

ALPENA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
RESOLUTION #25-21

WHEREAS, an estimated 58,000 children in the U.S. are ordered into unsupervised contact with abusive parents each year, resulting in almost 1000 children in the United States murdered during visitation with an abusive parent since 2008. In Michigan, 39 children have been murdered by a parent since 2008 during divorce or custody disputes, including 6-year-old Rowan Morey-Pols of Caledonia, Michigan in 2024 and 3-year-old Dylan Thebo of Kent County in 2021;

WHEREAS, Rowan's and Dylan's families have been working to increase awareness of child safety issues by promoting Family Court Awareness Month and have been honoring their children's legacy by introducing legislation to improve the safety of missing children in Michigan and helping improve Kent County's response to domestic violence; Rowan's Act was introduced in the Michigan House of Representatives this year by Angela Rigas who represents portions of Allegan, Kent, and Barry counties. This amendment would allow a faster response for Amber Alerts to be issued if Police believe a missing child to be in danger; Kent County, Michigan recognized the need for a specialized Domestic Violence Court, following six domestic violence-related homicides within three months in 2021. This court, staffed by individuals knowledgeable about the intricacies of domestic violence, aims to support victims and families, hold offenders accountable, and prevent further homicides;

WHEREAS, Washtenaw County hopes to improve safety and outcomes for families exposed to domestic violence by having law enforcement change the way it responds to domestic violence calls by using 'Lethality Assessments' in all domestic violence cases;

WHEREAS, the mission of Family Court Awareness Month (FCAM) is to promote judicial education that would include training on domestic violence, child abuse, childhood trauma, coercive control, and post-separation abuse for all professionals involved in family court cases;

WHEREAS, Family Court Awareness Month recognizes the need to incorporate evidence-based research into the court's decisions. This includes the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Study. This research highlights long term effects of exposure to abuse in childhood and emphasizes the need for research-informed and impartial decision-making to protect children's well-being;

WHEREAS, Family Court Awareness Month aims to encourage collaboration among legislators, advocates, professionals, and the community to improve family court practices, ensuring they are guided by evidence-based research and prioritize the safety and best interests of children;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Alpena County Board of Commissioners hereby declare the Month of NOVEMBER 2025 to be FAMILY COURT AWARENESS MONTH.