

GUIDANCE FOR TEACHERS:

Helping Children & Families Cope During Covid-19 (5/12/20)

Our 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 a list of questions you could ask. See page 3 for a list of resources.

QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

- Is now a good time to talk? Is there a better time?
- How are you? Are you okay? Are you safe? Do you need anything?
- Who are your supports? Are you able to connect with them right now?
- 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, employment, safety, education, health care, heat, internet, etc.)?
- Do you need help finding resources?

QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK CHILDREN

- How is virtual learning working for you? How is it affecting you? Your family? Do you need help with anything?
- How are things going at home? Are you feeling okay? Worried about anything?
- What do you like most about staying at home? What do you like least? Why?
- What is the best part of your day? What's the hardest?
- Who is taking care of you? Who makes sure you have everything you need?
- Who do you feel safe talking to? Do you have a way to talk to them right now?
- Do you have all the things you need right now?
- What did you have to eat for breakfast today? Yesterday?
- What are the rules in your home? What happens when someone breaks a rule?
- How is everyone getting along? Is anyone having a hard time? 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)?
- To follow up on something, ask open-ended questions: Tell me more about that. . . What happened next? What is happening right now?

LEARN MORE ABOUT TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT COVID-19:

- Resources for Helping Kids and Parents Cope Amidst COVID-19. From the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry:
https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Resource_Libraries/covid-19/resources_helping_kids_parents_cope.aspx

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

Vermont 2-1-1: Trained staff are available 24/7. They can help people find resources across the state. This includes things like food, fuel, emergency assistance, health care, housing, mental health services and more. Dial 2-1-1 toll free from anywhere in Vermont or search their online resource directory at <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 VERMONT'S CHILDREN AND FAMILIES!