



PRESS RELEASE

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In recognition of April as National Child Abuse Prevention Month, the Judicial Branch of the Virgin Islands and the Department of Human Services, are joining the nation in encouraging all individuals and organizations to help prevent child abuse and neglect through meaningful connections with children, youth and families in our community.

In 2016, the Virgin Islands' Department of Human Services (DHS) obtained the designation as a Title IV-E agency. With this designation, the local judiciary became eligible to apply for Court Improvement Project funding from the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau. With its successful application for grant funding, the judiciary established a Court Improvement Program (CIP) for Abuse and Neglect cases with primary objectives to:

- (1) promote the continuous quality improvement of court proceedings in child welfare matters; and
- (2) enhance and expand collaboration between the judicial branch, the Department of Human Services, and other partner entities to improve child welfare outcomes.

April is a time to celebrate the important role that communities play in protecting children and strengthening families, and DHS and the Court's CIP Program have collaborated in the development of a Court-Practice Training Project scheduled for kick-off during the month of April. The training will focus on efficient and effective delivery of Title IV-E services in the territory, and is also intended to foster stronger partnerships between DHS and the Courts to improve child welfare outcomes. Better outcomes are achieved by focusing on factors aimed at reducing child abuse and neglect, such as:

- Nurturing and attachment
- Knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development
- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Concrete supports for parents
- Social and emotional competence of children

For information on this national agenda, please refer to the *2018 Prevention Resource Guide: Keeping Children Safe and Families Strong in Supportive Communities*. This resource guide, designed for service providers who work throughout the community to strengthen families, is available online at: <https://childwelfare.com/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resources/resource-guide/>.

We All Can Play a Part in Keeping Children Safe and Families Strong. Everyone's participation is critical.

For more information, contact:

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