

Kids Need Schools to Continue Reporting Abuse During COVID-19 Crisis



Empowering teachers, counselors, bus drivers and nutrition staff to remain vigilant in their roles as mandated reporters during the COVID-19 Crisis

Students Not Being in School Creates Barriers to Reporting Abuse

In times of crisis and economic instability, child abuse and neglect rates increase. However, reports of child abuse and neglect in Virginia have declined dramatically.

To Report Effectively, Explain how the Suspected Abuse has Impacted the Child

Example: (Child) has not engaged in virtual classroom in 10 days, but has internet access. I have made 5 failed attempts to contact parents. Concerned that (child's) lack of participation is negatively impacting his/her education. (Child) experienced physical abuse one year ago.

Making a Report is Asking for Help and Services

If you reasonably suspect a child is unsafe – make a report. You do not need proof. You are not making an accusation. You are asking for a professional to help a child and their family.

You May Be the Only Person to Act

If something does not look safe, sound safe or feel safe – make a report.

Helpful Tips for Protecting Children

Continue to let students know you remain a supportive, caring adult in their lives:

- Check in regularly with students and/or caregivers.
- Provide encouraging messages.
- Ask questions to engage children. Ex: "Give me one word that describes how you feel today?" "How is learning from home different from learning at school?"

Signs of Concern:

- For students with technology/internet access: lack of virtual attendance or homework not completed over a long period of time.
- If you have had no contact at all with a family after many repeated phone calls/messages.
- If a child communicates that they feel unsafe, you see a child in a dangerous environment or you notice a significant change in a child's mood/behavior.

Make an extra effort with children who:

- Have a history of emotional, sexual, physical abuse or neglect, drug use or discussed/attempted suicide.
- Are responsible for the care of other children or live in a highly stressful family situation with limited support systems.
- Require assistance due to physical, mental, behavioral or medical disabilities or delays.

Legal Responsibilities and Protections:

- School personnel are mandated reporters. If you have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, you must directly report it immediately to the hotline or local agency.
- No administrator or supervisor may impede or inhibit any report.
- When you make a report in good faith you are protected against civil/criminal penalty or adverse employment action.

Where to Report
24 Hour/7 Days a week
Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline
(800) 552-7096
Or Bedford DSS Monday-Friday 8:30-5
(540)586-7750 ext. 2276
If a child is in immediate danger, call 911

*Bedford County
Department of Social Services*