

April 2017 ✦ Volume 14 ✦ Issue 1

## April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month

time to share child abuse and neglect prevention awareness strategies and activities.

The first Federal child protection legislation, CAPTA was signed by President Nixon on January 31, 1974 and marked the beginning of a new national response to the problem of child abuse and neglect. The legislation provided Federal assistance to states for prevention, identification, and treatment programs. It also created the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (now known as the Office on Child Abuse and Neglect) within the Children's Bureau to serve as a Federal focal point for CAPTA activities. Today CAPTA, most recently reauthorized in 2010, continues to provide minimum standards for child maltreatment definitions and support states' prevention and intervention efforts.

There are many events planned in Montana to draw attention to child abuse prevention. **The Montana Children's Trust Fund has list of these events on its website:**

<http://dphhs.mt.gov/childrenstrustfund/preventionmonth>

National Child Abuse Prevention Month is a time to acknowledge the importance of families and communities working together to prevent child abuse and neglect, and a

### What do all the blue pinwheels mean?

In April, you will most likely see blue pinwheels on lawns, in parks, and in store windows. According to Montana Children's Trust Fund, *"they symbolize what a healthy childhood should be; they are a reflection of hope, health and safety—what we all desire for our children."*



Use these pinwheel sightings to reflect on what you can do in your community to strengthen Montana families and talk to your own family about what you can do to make your own family strong and loving.

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## Strong Families

### Strong Families Need Daily Tending

Strong families don't just happen. They are grown, much like a garden where seeds need to be planted and tended daily. Only with this constant attention will seedlings grow into strong, productive plants, and families into strong, loving units. No matter why or how they came to live with you, your grandchildren will benefit from being in your home. However, it will take time for them to feel safe and secure in their new home with you. Here are a few tips to help your

grandchildren adjust and strengthen your new family arrangement:

- Help them feel “at home” by creating a safe space just for them. This could be a bedroom or just a corner of the living room or kitchen
- Create daily routine of mealtimes, homework, bedtimes, and any other activities you do together.
- Talk to them and listen and ask questions when they talk to you.
- Set your boundaries and expectations for the children, and enforce them consistently.
- Get involved with their school as much as you can, and encourage them to participate in school sponsored activities.
- Make time in your schedule to spend quality time with them.
- Let them know how much you love them.

The US Department of Health & Human Services has many tip sheets about what you can do to build strong families. These include *Helping Your Child Heal From Trauma*, *Raising Your Kin*, *Parenting After Domestic Abuse*, and dozens of others, in both English and Spanish.

[https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/prevention\\_ch5.pdf](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/prevention_ch5.pdf)



### Try these Fun Family Strengthening Activities!

**Caring Days** We all want to be loved in our own way. Family members themselves can tell us the special things that make them feel loved. Make lists of things that make you feel loved. Share your lists with family members and ask them to make a list of things that make them feel loved for all other family members.

Begin having “Caring Days” on a regular basis. On each Caring Day, every family member picks one thing from each person’s list and does what it says. For example, if you pick backrub from someone’s list, you take time during Caring Day to give that person a back rub. If your granddaughter feels loved when you build sandcastles together, take some time on Caring Day to do that.

**Find more great family activities at**

<http://extension.missouri.edu/bsf/strengths/FamilyStrengthsHandout2.pdf>

**Discovering Family Traditions** Make a list of your family’s traditions. They can be such a part of family life that you may not even recognize them as traditions. They can be anything from a daily activity to a once-a-year event. Go over the list as a family and discuss the traditions. Are there some you’d like to do more often? Are there some that are no longer enjoyable? Cross off traditions you want to drop and put a star by those you want to do more often.

Finally, list ideas for new family traditions. Possibilities include some special way of saying goodnight; making your own birthday or holiday cards; or having movie night every third Friday. Keep the list handy in case you want to add something.



## Strong Families

### Strong Families Start With Strong Adult Relationships

Just as your relationships with your grandchildren need constant tending, your relationships with the other adults in your life also need your care and attention to remain strong and satisfying. Having loving—or at least respectful—relationships with your spouse, partner, adult children and other relatives, and friends is essential to the make-up of a strong family. When children join the family, it is tempting to focus all your attention on them, but remember to spend time effectively communicating with the adults in your life. One of the most difficult issues adults face is **effective conflict resolution**.

All couples and families have conflict at some time. This is because we have a strong emotional connection with those we love. Conflict is not bad if the adults are respectful of one another in communication and action. When couples and families are unhappy, resolving conflict is more difficult. This unhappiness can cause miscommunication like:

**Not focusing on the problem.** Some people try to change the subject so that they don't have to focus on the problem. Others may try and bring in all of the problems the family ever had to avoid the original issue.

