
Recognize the Signs of Child Abuse and Neglect During the COVID-19 Pandemic

North Dakota families are experiencing a new and unfamiliar stress. While staying home to protect their families' health, they are also facing financial stress, changes to routines, new roles and responsibilities, and physical distancing from those who provide them with comfort and support. In these trying times, ALL OF US can reach out, provide SUPPORT and ensure children and families have what they need to ensure family WELL-BEING. By supporting children and families, we can reduce stress and isolation, which can lead to child maltreatment.

Ways to Connect and Help Children and Families from a Distance:

- Engage with children and their caregivers regularly, let them know how you can be contacted and when you plan to meet, even if virtually. Children thrive on knowing what to expect, and this is particularly important now when surrounded by uncertainty in our world and at home.
- Ensure the ability to have conversations in private when talking to children and families.
- Be curious and ask questions of children and caregivers about how they are doing, what is going well, and what concerns them about their current environment.
- Listen to children, let them share their experiences and frustrations, empathize, sharing stories leads to an understanding that we are all learning and living a "new normal."
- Pay attention to the environment during video chats, to changes in child or adult behaviors, and to families with whom you are unable to engage or make contact.
- Suggest resources and refer families to more support when needed.

Questions to Ask Children

* How are you, how are things going at home for you and your family? * What is a typical day at your house? * Are you feeling okay? * Are you worried about anything? * How is school going? * What do you like most/least about staying at home and why? * What is the best/hardest part of your day? * What did you have for supper last night? * If you were stranded on an island what would you need, do you have those items now? * Who do you feel safe talking to if you are worried and do you have a way to talk to them now? * How is everyone getting along?

Follow up and ask open-ended questions:
Tell me more about that. What happened next? ...

TYPES OF CHILD MALTREATMENT:

Neglect

- ✓ Child is exposed to controlled substances, drug paraphernalia, or has access to unsafe items in the home.
- ✓ Child is not being supervised adequately for their age and developmental ability.
- ✓ Child's primary needs are not being met
- ✓ Caregiver fails to protect a child from harm or threat of harm

Physical Abuse

- ✓ Child has bruising, welts, burns, bite marks, broken bones or other injuries that are not explained, appear to be inflicted, or are suspicious.
- ✓ Child may report having pain caused by parental behavior, though have no obvious signs of injury.
- ✓ Child may appear to be afraid of caregiver(s) and flinch when around them.

Sexual Abuse

- ✓ Child may describe being sexually touched by a parent, caregiver, or other person in the home.
- ✓ Child may demonstrate unusual sexual knowledge or behavior for their age.

Recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect during the COVID-19 pandemic:

Aggressive or repeated shouting

Hearing hitting or things being broken

Children crying for long periods of time

You observe safety hazards such as unsecured weapons within children's reach, drugs, unsanitary conditions

Caregiver appears intoxicated and unable to provide care

A child looks or behaves very differently than what is typical for them or would be reasonably expected

Children looking dirty or not changing their clothes

Children appear withdrawn or depressed



Photos courtesy of North Dakota Tourism

TYPES OF CHILD MALTREATMENT:

Psychological Maltreatment

- ✓ Caregiver is known or heard to repeatedly blame, belittle, or berate the child.
- ✓ Child may appear withdrawn, sad, or emotionally unattached to caregivers.
- ✓ Child is aware of and exposed to domestic violence incidents between caregivers.
- ✓ Child is exposed to pornographic material or sexual acts.
- ✓ Child expresses fear and describes reasonable threats to their safety in connection with the acts or inactions of their caregiver.

SUPPORTING THE MOST VULNERABLE: INFANTS AND TODDLERS

Very young children are particularly vulnerable as they are dependent on their caregiver and are unable to share how they are feeling.

- ✓ **Check in with parents** to see if they are receiving the support they need. We all in need additional support right now, especially new parents.
- ✓ **Ask Questions and Listen**
*What did you and baby do today? *Are you able to connect with supports? *How are you managing physical distancing, work, childcare, etc.?

IMPORTANT: Please obtain as much information as possible regarding any concerns, such as **WHEN/WHERE** an incident occurred, **HOW** something made the child feel, or **WHAT** injuries look like (size, shape, location). Ask open-ended follow-up questions to clarify information.

ANYONE can report suspected child abuse/neglect. Mandated Reporters are required by law to report suspicions of abuse or neglect. It is NOT necessary for a reporter to first verify that the abuse or neglect has occurred.

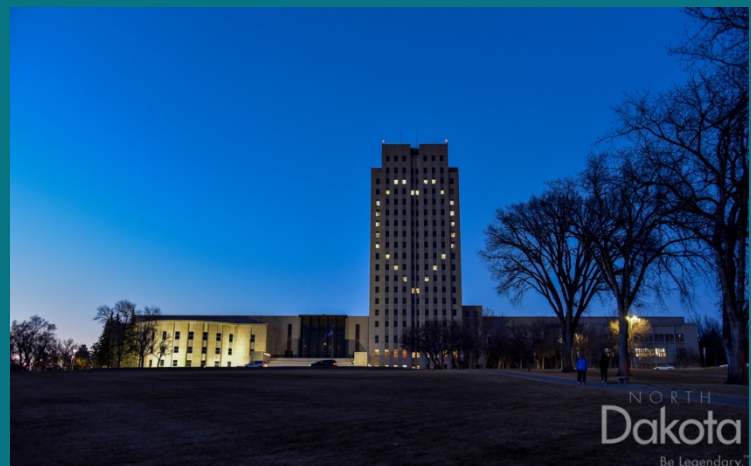


If you suspect a **child is in immediate danger, call 911** or your local law enforcement.



Reports of suspected child abuse and neglect are received by Human Service Zones (formerly County Social Services) where the child is physically present.

Contact information for **Human Service Zone offices:**
www.nd.gov/dhs/locations/countysocialserv/



Together we share the responsibility
to support child safety and well-being.