

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## National Child Abuse Prevention Month

**Pensacola, Fla. (March 28, 2018)** – April is National Child Abuse Prevention month and FamiliesFirst Network (FFN) of Lakeview Center wants the community to know how they can help keep children safe from harm.

Last year, the Florida Abuse Hotline referred 11,000 calls from the four-county area to the Department of Children and Families for investigation to determine if children could safely remain in their homes. In those instances where it was not safe, FFN received the call to help find homes.

FFN services help ensure the safety of children who have been abused, abandoned and neglected. The agency also works with biological parents to provide counseling, education and treatment so that the families can reunite. However, when a judge deems that it's not safe for a child to return home, FFN will seek a permanent, adoptive home with a relative, close friend or adoptive family.

The community also can play a role by fostering, adopting and reporting abuse. Currently, there is a great need for therapeutic, medically complex and behavioral foster care to help children who have experienced severe trauma. Therapeutic foster parents receive extensive evidence-based training, weekly in-home therapist appointments, 24/7 on-call support, monthly reimbursements and 10 paid respite days each year.

"We provide tremendous support to our foster parents," said Jenn Petion, director of administration and external affairs. "We are there for them 24/7."

Interested community members should call the following numbers:

- Therapeutic foster care - 850.860.4259
- Traditional foster care - 850.453.7779
- Adoption - 850.469.3847
- Report abuse, neglect or exploitation to the Florida Abuse Hotline at 800.962.2873. For the deaf call 800.453.5145. If it is an emergency, please call 911.

### CONTACT BELOW IS FOR MEDIA USE ONLY

For more information about this press release or to schedule an interview, please contact Tish Pennewill at 850.469.3621 or [Tish.Pennewill@bhcpns.org](mailto:Tish.Pennewill@bhcpns.org), or Lori Zavada at 850.469.3508 or [Lori.Zavada@bhcpns.org](mailto:Lori.Zavada@bhcpns.org).

*About FamiliesFirst Network of Lakeview Center, Inc.*

*Under a contract with the state of Florida, FamiliesFirst Network is responsible for the safety, stability and well-being of abused and neglected children in northern Florida's four westernmost counties: Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton. Our Mission is to help people throughout life's journey. Our services include protective supervision, foster parent recruitment, adoptive parent recruitment, and specialized help for teens and young adults preparing to leave the foster care system. A program of Lakeview Center, FamiliesFirst Network served more than 3,100 children in 2017 alone. To learn more, go to [FamiliesFirstNetwork.org](http://FamiliesFirstNetwork.org).*