-SAFE-1**

- **Require coroners to notify within a 48-hour window** and gather necessary information from law enforcement, the Department for Community Based Services, and the local health department upon the notification of the death of a child under the age of 18.

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**Kentucky can boost investments in the following programs that serve victims of child maltreatment:**

- **Funding for pediatric forensic medicine teams and Children’s Advocacy Centers.** The pediatric forensic teams based out of Kentucky’s medical schools, as well as the 15 Children’s Advocacy Centers across the Commonwealth, rely on state funding to provide **critical services for all children who have experienced maltreatment.** Allocating funding to support both of these programs – Pediatric Forensic Medicine and the Children’s Advocacy Centers – will allow for our most vulnerable children to get access to the services they need to heal and have their case investigated.
- **Reimbursement for Pediatric Sexual Abuse Forensic Examinations (P-SAFE).** The current rate does not adequately cover costs for these complex medical exam. Increasing the rate of reimbursement will allow these centers to adequately provide services and the level of care needed by pediatric sexual assault victims.

### Blueprint for Kentucky’s Children Solution:

Make commonsense policy changes and budget investments that support the investigation of child maltreatment and promote healing for children who have experienced abuse and neglect.