

# Phoenix

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A vocational teacher at a juvenile-detention facility was among four people arrested when authorities raided a home where they say methamphetamine was manufactured. Find out how you can report meth activity. **Inside today**

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# Help is only a phone call away for stressed parents

## Hotline offers behavior advice for younger kids

By Linda Helser

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After the family dog died, well-meaning parents immediately replaced the pet with a new puppy.

But when their 3-year-old son seemed angry and almost aggressive to the new addition, they turned to the Birth to Five Helpline (1-877-705-KIDS) for professional guidance.

"I explained to them that (the) child still missed the

### Birth to Five Helpline

■ A statewide toll-free telephone resource for those seeking in-depth advice and guidance from child development experts.

■ **Call:** 1-877-705-KIDS.

■ **Hours:** 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday.

other dog and needed time to grieve," said Patsy Rethore, an early childhood specialist and senior program manager for the Helpline. "Grieving is a very complex thing for a young child, and I recommended some wonderful books written for young children on death

and dying and suggested they read the books to him."

Behavioral problems, eating and sleeping challenges and developmental issues are all in a day's work for Rethore, who is one of two early childhood specialists who respond to sometimes frantic calls from confused parents, grandparents, babysitters and teachers.

Launched on a full-time, statewide basis in May with startup funding from the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust, the Birth to Five Helpline is the brainchild of the Arizona Institute for Early Childhood Development, which is operated by Southwest Human Development in central Phoenix.

It is Arizona's first comprehensive, toll-free telephone re-

source for those seeking more in-depth advice and guidance.

Within the first six months of operation, the Helpline assisted more than 9,700 callers.

"And even though the volume of calls is increasing, we can take many more," said Laura Chasko, development director for the Helpline. "We want people to call, call, call."

The line is answered from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday. "We take a lot of questions about feeding, tantrums and problems in preschool, like biting," Chasko said. "But if we get something more specialized, we have a whole cadre of professionals we can call in to help, such as registered nurses, mental health counselors, phy-

sicians, disability specialists, physical therapists, speech and language pathologists and early literacy specialists."

Within Maricopa County, Helpline experts can also make home visits.

"With family visits, we can get a better handle on what's going on before providing additional resources," Chasko said. "Those other resources may have fees involved, while others may be free."

Sometimes the Helpline is able to reassure parents they're doing a fine job.

"A lot of parents just get overwhelmed and they get a lot of conflicting advice," Chasko said. "Sometimes it's just nice to have a neutral person to turn to."