

Kids Need Schools to Continue Reporting Abuse During COVID-19 Crisis

Empowering teachers, counselors, nutrition staff and others in their role as mandated reporters during the COVID-19 crisis.

Students not being in school creates barriers to reporting abuse

In times of crisis and economic instability, child abuse and neglect rates increase. However, reports of child abuse and neglect have declined since shelter in place guidelines took effect. The ability to speak up for kids' safety is crucial at this time.

To report effectively, explain how the suspected abuse has impacted the child

Absence from virtual learning alone is not considered child abuse or neglect. Educators should follow their school district guidelines for reporting truancy. There must be other suspicion or knowledge present for truancy to be reported to Children and Family Services. Lack of attendance can be a red flag for child abuse but in combination with other signs.

Making a report is asking for help and services

If you reasonably suspect a child is unsafe – report. You do not need proof. You are not making an accusation. You are asking for a professional to help a child and their family.

You may be the only person to act

If something does not look safe, sound safe, or feel safe – report.



Where to Report 24-hours/7days a week

Children and Family Services Hotline

1-877-881-1116

Or

Local Law Enforcement

Helpful Tips for Protecting Children

Continue to let students know you remain a supportive, caring adult in their lives:

- Check in regularly with students and/or caregivers. Provide encouraging messages.
- Ask questions to engage children. Ex: "Give me one word that describes how you feel today?" "How is learning from home different from learning at school?"

Signs of concerns:

- For students with technology/internet access: lack of virtual attendance or homework not completed over a long period of time.
- If you have had no contact at all with a family after many repeated phone calls/messages.
- If a child communicates they feel unsafe, you see a child in a dangerous environment, or you notice a significant change in a child's mood/behavior.

Make an extra effort with children who:

- Have a history of emotional, sexual, physical abuse or neglect, drug use, or discussed/attempted suicide.
- Are responsible for the care of other children or live in a highly stressful family situation with limited support systems.
- Require assistance due to physical, mental, behavioral, or medical disabilities or delays.

Legal Responsibilities and Protections:

- Mandated Reporters with reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect must report it immediately or as soon as possible to the reporting hotline: 1-877-881-1116 or 911 followed in writing within 36 hours on the Suspected Child Abuse Report form BCIA 8572.
- No administrator or supervisor may impede or inhibit any report.
- When you make a report in good faith you are protected against civil/criminal penalty or adverse employment action.

Adapted from Parent Child Abuse Missouri and Missouri KidsFirst.