



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Op-Ed: Be Aware, Educated, Involved to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse**

March 2, 2016

To the editor:

The rash of recent high-profile incidents involving the sexual exploitation of children and youth should serve as an urgent reminder to us all of the key role parents and caring adults play in protecting our children from sexual abuse. State law (Indiana Code subsection 31-33-5-1) requires that ANY individual who has reason to believe a child is a victim of abuse or neglect MUST report that belief to the Indiana Department of Child Services or law enforcement; the failure to do so is a class B misdemeanor. The state maintains a 24-hour hotline — 1-800-800-5556 — to make it simple and safe to make such a report, which can be done without giving your name or identifying information.

But adults can do so much more — by preventing child abuse and sexual exploitation from happening in the first place. We have heard about these terrible things happening because somebody got caught; it is too late to protect the victims of these crimes now. We have the power to spare countless children and their loved ones the pain and long-term recovery process that every victim experiences by being aware, being educated, and taking time to be involved in the lives of children and youth.

There are abundant resources in our community to help you. Prevent Child Abuse Indiana (<http://pcain.org>) has all the information, the data, and the research any person might want and need to become knowledgeable about the issue and the solutions that can help us eliminate this problem.

Both MCCOY Inc. ([www.mccooyouth.org](http://www.mccooyouth.org)) and Children's Bureau Inc. ([www.childrensbureau.org](http://www.childrensbureau.org)) offer the Stewards of Children training, a two-hour workshop that

equips parents with information about signs to look for and ways to talk to their children. Whether you are part of a group or are a concerned individual, we can provide all the materials and training needed — at no charge to you — that will equip another cadre of aware adults to become protectors of children. A new website for parents called Careful Parents ([www.carefulparents.com](http://www.carefulparents.com)) offers abundant resources as well as a way to connect with other parents to share ways to keep our children and teens safe from harm.

Talking with your children — and yes, your teens — about sexual abuse is not easy. No parent even wants to think that his or her precious child could be victimized. But if you equip yourself with the resources that are readily available to you, then you can know you took every possible step to protect your children from this danger, just as you do all the other perils they face in life.

John Brandon  
President, Marion County Commission On Youth, Inc. (MCCOY)

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