

Guidance for Helpers in a Virtual Environment

Recognize the Signs of Child Abuse During the COVID-19 Pandemic



Questions to ask children:

- How are you?
- How are things going at home for you and your family?
- What is a typical day at your house?
- Are you worried about anyone or anything?
- How is school going?
- What is the best and the hardest part of your day?
- Who do you feel safe talking to if you are worried?
- Do you have a way to talk to them now?
- How is everyone getting along?

Follow up and ask open-ended questions

- Tell me more about that.
- What happened next?

We need to step up

The COVID-19 pandemic, wildfires and civil unrest create many challenges for families experiencing new and unfamiliar stress. Everyone working with children virtually can be the eyes and ears for kids to help them stay safe. This includes family members, neighbors, essential workers, individuals serving families in grocery stores and pharmacies and delivering goods to homes, school professionals and others.

By supporting children and families, we can reduce stress and isolation, which can lead to child abuse. Support comes from connection and relationship.

During this time of social distancing, the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS), Child Welfare Division encourages Oregonians to check in with families and continue to engage with child welfare when appropriate.

Ways to connect with and support children and their families

Engage regularly

Reach out and let the child or their caregiver know they are not alone. Offer judgment-free support and listening. Let them know how to contact you and when you plan to meet, even if virtually. People thrive on knowing what to expect. This is particularly important now with the uncertainty in our world and at home.

Observe

Pay attention to the environment during video chats. Notice any changes in child or adult behaviors, including lack of engagement or contact with you.

The Oregon Child Abuse Hotline wants to hear your questions, comments and training needs. **Feedback.**
OregonChildAbuseHotline@dhsoha.state.or.us

When you suspect child abuse, contact the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline at 1-855-503-7233 (SAFE)

The ODHS Child Safety website provides resources to support families while also providing critical information for child welfare frequently asked questions. This website is a resource for mandatory reporters and members of the community who want to make a difference for Oregon's children and families: <https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/CHILDREN/CHILD-ABUSE/Pages/index.aspx>

Connect to resources

Ask about needs and how to help meet them. You can connect families to resources in their community such as food banks (you can call 211 to learn about local resources).

Be curious

Ask children and caregivers questions about how they are doing, what is going well and what concerns them about their current circumstances.

Use the influence of your relationship

If you are concerned about someone and you have a strong or positive relationship with them, call and talk about your observations and concerns. Use this time as a chance for real talk. Support them in getting help if they need it. This may be uncomfortable, but we can all step up and reach out to make a difference.

Send texts or other messages of care and encouragement

Provide simple, affirming messages of support to let them know they are not alone.

Take care of yourself while taking care of others

Knowing or suspecting that a child may be in danger can be taxing and stressful. Make sure to ask for and receive personal and professional support.

Interrupt or intervene

Use your professional resources and supports to problem solve solutions when you have concerns about a child.

You can get this document in other languages, large print, braille or a format you prefer. Please contact **Feedback.**
OregonChildAbuseHotline@dhosha.state.or.us