

Better Futures

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casa de los niños

Child Abuse Prevention: Past and Present

For decades, the systematic response to child abuse failed to develop systems that adequately protected children. Laws continue to evolve and resources ebb and flow with changes in policy and politics, but the problem is still very real in our community. From January to June in 2019, Pima County's Department of Child Services received 4,270 child abuse and neglect cases. Of those, 3,000 (over 70%) were reports of neglect. When reports of child abuse are received,

DCS frequently works with Casa de los Niños to connect families and children with CDLN's crisis intervention teams to quickly support families through case management, supervised visitation, and home visits to protect children from experiencing further abusive or neglectful situations. When our teams can intervene early, abuse can be prevented and families are empowered to stay together in a safe and healthy environment.

National Child Abuse Prevention Month recognizes the importance of families and communities working together to prevent child abuse and neglect and promotes the social and emotional well-being of children and families. During the month of April— and throughout the year— communities are encouraged to increase awareness and provide education and support to families.

Casa de los Niños offers child abuse prevention programs that meet a wide array of needs including Nurse-Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers, and free parenting

classes to educate parents and provide resources for caregivers to ensure their children are safe and healthy. Many parents who enroll in these programs or attend classes have limited resources or support, and rely heavily on these services to learn how to parent and raise their family.

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can be prevented.**

When families are in need of mental health treatment, our Behavioral Health Services offer individual and group therapy to children who have experienced traumatic situations to begin to heal and build resilience for their future. All of our services are aimed at protecting children who have endured abuse or trauma, and building their resilience to become a healthy, happy member of the Tucson community.



Message from Susie Huhn, CEO



April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month, and now more than ever we look for ways to build new resources for families and to highlight the good work being done in our community to care for children in need. But, the reality is, this is our focus every month! Our amazing team of dedicated and compassionate professionals are working with kids and families in their homes every day to ensure a healthy start in life and to intervene when problems arise. When families are struggling to make ends meet to maintain safe and secure housing, or to find stable employment, and are perhaps dealing with their own mental health challenges, the impact on kids can be traumatic. Witnessing a parent deal with mental or physical health challenges, substance abuse, or being exposed to violence in the home can significantly impact how a child develops and relates to others for the rest of their lives.

And, right around the corner is May—Mental Health Awareness Month.

When we think about cancer, heart disease, or diabetes, we don't wait years to treat them. We start before someone becomes seriously ill. We begin with prevention, and when people are in the first stage of those diseases, we try immediately to reverse the symptoms.

This is what we should be doing when people have mental illnesses, too. When people first begin to experience symptoms such as loss of sleep, feeling tired for no reason, feeling low, or feeling anxious, we should act.

These early symptoms might not ever become serious. Like a cough, they often go away on their own and are nothing to fear. But sometimes they do not go away. Suicide has steadily increased over the last decade and now is the second leading cause of death for 15 to 24 year olds. (Motor vehicle fatality is the leading cause of death, representing over one-third of all deaths to teenagers. Suicides have become the second-leading cause, surpassing homicide deaths which dropped to third.) We are proud to have an outstanding Behavioral Health Services Program with some of the finest child psychiatrists and child and family therapists in Arizona! Every day they see hundreds of children and young adults working through a multitude of challenges, including past trauma, attachment disorders, managing depression or anxiety, or family violence.

Please take time over the next two months to offer help to a family or child that may be struggling, and know that we are here to help. And remember: It is always ok to ask for help!

Sincerely,

Susie Huhn

What You Can Do To Prevent Child Abuse

Child abuse can happen in any family and in any neighborhood. Studies have shown that child abuse crosses all boundaries of income, race, ethnic heritage, and religious faith.

The incidence is higher for families in the following situations:

- Living below the poverty level or financially stressed
- Stressed because of a loss of job or home
- History of intergenerational abuse
- Alcohol or substance abuse problems
- History of depression
- Domestic violence or abuse

PREVENT CHILD ABUSE AMERICA OFFERS THESE TIPS FOR STOPPING CHILD ABUSE:

- **Try to understand your children.** Learn how kids behave and what they can do at different ages. Have realistic expectations and be reasonable if children fall short.
- **Keep your children healthy.** Denying children food, sleep, or healthcare is abuse by neglect.
- **Get help with alcohol or drug problems.** Keep children away from anyone who abuses those substances.
- **Watch your words.** Angry or punishing language can leave emotional scars for a lifetime.
- **Get control of yourself** before disciplining a child. Set clear rules so the child knows what to expect. Avoid physical punishment.
- **Take a time-out.** Stop if you begin to act out frustration or other emotions physically. Find someone to talk with or watch your kids while you take a walk. Call a child abuse prevention hotline if you are worried you may hit your child.
- **Make your home a violence-free zone.** Turn off violent TV shows and don't let kids stay under the same roof with an abusive adult.
- **Join a support program** for new parents.
- **Take regular breaks from your children.** This will give you a release from the stress of parenting full-time.

