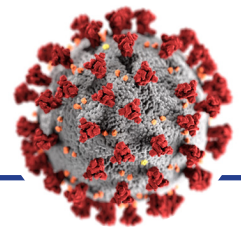


IMPACT OF COVID Virus on CHILD ABUSE

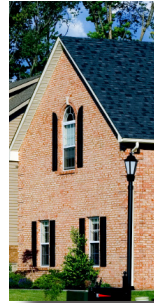
Considerations for Student Safety & Support



For Some Students:

- home is not a safe and supportive environment.
- may face neglect or abuse as a result of being in close proximity to caregivers for extended periods of time (without physical interaction with their service providers or schools.)
- the economic strain of the pandemic and mental/emotional strain can lead to an increase in violence in the home, including domestic violence and child sexual abuse
- they have different caregivers.
 - Grandmom is high risk for infection, so teen neighbor is watching them sometimes..
 - Mom and/or Dad may be essential workers, so Uncle Bill has been coming over to the apartment.
- May lack access to food, shelter, friends, or support.

Source: Responding During the COVID19 Pandemic - State of Vermont



DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR

While delayed disclosures are common among children, disclosures could increase at school, BUT forensic interviewers say that disclosures could be delayed by an additional 6-9 months.

Student Concerns May Be:

1. Should I be talking about this with all these new rules - washing hands, masks, Covid testing, social distancing?
2. Need to focus on learning.
Missing so much school. Should focus only be on learning?
3. New semester, new teacher?
Is new teacher a Trusted Adult?
4. With Covid restrictions, can I get close enough to tell the teacher I need to speak to someone privately?
5. Availability of one-on-one access?
Existing Policies & Procedures/New Covid guidelines
6. Who do I talk to?
New semester/year/new grade level/maybe new school/staff?

Suggestions for Teachers:

Quick Refresher for teachers on mandated reporting.

Warn teachers that trauma from abuse may increase due to:

- Isolation of Staying Home
- Fear of threats not to tell
- The act of abuse
- Home discourse/stress



Related Issues

1.5 Billion Students worldwide have been home from school in varying degrees since March 2020;

- More children active online and on social media as a result of isolation.
- Much time online unsupervised
- Global reports of suspected abuse to NCMEC's Cybertipline up 106% compared to March, 2019.
- 89% fewer child abuse images removed from Internet
- Knowing this, distributors using mainstream platforms, grooming & exploiting kids, 90% new images are GIRLS.

NCMEC = Nat'l Center for Missing & Exploited Children

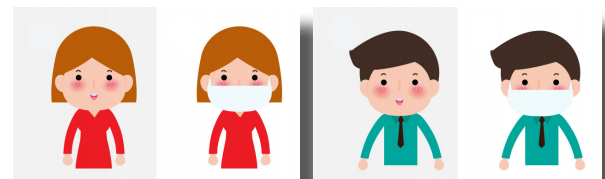
Majority of Child Abuse Reports from Schools

- Teachers identify and report more child abuse cases to child protection authorities than any other professionals.*
- Annual In-Service Training for educators on awareness and prevention of child sexual abuse is recommended.
- Teaching personal safety each year, to each grade and every student is recommended, with Pre/Post Testing.

*Source: US Department of Health and Human Services' 4th National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect

Recommendations for Helping Students

- Announce availability of help for any student.
- Specifically mention neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, food & housing insecurity.
- Introduce the person to whom students can talk;
 - If wearing masks, may want to introduce the person (counselor, nurse) behind glass window without mask on, or have the adult hold up a photo of themselves without a mask on.
 - ~ Much friendlier face without the mask on.
 - ~ The child can make the connection to the "friendlier face."



- Conversely, teens seem to take comfort in the semi-anonymity of mask wearing during disclosure/forensic interview.
- Let students know school staff is there for them – right now and at any time in the future.
- If something has happened to a student during the COVID pandemic, let them know:
 - they are not the only one and it was not their fault.
 - caring adults are available to help them feel safe again and begin to heal.

Created in collaboration with Holly's House Child and Adult Victim Advocacy Center in Evansville, Indiana.

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