

KEEPING KIDS "SAFE IN PLACE" DURING COVID-19

A Guide for Educators

Students Need ALL TEACHERS to Help Keep Them Safe

School personnel are mandated reporters even when not in the school building. Now more than ever, it's important for all educators to acknowledge the *importance of your role as mandated reporters*. For some students, school is their safest place. Without that safe haven and all of you - the people to whom they can turn when they don't feel safe - they may be at higher risk for abuse. **In times of crisis and economic instability, child abuse and neglect increases. However, reports of child abuse and neglect in Colorado are declining dramatically.**

Trust Your Gut

If something does not look safe, sound safe, or feel safe - REPORT IT. Students not being in school creates barriers to reporting abuse. The need to advocate for a child's safety is crucial at this time.

Making a Report Is Asking for HELP

When you report, you are asking for professional help and services for a child and their family. *You do not need proof*. You are not making an accusation.

Legal Responsibilities and Protections

- Mandated reporters MUST report any reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect. *No administrator or supervisor may impede or inhibit a report.*
- When you make a report in good faith you are *protected against civil/criminal penalty* or adverse employment action.

You May Be the Only Person to Act.

If you *reasonably suspect* a child is unsafe - REPORT IT.

Statewide Child Abuse Hotline:
844-CO-4-KIDS
(844-264-5437)

*If a child is in immediate danger
call 911

Helpful Tips for Protecting Students

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

- Check in regularly with students and/or caregivers. Provide encouraging messages.
- Ask questions to engage children. Ex: "Will you give me one word that describes how you feel today?"

Signs a child may not be safe:

- Bruising or injuries on the child.
- Child tells you they feel unsafe, you see a child in dangerous environment.
- Child tells you a friend or sibling is unsafe or something bad happened.
- You notice a significant change in a child's mood/behavior.
- Parents or caregivers arguing or fighting in the background during virtual contact.
- Child reporting not having food or being hungry.
- Child discloses sexual abuse or has advanced sexual knowledge for their age.
- Lack of virtual session attendance/homework not completed over long period of time/no contact with family after repeated phone calls/messages.

Make an extra effort with children who:

- Have a history of emotional, sexual, physical abuse or neglect, drug use or attempted suicide.
- Have a history of domestic violence in the home.
- 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.

