

# Recognizing, Reporting and Responding to Child Abuse from a Distance

COVID-19 has impacted the lives of children and their families around the world. Online schooling and physical distancing has significantly altered children's support networks. Without the natural supports that school communities provide, Alberta's vulnerable children are at greater risk of abuse and neglect.

School staff often play a key role in recognizing and responding to the signs of child abuse. Now, without seeing their students, they have less opportunity to identify the signs of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, neglect, or children witnessing domestic violence. At-risk children who have gone off the grid – because of online schooling, extra-curricular activities cancelled, and doctor or dentist appointments postponed – are a concern for all of us.

**“We ask that you take special consideration of the children and families in your classes that may need additional supports or more frequent check-ins to ensure they are safe, and their needs are being met,”**

Minister of Education, Adriana LaGrange

**We must work together to continue to provide the right types of support to vulnerable children and their families and remain alert to any indicators children may be unsafe at home.**

- » Have a plan in place for keeping tabs on children who were on the school's radar.
- » Make phone calls to students and families to check-in. Inability to connect with child (without reason) may be cause for concern.
- » Create space for student voice – videos, Zoom, Google Classroom.
- » Send messages to students, reminding them you are there for them.
- » Have access to demographic information, addresses, phone numbers
- » Provide hopeful and optimistic messaging.
- » Ask open-ended questions when checking in with students:
  - » What is it like being at home?
  - » What are some sad things that happened this week?
- » Provide words of support:
  - » We are in this together. You are not alone.
  - » I want to make sure you are safe.
- » Adapting services to best support students and families.
- » Monitor for signs of distress and refer to necessary supports.

## Signs of Abuse and Neglect:

Identifying abuse can be difficult to detect on messaging apps, phone calls or video conferences. Therefore, we must be extremely vigilant at looking for signs of potential abuse or neglect. Signs like the ones below MAY signal the presence of child abuse:

- » Unexplained marks or bruises
- » Basic needs or age-appropriate care not provided
- » Neglect; changes in physical appearance
- » Seems frightened of parents
- » Reports an injury caused by parent or caregiver
- » Changes in mental health; shows anxiety, depression, fear, suicidal ideation, withdrawn
- » Sending/posting concerning messages; writing about negative experiences
- » Indicators of domestic violence; aggression, shouting, items being broken

For a comprehensive list of behaviors and warning signs, please refer to <https://www.alberta.ca/what-is-child-abuse-neglect-and-sexual-exploitation.aspx>



calgary & area child advocacy centre

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## Duty to Report

If you suspect that a child is unsafe or at risk, you must report it. Reach out to appropriate services if you have a gut feeling something is not right. We can feel our “Spidey” senses tingling, even from a distance.

Children’s services case workers are ready and able to assess and investigate possible abuse, effects of domestic violence and/or neglect of a child. They remain available to follow-up on concerns and work with families. If you believe a child is in immediate danger, CALL 911.

**IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE, CALL:  
CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE 1-800-387-5437  
SOUTHERN ALBERTA CHILD INTERVENTION  
SERVICES 403-297-2995**

While the fight against COVID-19 is focused on hygiene and health, the Calgary and Area Child Advocacy Centre is working with our partners to protect vulnerable children from the impact of child abuse and neglect.

***Thank you, educators, for the incredible work you are doing to support your students and keep them safe.***

## Checking in with parents

Check-in with parents and have a listening ear. As a school community, develop a resource list for parents in need of support.

Refer to the Alberta Health Services - Help in Tough Times website. This is an excellent resource that provides information on a variety of topics including healthcare services and community/social resources.

When checking in with parents, be aware of warning signs that MAY indicate they are at risk of maltreating their child and may need support:

- » Shows little concern for their child
- » Sees child as completely bad, worthless, or a burden
- » Appears indifferent or uninterested toward the child
- » Seems unconcerned or depressed
- » Behaves unreasonably or in a bizarre manner
- » Abusing drugs or alcohol
- » Frequently blames, belittles, or berates child

## Resources

Child Abuse Hotline	1-800-387-5437	
Southern Alberta Child Intervention Services	403-297-2995	
Kids Help Phone	1-800-668-6868	
Family Violence Information Line	310-1818	
Alberta Provincial Abuse Helpline	1-855-443-5722	
Community and Social Services Help Line	211	Texting available to 211
Health Link	811	
Access Mental Health	403-943-1500	
Mental Health Helpline	1-877-303-2642	
Distress Centre	403-266-4357	
AHS COVID 19 HOPE		Text COVID19HOPE to 393939 to subscribe
Calgary Counselling Centre	403-691-5991	<a href="https://calgarycounselling.com/counselling">https://calgarycounselling.com/counselling</a>
Catholic Family Services	403-205-5295	intake@cfs-ab.org
Rapid Assess Counselling	403-233-2360	
Eastside Family Centre	403-299-9696	etherapy@woodshomes.ca
Wood’s Crisis Response Team	403-299-9699	Text 587-315-5000 Live Chat – iCarol
Calgary and Area Child Advocacy Centre		<a href="https://calgarycac.ca/">https://calgarycac.ca/</a>  A School's Role in Keeping Kids Safe <a href="https://calgarycac.ca/education/suspectabuse/">https://calgarycac.ca/education/suspectabuse/</a>
Government of Alberta		<a href="https://www.alberta.ca/what-is-child-abuse-neglect-and-sexual-exploitation.aspx">https://www.alberta.ca/what-is-child-abuse-neglect-and-sexual-exploitation.aspx</a>
Alberta Health Services - Help in Tough Times		<a href="https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/amh/Page16759.aspx">https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/amh/Page16759.aspx</a>
The Calgary Food Bank	403-253-2059	<a href="https://www.calgaryfoodbank.com/">https://www.calgaryfoodbank.com/</a>
Calgary Women’s Emergency Shelter	403-234-7233	
YW Sheriff King Home (Domestic Violence Shelter)	403-266-0707	
Awo Taan Healing Lodge (emergency women’s shelter)	403-531-1972	