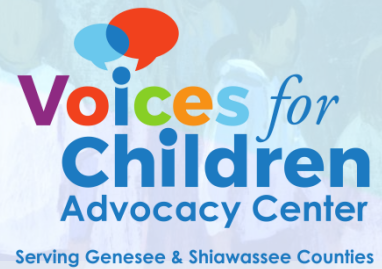


# Kids Need Schools to Continue Reporting Abuse During COVID-19 Crisis



Empowering teachers, counselors, bus drivers, afterschool professionals and nutrition staff in their role as mandated reporters during the COVID-19 crisis.

## Students Not Being at 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 Michigan have declined. The ability to speak up for kids' safety is crucial at this time. You have had your kids in your classroom and school since September 2019 which has allowed you to know the children in your class.

## To Report Well, Explain how the Suspected Abuse is Impacting the Child

**Example 1:** (Child) has not engaged in the virtual classroom in 10 days, but their household has internet access. I have made 5 failed attempts to contact (child's) parents. I am concerned that (child's) lack of participation is negatively impacting their education. (Child) experienced physical abuse one year ago.

**Example 2:** (Child) often came to school hungry. I am concerned about their access to food at home. The last time we talked to (Child) on the phone while they were at home for social distancing, they said they had not eaten breakfast or lunch.

## Making a Report is Asking for Help and Services

If you reasonably suspect a child is unsafe – 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 during this time.

## You May be the Only Person to Act

If something does not look safe, sound safe, or feel safe; Report.

## Open-ended Questions to Ask

- How have you been feeling? What do you need?
- What did you have for (last mealtime)?
- What is the best thing that has happened this week?
- Has anything happened this week that you didn't like?
- Is there anything else you want to tell me/I should know?

### Where to Report

24-hours/ 7 days a week  
Child Abuse/ Neglect Hotline  
1-855-444-3911

[Make an online report.](#)  
[Learn How Here.](#)

## Helpful Tips for Protecting Children

### Continue to let the child(ren) know you remain a supportive, caring adult in their lives:

- Check in regularly with students and/ or their caregivers. Provide encouraging messages. Remind them they can email you anytime.
- Consider having students keep a class journal that is shared with you.
- 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 Concerns:

- 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 says they feel unsafe, if you see a child in a dangerous environment, if you notice a significant change in a child's mood/ behavior.
- While virtually present in your student's home, observe their surroundings. Ex. Play scavenger hunt where you ask the child to bring a piece of fruit, a pillow, or their favorite toy to the session.

### 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/no support systems.
- Require assistance because of 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 **1-855-444-3911**.
- You can have law enforcement provide wellness checks as well if you believe a child is at risk for additional harm.
- Owosso Public Safety: (989) 725-0580
- Shiawassee County Sheriff's Office: (989) 743-2297

[Free child abuse or neglect reporting trainings at MDHHS.](#) For more information visit [Voices for Children's website.](#)

[Adapted from Kids First Missouri & Prevent Child Abuse Missouri's Document Resource](#)