



AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER OF SOUTHERN NEVADA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Debbie Ruiz

Child Abuse Prevention Program Manager

Phone: (702) 318-8452

DATE: July 18, 2007

Computer and video game addictions: new twist on an old problem

In 2006 Washoe County reported an estimated 2,403 cases of textbook child abuse with an estimated 28.5% of the cases substantiated, however, it is not always drug and alcohol related or physical abuse; it can be absolute criminal negligence and parental disregard. This is the case of Reno residents, 25 and 23 year old Michael and Iana Straw, who literally ignored their children, (ages 11 months and 2 years) to the point of starvation and disease. Most people equate child abuse with drugs, i.e. methamphetamine or alcohol abuse, 'computer and video game' addictions are a new twist on an old problem. The couple became so obsessed with the computer game 'Dungeons and Dragons' they unerringly disregarded their children for days, leaving them starving, unwashed and emotionally damaged. A concerned neighbor called in authorities upon hearing incessant crying. The children have since been removed and placed in protective custody.

In Southern Nevada officials in Clark County reported in 2006 an estimated 10,048 number of child abuse cases, with a majority being cases of neglect. Debbie Ruiz, Program Manager of Child Abuse Prevention at Area Health Education Center of Southern Nevada (AHEC) states, 'Child abuse prevention starts at home. There are a number of resources available to the community to help prevent abuse in all forms. The Straw case is a new twist on an old problem. The key is recognizing that as a community we need to play a role in protecting children. Thankfully they had a proactive neighbor who cared enough to step in.'

The fundamental element in preventing child abuse is education, community outreach and applicable information for everyone in the state. In 2002 Southern Nevada AHEC received funding by the Children's Trust Fund to establish a Nevada chapter of the national organization Prevent Child Abuse America (PCA). In addition to establishing a statewide chapter of PCA, the program's mission is: **To prevent child abuse and neglect in Nevada through early intervention, awareness, and education.** PCA Nevada chapter coordinates statewide child abuse prevention efforts and activities and provides legislative advocacy for child abuse prevention. As part of its ongoing efforts to represent all of Nevada, PCA partner with children's service providers, community organizations, and individuals throughout the state to address the needs of both rural and urban communities. To report child abuse or neglect in Nevada call: 1-800-992-5757 or in Clark County (702) 399-0081; Washoe County (775) 328-2300. For more information on local child abuse prevention programs in Nevada please call Debbie Ruiz at (702)-318-8452.

www.snahec.org

(702) 318-8452 (Fax) 702-318-8463

1094 E. Sahara Las Vegas, NV 89104



AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER OF SOUTHERN NEVADA

www.snahec.org

(702) 318-8452 (Fax) 702-318-8463
1094 E. Sahara Las Vegas, NV 89104