Remember that child abuse often repeats itself in the next generation. By doing what you can to prevent it today, you can help save children's lives far into the future.

Staff Perspective

Maggie Bellino, MA, LMSW CHILD & FAMILY THERAPIST

In 2013, I graduated from the University of Arizona with a Bachelor's degree in Sociology and a Minor in Spanish. I moved to Gracias, Lempira, Honduras to work as a first grade teacher at a bilingual school. But I quickly realized that while I loved teaching, my passion was advocacy work, connection, and healing. I began working with victims of domestic violence and was enthralled and motivated by the work. I will never forget one night, walking a woman home, that we encountered her abuser. I remember looking into his eyes and realizing that there was another person to this equation, another person who also needed someone to advocate for them, connect with them, and help them heal. I moved back to Arizona and completed my Masters in Social Work at Arizona State University. During my studies, I realized that there is a dearth of research and understanding regarding perpetrators of abuse, specifically of sexual offenses. However, there is a common understanding that people who have been hurt often times go on to hurt others, so it seemed imperative to me to work on the hurt first, in hopes of preventing the second.

Casa de los Niños is one of three organizations in Southern Arizona that provides treatment for children who sexually offend. Research tells us that less than 5% of juveniles who commit

sexual offenses reoffend (Caldwell, M. F., 2016), and that percentage decreases even further when effective treatment is employed. For this reason, I was honored to be offered a position as a Child and Family Therapist, working within the specialty of Maladaptive Sexual Behaviors. There is such a need for this treatment, and our program is so well-respected that we have families drive an hour one-way to receive services for their children. What is more, Casa de los Niños financially supports our team to be members of the Association of Treatment for Sexual Abusers, so that we may be informed as to the newest research internationally that pertains to our clientele. It is for this reason that our treatment is ever-increasing in effectiveness.

The population I serve is not understood, and for this reason there is a general lack of empathy. I hope to amplify the voices of these children, because when I look into my client's eyes, I see a child who needs someone to advocate for them, connect with them, and help them heal. I feel honored to be the one who has the opportunity to do just that.

I would like to add that as an employee at Casa de los Niños, we are treated with as much respect, understanding, and care as the community members we seek to serve. My husband and I recently became foster parents, and everyone has shown me compassion and support as we navigate "foster parenthood." I love working for an organization that practices what they preach in terms of helping kids and healing families.



Reflections of a New Mom

BY MARISA GARCIA

Sometimes life happens fast. I had every intention of moving forward with my plans for college. I did not plan on becoming pregnant, but at age 21, that was the situation. I was uncertain of how to move ahead, and my parents were really upset, and they feared the worst for me. They wanted to make sure emotionally I was ok. They had kids young and they knew how hard it is, and they were worried about a stable environment for the baby.

The routine with my nurse helped so much, and she taught me how to make sure I was doing all of the right things to have a healthy pregnancy. I was also able to meet other new moms who were struggling with some of the same issues, and I learned from them as well.

One of the amazing things about Casa de los Niños is the wide array of services and all of the ways they can help moms, families and kids. I was going to start working and I tried a daycare at a private home, but it was too expensive among other challenges. My nurse told me about the new Early Education Center at Casa de los Niños and said I should check it out. I was able to get some financial support from DES and enrolled Adriano. I had previously felt so concerned about leaving him, but the teachers and staff made me feel so comfortable when I brought him there, and they make drop off and pick up so easy, and I know that they are giving his great care. I've been able to make special requests about his unique dietary needs, and they were very supportive and helpful. Adriano's father feels good about having



Marisa and her son, Adriano

My boyfriend, the baby's father, is in the military, and I really did not feel comfortable moving to San Diego with nothing familiar and the challenges of a military life, and the physical changes of pregnancy were overwhelming. I went for a doctor's appointment and was referred to the Nurse-Family Partnership program at Casa de los Niños. This turned out to be the best possible thing to happen!

him in a steady, high-quality daycare. My son is learning so much; he is so social and interacts with people so much. And they are helping him to nap without a pacifier!

