

GUIDANCE FOR CHILD CARE, PRE-K & AFTERSCHOOL PROVIDERS: Helping Children & Families Cope During Covid-19

The Family Services Division (FSD) is responsible for making sure children and youth:

- Are safe from abuse,
- Have their basic needs met, and
- Live in safe, supportive and healthy environments.

We do this work in partnership with educators, law enforcement, service providers, courts, family members, foster parents and others. Our work is especially important during the current health crisis. The table below shows the impact this crisis has had on the number of child abuse intakes we receive.

CALLS TO VERMONT'S CHILD PROTECTION LINE

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
March 2019	379	459	467	459	419
March 2020	391	411	192	178	201
April 2019	473	300	370	493	432
April 2020	217	206	185	237	272

We are concerned that child abuse could be on the rise even as calls have gone down. Families are spending extended time together and many are worried — about reduced incomes, lost jobs, the health of family members, housing and other basic needs. This can lead to higher-than-usual levels of tension, anxiety and stress. It's especially concerning since children are not interacting as much, if at all, with the people who would normally identify and report any safety concerns. *At least 83% of the calls we typically get are from mandated reporters; of those, around 30% are from educators.*

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Check in with the parents, caregivers, children and youth you typically interact with — especially those who were at risk before the crisis. Ask how they're doing. Lend an ear. Share a laugh. Find out if they need supports. If so, help connect them to needed resources. This can go a long way towards ensuring child and family wellness.

See page 2 for questions you could ask and things to look for. See page 3 for a list of resources.

QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

- How are you? Are you okay?
- Is now a good time to talk? Is there a better time?
- What's changed for your family since COVID-19 started? What worries you most?
- Are you able to meet your family's needs (e.g., food, housing, income, health care, heat)?
- Do you have people who can help? Are you able to connect with them right now?
- Do you need help finding resources?

QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK CHILDREN (DEPENDING ON AGE & DEVELOPMENT)

- How are things going at home? Are you feeling okay? Are you worried about anything?
- What do you like most about staying at home? What do you like least?
- What's the best part of your day? What's the hardest?
- Who takes care of you? Who makes sure you have all the things you need?
- Who do you like talking to? Do you have a way to talk to them right now?
- How is everyone getting along? Are you worried about anyone? Why?
- Can you describe your typical day (e.g., what you eat, who makes the food, where you play, who comes to your home)?
- Open-ended follow up questions: Tell me more about that. . . What happened next?

THINGS TO PAY ATTENTION TO

- A child/caregiver with concerning injuries or unexplained bruises, welts, or cuts.
- A child who is looking or behaving much differently than you would expect for them.
- A caregiver who appears to be under the influence and unable to care for a child.
- Evidence of illicit substance use in the home (e.g., drug paraphernalia) or other hazards that could lead to child injury/illness (e.g., weapons in reach, extremely unsanitary conditions).
- If you are repeatedly unable to get in touch with the family — unrelated to barriers like internet, phone access — and are seriously worried for their safety (e.g. prior safety concerns due to domestic violence, substance abuse or child abuse).

RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN VERMONT

CHILD SAFETY

- If a child raises a concern, consider whether you can safely raise the issue with the parent.
 - If you see, hear or learn anything during your interactions that makes you concerned about a child's safety, call the Child Protection Line at 1-800-649-5285 (24/7) to make a report.
 - If you have any concerns that a child or caregiver is in immediate danger, call 911. Then call 1-800-649-5285 to make a report.
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GENERAL SUPPORT & REFERRAL

Dial 2-1-1 Toll Free From Anywhere in Vermont (24/7): Trained staff can help you find resources across the state. This includes food, fuel, emergency assistance, health care, housing, mental health services and more. <https://www.vermont211.org/>

Resources for families, by topic: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/resources/topic>

Agency of Human Services, Family Support & Safety Services: safefamilies.vermont.gov

FINANCIAL & OTHER HELP

Benefits Available through DCF: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits>

Benefits Available from Other Organizations: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits-other>

Food Access in Vermont: Information on where to get emergency food services and who to contact if you need help. From 3SquaresVT, food shelves in Vermont, WIC and more.

<https://agriculture.vermont.gov/covid-19-information/food-access>

MENTAL HEALTH

The Department of Mental Health has resources on taking care of our mental health during COVID19: <https://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/Corona-MH>

Factsheets:

- [Staying Mentally Healthy During Self-Isolation or Quarantine](#)
 - [Stress and Your Mental Health](#)
 - [Engaging Health](#)
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THANK YOU FOR DOING YOUR PART TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES! (5/12/20)