

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Signs Bill Requiring Child Abuse Pamphlet, Urges Parents to Fight Stress During the Holiday Season

Gov. Christie Whitman today signed a bill that requires a pamphlet about child abuse and neglect to be distributed to all parents of newborn children. The Governor also reminded parents to know the signs of stress - and how to deal with it -- during the holidays.

"During the holiday season, many parents are under additional stress. Unfortunately for children, this stress can often lead to child abuse or neglect," Gov. Whitman said. "It is understandable how parents can find themselves overwhelmed during the holidays, but abusing or neglecting a child is never excusable."

S-972, sponsored by Senators John Bennett (R-Monmouth) and Donald DiFrancesco (R-Middlesex/Morris/Somerset/Union) and Assembly Member Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-Mercer), requires the Department of Human Services, in consultation with the Department of Health and Senior Services, to prepare a pamphlet containing:

- the signs of child abuse and neglect,
- the services provided by the state which help in preventing child abuse and neglect, and
- the legal ramifications of abusing or neglecting a child.

The pamphlet "A Survival Guide for Parents" will be distributed to each parent present during the infant's birth at the time of the mother's discharge from a hospital or birthing facility.

"Everyone knows that there is no training or experience that can prepare us for the job of parenting," Gov. Whitman said. "This resource for parents will help them understand exactly what can constitute child abuse or neglect, as well as offer tips for preventing a tragedy in their home."

Among the tips the Governor offered to parents for the holidays are:

- Call the Family Helpline at 1-800-THE-KIDS for answers to questions on child abuse and its prevention, or as an anonymous hotline for parents who simply need someone to talk to.

- Count to 10 when you feel stress coming on.
- Vent your frustrations privately. Go to another room and close the door when it is necessary to scream or cry.
- Do something physical as a family. You don't have to stay cooped up in your house, letting the stress of the day build up. Take your children out for a walk or play in the snow - both are good outlets for pent-up feelings of frustration.
- Make sure everyone in the family gets enough sleep. Children - and parents - who do not get enough rest won't be any fun.
- Plan ahead. Pre-planning holiday outings can save time and energy, and can be a way to involve even young children.
- Take time for yourself. While holidays usually focus on family and friends, don't forget to take some time out for your own holiday.
- Take advantage of free community events. Check your local newspaper for announcements about upcoming events and attend as a family.

The Governor also urged parents to contact the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect for pamphlets on "Survival Guide for Parents," "Hassle Free Holidays," or for their 1999 calendar - illustrated by New Jersey school children -- which offers daily parenting tips.