

## **The Impact of Childhood Abuse on Adults**

One in four women and one in six men are sexually abused as children. Many of them never tell anyone. The abuse is not over when it stops, but often continues to affect them their entire lives. It can create ongoing, long-term stress in the body. This can lead to emotional, physical and mental health problems.

### **What are the effects of childhood abuse on adults?**

Childhood trauma increases risks for medical problems in adulthood, such as diabetes, heart disease, stomach, and respiratory disorders. Survivors may suffer from depression, anxiety, insomnia and eating disorders. Chronic headaches, backaches, and memory loss are not uncommon.

### **How can you help these adults?**

- When someone tells you about abuse in childhood, believe them. Say things like “I am so sorry that happened to you!” “You were just a child. This was not your fault.” “I am glad you told me about this!”
- Remind them that God loves them, and they do not need to feel shame about what happened to them as a child.
- Help them to find a licensed counselor trained in childhood trauma or a professionally led support group. Sending survivors to counselors without the proper education can do more harm than good.

When an adult tells you about past abuse, you do not need to call the PA Childline. If they believe a child (currently under age 18) may have been abused, they can call 1-800-932-0313.

This message is brought to you by the Plain Communities Task Force. To learn about counseling and group resources, contact Linda or Andrea at 717-560-9989, or Mary at 717-627-1611.