

# Caritas Family Solutions Spreads Awareness During National Child Abuse Prevention Month

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BELLEVILLE - April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month and Caritas Family Solutions is working to raise awareness about some of the common signs of child abuse.

As the largest provider of foster care in Southern Illinois, Caritas currently serves more than 6,500 people including 1,700 foster children. Caritas Family Solutions also provides resources and programs for children who have experienced some form of neglect, abuse, and trauma throughout their childhood.

Caritas Training and Compliance Manager, Rico Dunn, said it's important for everyone to be familiar with how to identify the warning signs of child abuse.

“It’s important for people to remember that abuse comes in many forms, whether that be physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect,” said Dunn. “The most important thing to look for, aside from physical indicators, is a significant change in the child’s behavior or attitude. Caritas puts strong importance on training our staff, so they know how to handle children dealing with the repercussions of prior abuse and trauma.”

Dunn said trauma can show up in different forms within a child’s behavior. This can consist of lashing out, withdrawing from others, or being triggered by particular objects or noises that might bring up bad memories for the child. Dunn added that child abuse often involves an adult that is close with the child or within a child’s family.

“It is devastating to see what some of these children have dealt with during their young lives and our goal is to help them recover from that abuse,” said Dunn. “One of the most important things we work on with our entire staff and foster parents is how to understand the mindset of a child who has undergone trauma. We teach our staff how to interact with those children with compassion, understanding, and support when they act out. Understanding those triggers and emotions is an important part of helping them recover.”

Caritas Family Solutions provides therapeutic counseling services by licensed clinicians who help children and families deal with past trauma. Dunn said their counselors develop individualized treatment plans for children to help them recover from past abuse. These treatment plans include goals and activities that help them build back trust for others and manage their emotions.

### ***About Caritas Family Solutions:***

*Founded in 1947, Caritas Family Solutions strengthens the social and emotional well-being of individuals and families in order to create healthy relationships, loving homes and strong communities. Caritas provides services across Southern Illinois from offices located in Belleville, Carterville, Mount Vernon, Olney, East Alton, Alton, Highland, Sparta and Effingham. For additional information, visit [www.caritasfamilysolutions.org](http://www.caritasfamilysolutions.org).*