



COVID-19

New Jersey Resource Guide

**TO KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE DURING
SOCIAL DISTANCING**

Tips and resources for recognizing
signs of child abuse in an environment
of social distancing and virtual
interactions

njcainc.org



The Covid-19 pandemic has created far-reaching challenges and risks. As social distancing measures continue, we are all facing multiple new stresses, including physical and psychological health risks, school and business closures, family confinement, isolation and economic instability. Through all of that, children are particularly vulnerable. In times of crisis and instability, child abuse and neglect rates increase. Now, with social distancing measures in place, children are not going to school, where signs of abuse are most often recognized – and the “protective eyes” on children exist almost exclusively in a virtual environment. This means that teachers, therapists and other child service providers, extended family, and friends who have contact with children need to find ways to support children and look out for their well-being through virtual interactions.

One key to helping keep children safe is by identifying and supporting families who may already have been struggling with child maltreatment, domestic violence, substance use or other issues that may be exacerbated with the additional stressors of the pandemic. These families would benefit from proactive check-ins and information on available resources and places to turn for help.

All families, however, are subject to extra stressors in the current environment, creating a situation where children may be at risk who were not at risk before. That is why all of us can reach out by phone, text, or video call to provide support and look out for the well-being of children and families.

Some ways to connect with children and families during this time of social distancing include:

- Connect with children and their caregivers regularly. Let them know how you can be contacted and when you plan to connect again.
- Be curious and ask open-ended questions of children and caregivers about how they are doing, what is going well, and what their concerns or worries are.
- Listen to children, let them share their feelings and experiences, and empathize.
- During video chats, take note of the environment, to changes or concerning aspects in child or adult behaviors, and to situations where you are not able to connect despite your best efforts.
- Suggest resources and refer families to more support when needed.
- If you see something that causes you concern about the possibility of child abuse or neglect, report it to the child abuse hotline (1-877-NJ-ABUSE). You do not need proof. By calling, you are not making an accusation; you are reaching out to professionals to help a child and their family.

Resources and Infographs on Keeping Children Safe

The following pages contain information on recognizing the signs of child abuse while social distancing, as well as information and resources for families. We encourage you to share these pages with others who have contact with children in this socially distant environment, as well as parents and caregivers who may need additional help.

Many additional links and resources for parents and caregivers, educators, and child welfare professionals can be found at <https://njcainc.org/community/covid-19-resources-and-information/>.



Looking Out For Kids During Social Distancing

To learn about a child's well-being, instead of asking "How are you?" ask:

- What do you like most/least about staying at home, and why?
- Are you worried about anything?
- How is everyone getting along?
- What things do you like to do at home? What things don't you like to do?
- What is a typical day like at home?
- What did you have for dinner last night?
- What is the best part of your day? What is the hardest part?
- Do you have everything you need at home?
- Who are the people you can talk to when you are having a problem or are worried about something?

Recognizing Signs of Child Abuse

when connecting with kids during social distancing

YOU MIGHT SEE...

- Hypervigilance of their surroundings
- Recoiling or bracing from a hand
- Extreme changes in grooming
- Injuries at different stages of healing, patterned bruises such as from an object, or other injuries that don't sound plausible as accidents
- Rapid weight loss or frail appearance
- Child not smiling or speaking
- An adult hovering or showing intimidating behaviors
- An adult engaging in harsh physical discipline
- Child attempts to hide bruises with clothing or dim light
- After continuously video chatting in prior interactions, the child switches to a headshot or emoji

YOU MIGHT HEAR...

- An explanation of bruises that is not consistent with abuse rather than accidents
- A parent or caregiver shouting insults, or chaotic fighting and screaming in the background
- A parent or caregiver using abusive language toward the child and/or other children in the home
- Child indicates that they are scared or "don't want to be at home"

IF YOU SEE OR SUSPECT CHILD ABUSE, REPORT IT IMMEDIATELY. YOU MAY BE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN SEE THE SIGNS. YOU DO NOT NEED PROOF.



1-877-NJ-ABUSE

RECOGNIZING AND REPORTING CHILD ABUSE DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

A Guide for Connecting With Kids While Social Distancing

Teachers, therapists, and other providers who are working with kids remotely - kids need you to watch for signs of abuse and neglect and make reports!

