**Letter to the Editor: We can’t stop child abuse**

Just before this year’s Super Bowl in Houston, airlines instructed their flight crews to look for suspicious behavior. Not just for bombs or drugs, but for distressed children. One flight attendant on an unrelated flight bound for San Francisco left a note in the lavatory for a child she thought was in trouble. “I need help,” the girl wrote back. The plane landed, and the police learned she was in a human trafficking ring.

Human trafficking was a problem for our neighbors in Indianapolis during their year as host of the Super Bowl and for other large conventions that come to our state. Child abuse, neglect, and assault, however, are happening right here in [REGION-NAME].

As Executive Director of [CAC-NAME] in [CITY-NAME], we see it every day. We’re a Child Advocacy Center. A safe, neutral, child-first facility funded by scarce grants and donations from people like you. We conduct forensic interviews of abused children that are recorded testimony later used by law enforcement and prosecutors in court. A full multidisciplinary team comes together to help non-offending family members and children heal mentally, physically, and emotionally after abuse happens.

We can’t stop abuse. In fact, the neglect for young Hoosiers has doubled over the last few years. Sixty-six kids died from abuse in Indiana in 2015. At [CAC-NAME] we’ve conducted [##] cases last year and [##] cases so far this year just in our coverage area. For the first time, Indiana’s CACs together interviewed over 10,000 children in 2016. That’s just a small sliver of the over 150,000 claims of child abuse made in Indiana each year.

You may be as powerless as us to stop child abuse altogether. But know this: you can take small steps that do help. You can talk to your kids about what to do if someone is physically abusing them – which is most often another family member. You can help them help their friends. Some common signs of abuse include bruises, marks and scars, depression, a fear of going home, always wearing the same clothes, or fear of another adult.

You can purchase a “Kids First” license plate the next time you’re at the BMV. You can donate directly to us at [www.URL.com]. You should also know this: Americans donate $1 to children for every $4 given to animals and shelters. I love animals as much as the next person, but this is our kids.

You should also know that Indiana’s Mandated Reporter Law requires *everyone* regardless of age or occupation to report any suspected signs of child abuse for any child you encounter. There are only two ways to fulfill your obligation under the law: by calling 911 or the Indiana Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-800-5556.

Helping protect a kid today makes for a happy, healthy, productive adult tomorrow. Invest in your community and in protecting children from abuse. Somewhere a child is writing “I need help” to an adult like you.

You can learn more about us at [www.URL.com] and visit the Indiana Chapter of the National Children’s Alliance at [www.incacs.org](http://www.incacs.org).

[DIRECTOR’S-NAME], Executive Director of [CAC’s-NAME]