

As Gulf Coast Sees More Severe Child Abuse Cases, Nemours Establishes Itself as Certified Kids Safe Zone

Nemours Associates & Gulf Coast Kids House take immediate action to identify, report and stop abuse in order to save lives.



PENSACOLA, FL (Aug. 20, 2020)– Nemours Children's Specialty Care, Pensacola has been providing health services to the children of the Panhandle for over 20 years and now they are helping kids another way – by becoming a certified Kids Safe Zone in Northwest Florida. On Thursday, August 20 administrators from Gulf Coast Kids House joined Nemours Pensacola leadership to officially present them with a certificate and 'Kids Safe Zone' building identifiers.

Nemours associates went through training via Gulf Coast Kids House website, composed of two pre-tests, three videos, and two posts tests. The certification tests ways to identify, report and reduce child abuse within the community. In order to receive certification, over 80% of Nemours

associates had to complete the training.

"Currently, 1 in 8 children on the Gulf Coast will experience some kind of abuse – mental, medical, physical or sexual. Because Nemours associates work so closely with children, it was essential to educate our staff on how to identify, report and reduce abuse," said Ashley Cole, Nemours Children's Specialty Care Site Administrator.

Nemours team is now certified and is continually educating its associated on the signs and symptoms of abuse. The 'Safe Kid Zone' certification is available to both residents and businesses. The goal of course is to help citizens learn how to spot signs of potential abuse or neglect through distance learning.

According to Stacey Costevicki, Executive Director at Gulf Coast Kids House, there hasn't been an uptick in child abuse cases during COVID-19, when families are urged to stay at home, but the severity of the cases seen on an individual basis has become far more severe. The coronavirus outbreak in Florida has sidelined most mandated reporters of abuse, such as teachers, coaches and clergy members, because of closures and stay-at-home orders. Doctors and nurses are sometimes the only lifeline the abused child has outside of the home.

"We know we're one of the few sets of eyes on children these days," Cole said. "We're being mindful at every encounter we have with a child to make sure the child is safe."

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About Nemours Children's Specialty Care

Nemours Children's Specialty Care, a specialized pediatric care facility for Northwest Florida and South Alabama kids, is considered a leader in children's healthcare and has seen over 14,000 children and performed over 900 surgeries – with a 0% infection rate. Nemours is an accredited pediatric cystic fibrosis center, an accredited pediatric sleep center, one of the few accredited pediatric transthoracic in the region and is a center of Excellence by the American Diabetes Associates. In the Pensacola area, Nemours has served the children and families in the community for over 20 years, and is involved in research studies and clinical trials to seek new approaches to the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of childhood diseases.

About Nemours Children's Health System

Nemours is an internationally recognized children's health system that owns and operates the Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children in Wilmington, Del., and Nemours Children's Hospital in Orlando, Fla., along with outpatient facilities in six states, delivering pediatric primary, specialty and urgent care. Nemours also powers the world's most-visited website for information on the health of children and teens, KidsHealth.org and offers on-demand, online video patient visits through CareConnect.

Established as The Nemours Foundation through the legacy and philanthropy of Alfred I. duPont, Nemours provides pediatric clinical care, research, education, advocacy, and prevention programs to families in the communities it serves.

About Gulf Coast Kids House

Gulf Coast Kid's House is a children's advocacy center serving Escambia County. As a children's advocacy center, they combine all of the professionals and resources needed for the intervention, investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases under one child-friendly facility. Child victims and their families also receive mental health counseling at their center.

The goal of Gulf Coast Kid's House is to form a more collaborative response to child abuse cases so that they can improve case outcomes, and minimize trauma to the children and families they serve

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