I really want to work and am focused on starting a career, so the consistent and high-quality center makes a huge difference. Without Nurse-Family Partnership and the Early Education Center, I don't think I would have been able to attend school, and now I am ready to apply for nursing school. This was not the plan – but Adriano is a blessing – I love that kid!

Thank You to these Amazing People!

We are so grateful for over 100 groups and individuals who have donated toys, clothing, gift cards, diapers, hygiene supplies, and so much more. The Tucson community is so generous – thank you!

Every year, the **Ace Hardware on Golf Links and Harrison** hosts a Stuff-the Ace Truck event. This year they collected a truck full of toys and even held a BBQ!



Thank you **Coffee Times Drive-Thru** for holding a successful toy drive for us – we appreciate your constant support!



outdid themselves! Their team showed up in a U-Haul unloading boxes of gifts!

For six years, the **students at Lineweaver Elementary** hold a toy drive. Thank you Ms. DeLeon for dropping off a car full of toys!



held their annual Holiday Sing-a-Long event. When customers donated a new toy, they would receive a discount off admission!



provided joy for many kids!



Starrview at Starrpass Apartments did another phenomenal donation drive for the families we serve!



The community of **St. Mark Catholic Church** did an amazing job! They stopped by

numerous times with cars overflowing with clothing, toys, and gift cards!



These friends do an amazing job every year with their **Toys for Tats Drive!** We appreciate you and your clients so much!



The **Tucson Hogs Chapter** rode in on their motorcycles and had a truck full of toys! We had so much fun spending the afternoon with them.

Special mention and thanks to:

- Petsmart
- Pima Pain Center
- Murphy's Public House
- Bloom Dispensary
- Al Coronado Plumbing
- Olive Garden
- Macys
- Old Navy
- HDR Services
- Buffalo Exchange
- Hotel Congress
- University of Arizona Fraternity & Sorority Programs



Every year the **JW Tucson Marriott Starrpass Resort** puts on an annual tree lighting event and collects toys! We appreciate this group so much!

Nana's Needles have been working so hard at making beautiful handmade blankets for children and families – we are so grateful for your on-going support!

Wheels for Kids is dropping numerous bikes off monthly for children, teens, and adults! These bikes are crucial for many of our clients' transportation. They even donate bike locks and helmets to ensure clients are riding safely around town!



Board of Directors POINT OF VIEW

Our Board of Directors encompasses the mission and vision of Casa de los Niños. They are a diverse group of professionals that are all committed to advancing our work, maximizing our impact, and incorporating many points of view.

MEET LELA RANKIN WILLIAMS, PHD
Associate Professor and Associate Director
Arizona State University School of Social Work, Tucson

"As a scholar in social work and child development, I place a high value on doing work with children and families from the perspective of strengthening relationships. Casa de los Niños is an organization that reflects these same values. I am honored to serve on the board of an organization that has stepped forward to be part of the village that is raising empathic, resilient, and happy young people."



ARE YOU? Dedicated Solutions-Focused Compassionate

JOIN THE CASA DE LOS NIÑOS TEAM and Be a Voice for Children • Change • Advocacy

We Have Current Opportunities for:
Child and Family Therapists
Behavioral Health Care Coordinators
Registered Nurses
Home Visitors

www.casadelosninos.org

THE MISSION of Casa de los Niños
is to promote
CHILD WELL-BEING and
FAMILY STABILITY in our community.

the
voice
for change
advocacy
children



casa de los niños

CHANGING LIVES FOR GENERATIONS

Casa de los Niños
1120 N. 5th Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85705

casadelosninos.org
520.624.5600

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Behavioral Health Services of Casa de los Niños

Do you have a child or young adult in your life who needs someone to talk to?

We have therapists with multiple specializations, including:

- 0-5
- Autism
- Special needs
- Transitioning youth
- Depression/anxiety
- Victims of domestic and/or family violence
- Justice-involved youth

We help kids and families to work through emotional and behavioral challenges, the effects of trauma, and victims of violence...we are here to help!

More information on how to access services:
520-624-5600 | casadelosninos.org

Earn a Tax Credit: Casa de los Niños is a Qualified Charitable Organization

In calendar year 2020, Casa de los Niños
is a **Qualified Charitable Organization**—
the status changed from a Qualified Foster Care
Organization at the end of 2018.

Please consider making a gift to Casa de los Niños
to help children and families in need.

***Your gift to Casa de los Niños helps
thousands of kids and families every year!***

When you make a gift to Casa de los Niños in 2020,
your gift can qualify for the Charitable Organization Tax Credit.

Thank you!

