

Kids Need Everyone to Continue Reporting Abuse during COVID-19 Crisis

Empowering all people who interact with kids to be reporters.

#ElkhartCounty

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 Elkhart County have declined by more than 50% since the COVID-19 crisis began. The ability to speak up for kids' safety is crucial at this time.

To Report Effectively, Explain Why You Are Concerned and How the Child Is Impacted

Example: (Child under 18) has not joined the virtual classroom in 10 days but does have internet access. I have tried 5 times to contact the parents with no response. I am concerned that (child under 18)'s lack of participation is negatively impacting his/her/their education. (Child under 18) was physically abused one year ago.

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.

You May Be the Only Person to Act

If something does not look safe, sound safe or feel safe—report.

Where to Report

24 hours a day / 7 days a week

Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline

1-800-800-5556

If you do not have access to a telephone, the local DCS office will help you to make a report. The Elkhart County office is located at 1659 Mishawaka Street, Elkhart, IN 46514.

Helpful Tips for Protecting Children

Continue to let kids know you are a supportive, caring adult in their lives:

- Check in regularly with kids and/or caregivers. Provide encouraging messages.
- Ask questions to engage children.

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 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:

- Indiana is a mandatory reporting state; anyone who suspects a child has been neglected or abused must by state law make a report.
- State law requires DCS to protect the identity of those reporting abuse or neglect allegations.

Adapted from [flyer](#) by Prevent Child Abuse Missouri and Missouri KidsFirst

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