Considerations for Schools in Recognizing Child Abuse During COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to be extra vigilant about keeping our students safe. We need to ensure that students' needs are being met and that we are coming together as a community to support them.

Keeping students safe virtually requires a paradigm shift in how we provide support services to youth and ensure their safety. Listed below are some considerations and guidance to support schools in maintaining the safety of students in a virtual setting during a pandemic. Schools can use the virtual setting to identify, communicate and coordinate services for youth.

- Use technology for virtual check-ins. Staff can serve as a reassuring, reliable presence. Social distancing doesn’t have to mean emotional distancing or social isolation.
- Staff should be alert to signs of distress and abuse, including things they may see or notice during the virtual meeting. Remember school staff are still mandated reporters and need to report any child abuse concerns to child protective services.
- Review district protocol related to mandated child abuse reporting with all school staff.
- Develop a list of resources within your school community and the larger surrounding community. Ensure it is readily available to all school staff.
- Develop a process to share hotline and online resources with youth. Talk with them about child abuse and give them resources about where to find help.
- If a student discloses abuse virtually or shows signs of abuse physically, report it right away.
- Implement a check-in system with students. Identify families most at risk and check in more frequently.
- Share referral options to the Department of Mental Health and other community-based mental health support agencies that address well-being. In rare instances, when parents/caregivers decline critical services for students, this can also be construed as a form of neglect or abuse.
- Link families with other critical community and county resources to support them during this time. Linking families with needed resources may help them cope with stressors and possibly decrease or reduce the risk of child abuse.
- Partner with community organizations, faith-based groups, and elected officials to help coordinate resources and disseminate information to broaden your efforts.
- Use other virtual spaces to share information with parents, such as Facebook and other social media platforms.
- Ensure modes of communication for students and parents with disabilities and special needs are accessible.
- Establish parent online virtual support opportunities such as Virtual Coffee or Tea with Parents. *Focus on parents of students at the elementary level, because younger children are often unable to communicate safety needs.

Child Abuse Hotline and Other Resources
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department of Children and Family Services Child Abuse Hotline</th>
<th>If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, or know of a family that may need additional support or access to resources, please contact DCFS immediately: If you have a non-urgent report to make… you can use the online reporting system, CARES (Child Abuse Reporting Electronic System), if you fall into one of the following categories:  ● school personnel  ● mental health clinicians  ● probation officers  ● coroner’s office  ● law enforcement  ● medical professionals  ● CPS social workers  By using CARES, you no longer have to file a verbal and written report.  <a href="https://mandreptla.org/cars.web/">https://mandreptla.org/cars.web/</a></th>
<th>You may report suspected child abuse and/or neglect by contacting any of the following agencies:  Los Angeles County Child Protection Hotline: 1-800-540-4000  Los Angeles Police Department Juvenile Division/Abused Child Unit: 1-213-486-0570 or your local law enforcement agency  Out of State 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453) or click here for Out-of-State child welfare agencies  TDD [Hearing Impaired]: (800) 272-6699  The Hotline is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.</th>
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<td>Suicide Prevention Hotline or Suicide Prevention Center in Los Angeles</td>
<td>Provides a 24-hour suicide prevention crisis line and uses community volunteers in providing hotline service. The hotline counselors can refer the caller to a therapist in the community.</td>
<td>(877) 727-4747  310) 391-1253</td>
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<td>Suicide Prevention Text line</td>
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<td>741741</td>
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<td>Psychiatric Mobile Response Team (PMRT)</td>
<td>Consist of DMH clinicians designated per Welfare and Institutions Code 5150/ 5585 to perform evaluations for involuntary detention of individuals determined to be at risk of harming themselves or others or who are unable to provide food, clothing, or shelter as a result of a mental disorder.</td>
<td>1-800-854-7771</td>
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<td>Domestic Violence Hotline</td>
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<td>1-800-978-3600</td>
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<td>211 info line</td>
<td>2-1-1 phone line is open 24 hours, 7 days a week, with trained Community Resource Advisors prepared to offer help with any situation, any time. Our community services go far beyond phone referrals – explore the website <a href="https://www.211la.org/">https://www.211la.org/</a></td>
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