**Not listening.** Interrupting your family member is one way to tell the person you are not listening.

**Assuming your family member can read your mind.** We can't read minds. The other person will not know how you feel unless you let him or her know.

**Finding fault** with everything your family brings up as a solution is not helpful. This is called "yes, butting", where one person can't find anything to agree on.

**Competing with your family member** to try and make your problem seem worse does not help when there is conflict. This does not help when trying to solve a problem.

**Displaying a negative attitude** does not help when there is conflict. This includes mocking or insulting the other person, being defensive, withdrawing from the conversation, or being aggressive or belligerent

Conflicts need to be resolved. Those that aren't will "simmer" between family members and eventually boil over into a larger problem. Resolving conflicts can be done in a constructive way. Some good strategies to use when there is a conflict include:

**Use "I" statements.**

"I" statements are less offensive to the other person. For example, instead of saying, "You never spend time at home with me," say, "I would like to spend more time with you. I get lonesome when you are gone so much. Can we think of a way to be together more often?"

**Say what you mean.** Be clear in your messages and ask the other person what they heard.

**Be polite and stay cool.** If the situation is too tense, take a break and come back to the issue later. Be sure to set a specific time when the issue will be revisited otherwise it may be left unresolved. Allow at least a few hours to pass before revisiting the issue. For example, "I need to think about this, let's talk about it after dinner."

**Offer respect and validation** even if the family members disagree. Being respectful and validating one another's feelings is important in any relationship.

**Ask yourself whether or not the issue is important enough for a conflict.** Sometimes we argue over small issues that can be resolved by agreeing to disagree.



Adapted from *Couple Relationships: Communication and Conflict Resolution*  
<http://msuextension.org/publications/HomeHealthandFamily/MT200917HR.pdf>



## Strong Families

### Communities Can Help Build Strong Families

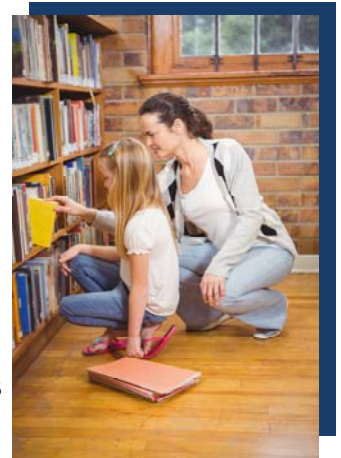
Healthy families are connected to others in the community, building a mutual support system of family and friends they can count on in times of need. Children learn a sense of caring for others by watching grandparents' examples. Actions truly speak louder than words. When grandparents welcome a new neighbor, call on a sick friend, or donate clothing that has been outgrown, they are teaching their grandchildren to be involved with the larger community. Teach your grandchildren—and their friends—the value of their community with these activities:

**Reduce, Recycle, Reuse.** Recycling can be a fun, educational project for the entire family to share. Spend time discussing that when we collect certain materials for recycling we are saving money, energy and natural resources to help the environment. A home recycling center takes only a small amount of space and a few minutes a day to use. Set up a system that fits with how your community collects recyclable materials.

**Learn About Citizenship.** Visit the city council, a county commissioner's meeting, or the state legislature. Watch regulations and laws being made. Interview a lawmaker. Take the kids to see a public, pre-election forum or watch public affairs programs on television and discuss them afterwards. Learn the process for making policies and laws, and practice influencing it.

**Be A Good Neighbor.** Strengthen ties you have with neighbors by finding ways to be helpful (for example, splitting wood, installing fencing, pet sitting, sharing a favorite dessert, shoveling sidewalks, bringing in the newspaper, shopping for someone who is ill, or sharing plants and garden produce).

**Make School Connections.** Strengthen ties between home and school. Help out at your grandchild's school. Share a talent or vocation in a classroom, participate in fundraising, or a playground party. Attend parent-teacher conferences. Support school events such as performances and sports activities. Work closely with the teacher to promote your child's success at school.



Adapted from *Having Fun with Your Family 365 Days a Year: Family Survival Activities*  
<http://extension.missouri.edu/bsf/strengths/FamilyStrengthsHandout2.pdf>

### Teach Your Grandchildren Early About the Benefits of Gardening!

Kids can learn about life from gardening. Like people, plants need love and care to grow. Food and water keep them alive, and extra acts of kindness help them thrive. Children also learn a sense of responsibility by watering and weeding plants.

**Try these fun ideas**

- Put a marker with each child's name beside the vegetable or flower he or she planted. After harvest, use the vegetable in a family meal and put the gardener's name beside the serving dish (for example, Carol's corn or Tom's tomatoes).
- Fill an old tennis shoe with potting soil and plant grass or flower seeds in it. Keep it moist and in 5 weeks you should have a fine crop of grass or flowers.
- Children will love to share homegrown vegetables or flowers with neighbors, grandparents and others. Have them add a note that says "homegrown with love by...."
- Care for the garden together with a positive attitude. Make it fun—not a punishment or a chore.



