



Child Abuse Prevention and Identification during COVID-19

Talk Points:

- Times of uncertainty can challenge our ability to remain calm, feel connected, and may force us to question our sense of safety and hope.
- During these times, families may feel overwhelmed and function at higher stress levels than normal.
- COVID-19 stay-at-home orders have removed protective factors for maintaining safety and security for children who would otherwise have been identified as abuse victims.
- Prevention and intervention strategies are no longer effective while under quarantine.
- Not all vulnerable families have access to services provided through technology.
- Essential workers are now, more than ever, depended upon to recognize and identify signs of abuse. This is virtually impossible when the majority of those signs are invisible and there is a lack of daily interaction with these children.
- Due to social-distancing and stay-at-home orders, mandated reporters are not able to set eyes on children who are dependent on outside intervention.

What Can You Do:

- Reports of abuse are at its lowest point in recent history. Listen to your intuition. If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, please report it to the proper authorities.
- Provide support and share resources with adults who may be struggling and have children in the home.
- Seek professional guidance if you suspect abuse but are unsure of what actions to take.

Resources for General Public

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/responding/reporting/how/>

Child Helpline

1-800-422-4453

Resources for Caregivers

Crisis Text Line provides free, 24/7 support via text message. Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a Crisis Counselor.

National Alliance on Mental Illness - Helpline staff are prepared to answer your questions on mental health issues. Contact us Monday-Friday, 10am–6pm ET. 1-800-950-NAMI (6264).

Prevent Child Abuse America - Recognizing Child Abuse: What Parents Should Know

https://nic.unlv.edu/pcan/files/recognizing_abuse.pdf

Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope With the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/outbreak_factsheet_1.pdf



Warning signs of child abuse and neglect*

Warning signs of emotional abuse:

- Excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong
- Shows extremes in behavior (extremely compliant, demanding, passive, aggressive)
- Doesn't seem to be attached to the parent or caregiver
- Acts either inappropriately adult-like or inappropriately infantile

Warning signs of physical abuse:

- Frequent injuries or unexplained bruises, welts, or cuts
- Is always watchful and "on alert," as if waiting for something bad to happen
- Injuries appear to have a pattern such as marks from a hand or belt
- Shies away from touch, flinches at sudden movements, or seems afraid to go home
- Wears inappropriate clothing to cover up injuries, such as long-sleeved shirts on hot days

Warning signs of child neglect:

- Clothes are ill-fitting, filthy, or inappropriate for the weather
- Hygiene is consistently bad (unbathed, matted and unwashed hair, noticeable body odor)
- Untreated illnesses and physical injuries
- Is frequently unsupervised or left alone or allowed to play in unsafe situations

Warning signs of sexual abuse in children:

- Displays knowledge of sexual acts inappropriate for their age, or even seductive behavior
- Makes strong efforts to avoid a specific person, without an obvious reason
- Doesn't want to change clothes in front of others or participate in physical activities
- An STD or pregnancy, especially under the age of 14
- Runs away from home

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Important Statistics on Child Abuse & Neglect

- A 2018 report¹ by the US Department of Health and Human Services found that professionals such as education, medical, and child care personnel accounted **for more than 65% of child abuse and neglect reports** that rose to the level of formal investigation. **Only 6.7% of reports are made by parents.**
- Many children are experiencing a period of social isolation where contact with adults is limited to their parents only. Based on the above referenced study, **over 93% of child abuse and neglect reports are made by someone other than the parent.**
- Many children are currently limited in contact to only parents and other close relatives. Statistics cited on the NCA website² from the US Administration for Children & Families, Child Maltreatment 2014³ indicate that, nearly 40% of all child abuse is at the hands of parents or caretakers, while fully 90% is attributed to someone related to the child.

¹ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cm2018.pdf>

² <https://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/media-room/nca-digital-media-kit/national-statistics-on-child-abuse/>

³ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/child-maltreatment-2014>