

INTER-AGENCY COUNCIL ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT County of Los Angeles



May 6, 2022

Dear ICAN Partners and Friends,

April, Child Abuse Prevention Month, brought an important focus on our county's commitment to preventing child abuse and neglect. Key issues we have identified as critical to increasing accountability for children's safety were recognized, as well as tangible steps for our public and private efforts to prevent harm to children.

The Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a Proclamation of Child Abuse Prevention Month on April 19th, recognizing the professionals and volunteers who work to promote the safety, joy and well-being of children and families.

The Board motion supported our ICAN sponsored AB 2654 (Lackey) to reconvene the State Child Death Review Council. This will promote development and coordination among child death review teams throughout the state. The CEO and DCFS will be working with ICAN on two ICAN Associates Campaigns: the annual Child Abuse Prevention Children's Poster Art contest and the No-Hit Campaign.

Every year, hundreds of children participate in the Poster Art contest, which provides them the opportunity to express their ideas and concerns regarding child abuse and neglect. The Board Motion created a scholarship fund for children who may be unable to participate in this contest because their schools lack art supplies.

Perhaps most importantly, this Motion declared Los Angeles County to be a No Hit Zone with instructions to all county agencies to post No Hit Zone posters, and share brochures and information on positive alternatives to discipline with families they serve.

Here is why the No Hit Campaign is important. It can promote a culture of non-violence, and it can save lives. Over half of the child fatalities documented in ICAN's 30 year study of child homicides involved physical trauma to very young children. Sadly, these tragedies can result from over-discipline for normal childlike behavior. Moreover, research shows that hitting is not an effective means of improving children's behavior. On the contrary, it teaches them that hitting is the way to express anger.

Much as our culture has changed behavior by recognizing the negative effects of smoking, we can change behavior with a message that hitting is hazardous to our social and physical health. ICAN is focusing on preventing child abuse, but the no-hit message applies to inter-personal violence and bullying as well.

Catching Up:

Our Annual ICAN Associates Children's Poster Art Contest had 418 entries, and the judging now begins on the final 25 finalists. New ICAN Associates Board member Judge Mary House (ret) will join Beverly Kurtz and Sabina Alvarez in leading this year's contest.



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The 25th annual ICAN Nexus Conference was held on March 2. This was ICAN's first virtual Nexus Conference drawing close to 500 participants! The program included keynotes from Joe Torre and Professor Evan Stark, presentations by Lindsay Wagner and Justin Chambers to Annie Bosco and Jack Dillan Grazer, and 12 workshops.

ICAN Co-sponsored the first annual Diversity Summit with Fork in the Road on April 28, with an inspiring program of speakers on racial, ethnic and gender identity issues affecting children in the foster care system. Supervisor Sheila Kuehl received the first Children's Diversity Champion award for her trailblazing life journey in pursuit of justice for all women and children.

I encourage you to attend ICAN's monthly Operations Committee (2nd Wednesday of every month) to hear updates on ICAN's many committees, workgroups and teams.. These meetings also include expert presentations related to our work. Recent topics have included: Failure to Thrive (Carol Berkowitz, M.D, FAAP, FACEP and Dulce Alvarez, Harbor/UCLA Failure to Thrive Clinic), The Importance of Parents' Mental Health for Child Safety and Wellbeing (Emily Dossett, MD, MTS), Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (Astrid Heger, MD), Current Issues in Cyber Crimes Against Children (Tracy Webb, US Attorney's Office) and The Opioid Crisis (Claudia Wang MD).

We're looking forward to our next expert presentation on Concussion in Family Violence/Child Abuse by Edie E. Zusman, MD, MBA, FACS, FAANS, at our Operations meeting on May 11. You can request a link to this meeting from solanj@dcfs.lacounty.gov.

And Save the Date: July 28, 2022, ICAN Children's Grief and Traumatic Loss Conference, Almansor Court!

This month we challenge all of our ICAN partners and friends to take a moment each day to recognize yourself as an agent of change for a world yet unknown without child abuse.

I'll close with a quote from Audre Lorde, shared at the Diversity conference:

"If I waited until it was safe to say what needed to be said, I would be speaking from my grave"