## Resources & Services

### Office of Child & Family Ombudsman

The Office of the Child and Family Ombudsman (OCFO) is a part of the Montana Department of Justice (DOJ) and helps citizens statewide. Created in 2013 and continued permanently in 2015, the Montana Legislature established OCFO as an **independent, impartial, and confidential** resource to Montana citizens. There is currently a Chief Child and Family Ombudsman and a Deputy Child and Family Ombudsman serving in the Office.

OCFO responds to requests to protect the rights of children and families by improving case outcomes and strengthening Montana's child welfare system. More specifically, the Child and Family Ombudsman duties are to investigate requests, involving acts or omissions by the Child and Family Services Division of the Department of Health and Human Services; to advocate for best practices in working with children and families; and to provide outreach and education on how best to protect and serve Montana children and families.

**Any individual concerned about the interests or rights of a child in Montana may request assistance from the Ombudsman.** If the request is outside of the jurisdiction of OCFO, the Ombudsman will assist in locating other referrals or resources.

**To request assistance, you can:**

**Call (844) 25CHILD (24453)**

**Fax (406) 444-2759**

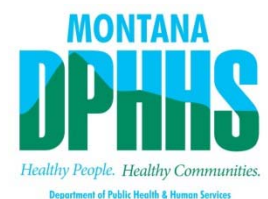
**Email [DOJOMBUDSMAN@mt.gov](mailto:DOJOMBUDSMAN@mt.gov).**

For more information or to download the request for assistance form, please visit:  
<https://dojmt.gov/enforcement/childrensjustice/>



### Montana DPHHS, Child and Family Services Division (CFSD)

The mission of the CFSD is simple: keep children safe and families strong. The division protects children who have been or are at substantial risk of abuse, neglect or abandonment. "We strive to assure that all children have a family who will protect them from harm. We recognize the protective capacities of families and incorporate them in assessments, decision making and actions with the goal of improving safety, permanency and well being for children."



The Division encourages communities to share responsibility for the safety of its children and families. To this end, **the division operates a toll-free child abuse hotline, also known as Centralized Intake, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.** Specialists screen calls, assess the level of risk to children, and prioritize reports of abuse, neglect, and abandonment according to the urgency with which social workers need to respond. The specialists forward reports of suspected child abuse, neglect, or abandonment to social workers in county offices for investigation.

Callers will be asked for their name and phone number, so they can be reached for clarification or to provide additional information. **Caller's names, by Montana law, must remain confidential.** If you call the hotline, you can expect to be treated with dignity and respect, and expect that the information you provide will be used to provide protection to children.

**Call CFSD Centralized Intake any time at (866) 820-5437 or TTY-Hearing-Impaired (866)341-8811.**



## Resources & Services

### A Legal Relationship Can Ease Fear and Uncertainty

Knowing that you and your grandchildren have a strong legal relationship can help strengthen your family by alleviating stress and allowing you more time and energy to focus on what is important: raising happy, healthy children. We are fortunate in Montana to have several laws that offer legal protection to caregivers when the parents are absent.

**MCA 40-6-501** allows grandparents to enroll their grandchildren in school when the adult children cannot be located, if the legal requirements, including completion of an educational authorization affidavit, are met.

**Download the affidavit at**

<http://montanagrandparents.org/documents/caretakerrelativeeduaff-1.pdf>

**MCA 40-6-502** allows grandparents medical authority for their grandchildren when the adult children cannot be located and, if the legal requirements, including completion of a relative medical authorization affidavit, are met.

**Download the affidavit at**

<http://montanagrandparents.org/documents/caretakerrelativemedcareaff.pdf>

**MCA 40-6-601 & 602** state that if grandchildren are left with grandparents for longer than six months, and it is unclear if, or when, the parent will return and re-take child custody, grandchildren do not have to be returned immediately to the parent when the parent returns. If the grandparent files an affidavit with the court containing all of the items required by law, the child may remain with the grandparent for five days while the court reviews the situation and issues an order regarding the custody of the child.



**MCA 40-4-212, 40-4-228 & 40-9-102** state that grandparents may petition the court for grandparent visitation over the objections of the natural parents.

**Power of Attorney for Care, Custody or Property of a Minor** A power of attorney is a short-term document that allows parents to appoint someone to make legal, financial, and educational decisions for their children. Different levels of control can be written into the document. Unless the POA is set to be durable, it is valid until the expiration date, if one is set by the parent; until it is cancelled by the parent; or until the parent dies or becomes incompetent or incapacitated. This document become valid when both parties sign and it is notarized.

