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How do we stop child abuse?

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Sadly, child abuse allegations have dominated Daily Record headlines in recent weeks.

- A Carroll Township couple is accused of neglecting and abusing a 7-year-old boy adopted from Russia - allegations that have been well-publicized in Russia.
- West Manheim Township Police say the May 19 death of an 11-month-old boy was a homicide, the result of repeated impacts to his head.
- And a York Daily Record documentary about the gut-wrenching experience of the first responders in the tragic death of Darisabel Baez at the hands of her mother's boyfriend, Harve Johnson, has brought much (and much-needed) attention to the issue of child abuse. It was that documentary and case that prompted the YorkCounts organization to plan a community forum on the issue of child abuse, slated for Thursday at the Jewish Community Center. The event will feature a screening of the documentary, followed by a panel discussion on how our community can prevent child abuse. We, as a co-sponsor of the event, hope you plan to attend. It's free and open to the public. (See the accompanying box for details.) YorkCounts officials will set the agenda for the evening, but the following are a few questions that come to mind as we ponder the difficult issues surrounding

child abuse:

- When should a reasonable person get involved if he or she witnesses or suspects child abuse? What is the best way to report child abuse suspicions?
- What can we do to teach people how to - and how not to - discipline their children?
- A recent letter to the editor sent in response to the documentary was from a school employee who said that as a mandated reporter of child abuse, she had reported dozens of suspected cases, but none had been substantiated. What happens when there are referrals from mandated reporters? Is that reporting system effective? Are there enough resources to investigate all these tips?
- York County has a high child abuse rate compared to many Pennsylvania counties, according to YorkCounts statistics. What are counties with lower child abuse rates doing that we're not? How can we best measure the effectiveness of our efforts? How does York County's funding compare to counties that see better rates?
- Many of the headline-making abuse cases - resulting in fatalities or severe injuries - are at the hands of men, often when they're left alone to care for infants. Is there anything we can do to better prepare fathers or male caregivers for the turmoil and frustration that can lead to shaken babies or other abuse?
- Are there any gaps or problems in the law that hamper the efforts of Children and Youth Services, police and prosecutors to protect children from abusers? What new

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tools can we give them to do their jobs?

- Harve Johnson was a victim of terrible abuse himself. We know that abusers are often abuse victims. What do we need to change in York County to help break this cycle?
- What is the single most important thing we as a community can do to address the issue of child abuse? What are other specific steps we can take toward that goal? Do you have any thoughts or answers? Please join us Thursday. **Child abuse forum slated** **forum slated** **What:** "After Darisabel: Reducing Child Abuse in York County," a summit to find solutions to the rising number of child-abuse cases **When:** 6 p.m. Thursday **Where:** York Jewish Community Center, 2000 Hollywood Drive **Cost:** Free, but registration is requested **Details:** e-mail events@yorkcounts.org or call Dan Fink at YorkCounts at 650-1460 **Panelists:**
 - Richard Gold, deputy secretary of the state Department of Public Welfare and director of the Office of Children, Youth and Families
 - Angela Liddle, director of the Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance
 - Deb Chronister, director of York County Children and Youth Services
 - Deb Harrison, executive director of the Children's Advocacy Center in York **Watch it live:** The forum will be broadcast at **ydr.com**, and viewers can also take part in an interactive chat, where questions raised can be posed directly to the panel.

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