



## Virtual Child Safety Tip Sheet for Educators

Thank you for all you are doing for Texas students during these unprecedented times. Our schools continue to play an important role in ensuring the safety of children. As you engage with your students, please consider these factors, as some signs of maltreatment that you have been trained to notice may still be present, even virtually.

- Is the child frequently alone in the residence when you are working/checking with them? Or are they being made to be responsible for other children in the home?
- Does the parent/caregiver appear overly stressed or frightened?
- Have you noticed a significant change in the child's mood or behavior?
- Has the child eaten today?

If you do have reason to believe that a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect, you **MUST** make a report. Make reports to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services at 1-800-252-5400 or the [Texas Abuse Hotline website](#) for non-emergency reports.

If child abuse and/or neglect is not of concern, there are things you can do to engage and support children and their families:

- Share online resources like the [Help and Hope website](#) with parents and caregivers.
- Connect the parent/caregiver with the [Family and Youth Success Program](#) (formerly known as the STAR program) to get immediate support 24/7.
- The Texas Youth Helpline which provides support, advocacy, and resources to youth and families 24/7. Call/Text the Texas Youth Helpline at 1-800-989-6884. Chat is available at the [Texas Youth Helpline website](#).
- We are also aware that the current shelter in place orders can increase the risks for survivors of domestic violence and their children and restrict their ability to reach out for help. The National Domestic Violence Hotline provides support to survivors 24/7 and can be reached at 1-800-799-7233 (1-800-799-7233 for TTY). If someone cannot safely speak they can log onto the [National Domestic Violence Hotline website](#) or text LOVEIS to 2252.

## More Tips

- You can check on a family indirectly by asking about their pets, too. If they do have a pet engage the child in a conversation about their pet to determine its welfare. We know there is a shared link with pet abuse, child abuse, and Domestic Violence. A child or adult may not be willing to talk about their own welfare, but may give an indication about a pet, and you could offer support if there is a concern.
- Try to spend a little extra time with children whom you know to have challenges (physical, emotional, developmental), or, perhaps a child that has a history of being maltreated or is living in a neighborhood that is experiencing violence.
- Is it safe to develop a codeword or phrase with the child, so that if they say that word or phrase you will know there is an issue? If so, consider this as a communication method.
- Write the child a letter or an encouraging message, and include a self-addressed stamped envelope, in case they would like to write back. Some children may never have received a letter before!
- You are not alone! School staff can offer each other support by checking in regularly. Consider a phone tree to support and share ideas.

This Fact Sheet was adapted from the Indiana Department of Child Services, the Indiana Department of Education, and Missouri Kids First and Prevent Child Abuse—The Villages Child Safety Tip Sheet.