**Download the POA MontGuide at**

<http://msuextension.org/publications/FamilyFinancialManagement/MT199001HR.pdf>

**Find the POA form at** <http://courts.mt.gov/library/topic/guardian>

**Guardianship of a Minor** A judge must grant guardianship of a minor. If guardianship is sought by grandparents over the objections of the parents, it is the responsibility of the grandparents to show the parents are unfit to have decision-making authority for the children. Seeking guardianship is a complicated, multi-step process. While it is possible to represent yourself in court, a private attorney or other legal advice may be useful.

**Find the guardianship forms at** <http://courts.mt.gov/library/topic/guardian>

# Grandfamily Support Contacts Across Montana—By County

**Blaine County—Harlem & Fort Belknap Indian Reservation**  
Barbara Skoyen, RN  
(406) 353-3157

MSU Extension  
(406) 353-2656

**Big Horn County—Wyola**  
Kristy Old Coyote  
LBHC Extension  
(406) 638-3114

**Big Horn County—Hardin**  
Janice Eckman  
Hardin Parent Center  
(406) 665-4151

**Big Horn & Rosebud Counties—Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation**  
Ryhal Rowland  
MSU Extension  
(406) 477-6498

**Cascade County—Great Falls**  
Tammy Phelps  
Family Connections  
(406) 761-6010

Beth Branam  
Opportunities, Inc. Head Start  
(406) 453-5415

Katrin Finch  
MSU Extension  
(406) 454-6980

**Chouteau County—Ft. Benton**  
Janell Barber  
MSU Extension  
(406) 622-3036

**Custer County—Miles City**  
Don & Vivian Westall  
(406) 234-6727

**Dawson County—Glendive**  
Family Life Institute  
(406) 939-5591

**Deer Lodge County—Anaconda**  
Abbie Phillip  
MSU Extension  
(406) 563-4036

**Fergus County—Lewistown**  
Denise Seilstad  
MSU Extension  
(406) 535-3919

**Flathead County—Kalispell**  
Cathy Brenneman  
The Nurturing Center, Inc.  
(406) 756-1414

**Gallatin County—Bozeman**  
Deb Albin  
MSU Extension Family & Human Development  
(406) 994-3395  
grg@montana.edu

Gerre Maillet  
Youth Dynamics  
(406) 548-6606

**Glacier County—Browning & Blackfeet Indian Reservation**  
Carrie Bear Chief-Evans & Connie Bremner  
Eagle Shield Center  
(406) 338-7257

**Hill County—Havre**  
MSU Extension  
(406) 265-5481 x233

**Hill County—Rocky Boys Indian Reservation**  
Mary St. Pierre  
Stone Child College & MSU Extension  
(406) 395-4875

**Lake County—Ronan & Flathead Indian Reservation**  
Nori Pearce  
MSU Extension  
(406) 676-4271

**Lewis & Clark County—Helena**  
Jackie Stoeckel  
MT Office on Aging  
(406) 444-6061

**Madison/Jefferson Counties—Whitehall**  
MSU Extension  
(406) 287-3282

**Missoula County—Missoula**  
Kelly Moore  
MSU Extension  
(406) 258-4206

**Pondera County—Conrad**  
Wendy Wedum  
MSU Extension  
(406) 271-4052

**Ravalli County—Hamilton & Bitterroot Valley**  
AnnaMarie White  
La Paloma Agency  
(406) 396-1937

Jo Ann Wilson  
(406) 926-1711

**Richland County—Sidney**  
MSU Extension  
(406) 433-1206

**Roosevelt County—Culbertson**  
Ardis Oelkers  
MSU Extension  
(406) 787-5312

**Roosevelt County—Fort Peck Indian Reservation**  
Carol Bemer  
(406) 768-2430

**Rosebud County—Forsyth**  
Jennifer Anderson  
MSU Extension  
(406) 346-7320

**Rosebud County—Lame Deer & Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation**  
Kay Medicine Bull  
Boys & Girls Club of the Northern Cheyenne Nation  
(406) 477-6654

**Sanders County—Thompson Falls**  
Juli Thurston  
MSU Extension  
(406) 827-6934

**Silver Bow County—Butte**  
Brenda Hergott  
Butte 4-C's  
(406) 723-4019  
1-800-794-4061

**Stillwater County—Columbus**  
Lisa Terry  
MSU Extension  
(406) 322-8035

**Teton County—Choteau**  
Jane Wolery  
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(406) 466-2491

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Montana State University Extension is an ADA/  
EO/AA Veteran's Preference Employer and  
provider of educational outreach.

# Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project

*"Call it a clan, call it a network,  
call it a tribe, call it a family.  
Whatever you are, whoever you are,  
you need one."  
~Jane Howard*