

# Knowles focuses on youth with Children's Cabinet

Gov. Tony Knowles today urged Alaskans to participate in community activities in recognition of National Child Abuse Prevention Month, beginning on April 1.

Alaska leads the nation in incidences of child abuse.

"Alaska's record is shameful and intolerable," said Knowles. "We know that children who live in violence not only suffer but often grow up to be parents who abuse. If we are to end this vicious cycle, we must continue to focus attention on the

problem and remind ourselves of its seriousness. National Child Abuse Prevention Month is an opportunity to do that."

Child abuse in Alaska reached an all time high between July 1994 and June 1995, when 15,706 incidents were reported. Between July 1995 and 1996, those figures dropped by almost 6 percent.

"Responding effectively to protect children is a critical job we are working hard every day to improve protections for children, but just responding to reports of

harm is not the solution," said Karen Perdue, Commissioner of the Department of Health and Social Services. "We have to address the root causes of child abuse and neglect by investing in prevention to decrease the need for interventions in the future."

"Gov. Knowles has worked hard to focus attention and efforts on a balanced response that not only protects children at risk of harm but prevents those risks from occurring," Perdue said.

"By forming the Children's Cabinet and sponsoring the Conference on Youth and Justice he has increased the focus on prevention and on helping communities build capacity to promote the well-being of children and their families.

"I encourage communities to develop programs that support and strengthen families and urge Alaskans to contact organizations that fight domestic violence," Perdue said.