DURING A CRISIS SUCH AS THIS, ABUSE INCREASES BUT REPORTING DECREASES

In times of stress and instability, abuse and neglect increase, while reports decrease due to the lack of interaction with safe adults outside the home.

That's why it's crucial for teachers, therapists, and others who are currently interacting with children through socially distant means to look out for their safety.



DO DAILY CHECK-INS

Establish a routine of checking in with students and clients about how life is going at home.



ASK WHAT THEY NEED

Establish a routine of checking in with students and clients about how life is going at home.



GIVE OPTIONS TO CONTACT YOU

Provide alternate options for how children can reach you outside of scheduled virtual visits, such as email or a social media messenger. (Giving out personal cell phone numbers is generally not recommended.)

It's especially important to keep an eye on kids who are at greatest risk.



HISTORY OF ABUSE

Record of physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect, drug use, or suicidal talk or attempts.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

History of domestic violence in the home.



INSUFFICIENT SUPPORT

Child takes care of other children or lives in a highly stressful home situation without support.



SPECIAL NEEDS

Child has special needs due to illness, disabilities or delays.

COVID-19 FAMILY FACT SHEET

COVID-19

- To speak with a health care professional, call 1-800-962-1253 and for general information and resources for basic needs, dial 211.
- [NJ COVID-19 related information](#)
- [Established Coronavirus Test Sites in NJ](#) are only for people who are showing symptoms of the virus currently.
- Take this [self-assessment test](#) to see if you qualify.
- What to do if you [test positive](#) for COVID-19; What to do if you [test negative](#) for COVID-19

Healthcare

- [New Jersey's Federally Qualified Health Centers](#) (FQHCs) deliver high quality health care to all people regardless of their ability to pay.
- [NJ FamilyCare](#) is the state's low or no cost health insurance program.
- [Hotline for Diabetes Emergency Kit](#) - Anyone needing an emergency backup kit can apply to receive one by calling 973-849-5234.

Mortgage/Utilities

- [90-Day Grace Period for Mortgage Payments](#) for borrowers economically impacted by COVID-19.
- [Utilities](#): As of March 13, all of New Jersey's public gas and electric companies have voluntarily suspended service shutoff. If you have problems, call (800)-624-0241 between the hours of 9 am to 4 pm.
- [Cable/Internet](#): Numerous companies have signed up for the Keep America Connected Pledge, providing either free or at low cost internet services.

Basic Needs

- [Applying for assistance](#) with programs like SNAP, NJ FamilyCare and more.
- The [DCAid website](#) will allow you to see if you are eligible for the NJ housing assistance programs.
- [Education](#) - All schools remain closed in our state. This situation will be reassessed on April 17, 2020.
- [NJ SNAP](#) - Individuals who receive NJ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (NJ SNAP) benefits should have received an extra benefit payment in March. Benefits will be higher in April to help address critical food needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [Food Pantries](#)
- [Taxes](#) - The tax filing deadline for federal and state taxes has been extended to July 15, 2020.
- [Emergency Child Care Centers and Subsidy](#) - To locate a [Child Care](#) Center and find out about the [Subsidy](#) available in support of NJ essential workers.

Employment

- Learn about [who is hiring](#) in your community.
- Find out if New Jersey's comprehensive [Earned Sick Leave](#), [Temporary Disability](#) and [Family Leave Insurance](#) protect your job during COVID-19.
- Did you lose your job due to the pandemic? [File for unemployment insurance](#).



COVID-19 CRISIS NJ CRISIS RESOURCES



CRISIS TEXT LINE

TEXT NJ TO 741741

24 HOURS A DAY - 7 DAYS A WEEK

Connect with a crisis counselor, trained in active listening and collaborative problem solving, helping to defuse a "hot" moment or crisis.



FAMILY HELPLINE

1-800-THE-KIDS (843-5437)

If you're feeling stressed out, call to speak to a trained volunteer of Parents Anonymous who can provide support and refer you to resources in your community.



2ND FLOOR YOUTH HELPLINE

1-888-222-2228

A youth helpline serving all youth and young adults in NJ. Youth who call are assisted in their daily life challenges by professional staff and trained volunteers. Anonymity and confidentiality are assured except in life-threatening situations.



MOM2MOM

1-877-914-MOM2 (914-6662)

24 HOURS A DAY - 7 DAYS A WEEK

The Mom2Mom helpline offers 24/7 peer support to mothers of children with special needs.