

# CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION DURING COVID-19

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month, and while we are all practicing physical distancing, children are at increased risk for abuse and/or neglect. Because of this, it is more important than ever to help and protect our most vulnerable children and families. As child welfare professionals, there are many concrete actions we can take.

1. One of the most important prevention efforts we can make is to encourage existing natural supports, school staff, day care staff, neighbors, and family members to stay connected to the children and families in their lives. We can encourage those supportive people to regularly call/Skype/FaceTime/Zoom with the family and encourage our families to stay connected to the positive people in their lives.
2. It is very important that we regularly ask about and aid our families in meeting their basic needs. If parents don't have enough food in their house or know how they are going to pay their bills, the overall stress level in the home will be higher, increasing the risk of abuse or neglect.
3. As professionals, we can give parents permission to take breaks, set realistic goals, understand the importance of self-care, and help them shift their focus onto things they have control over. We can help parents create realistic and developmentally appropriate expectations for their children and help them celebrate the littlest positive changes.
4. Creating detailed, thought out, and adaptable safety plans involving the whole family is also an important step in increasing safety for our most vulnerable families. Be sure to include all of the children in the creation of the safety plan. Help each child identify at least one trusted adult outside of their immediate family they know how to reach out to.
5. Connect parents to online support groups and helpful websites. Make sure they know about local resources in their community like free meal pickups at the school closest to them.
6. Encourage parents to continue engaging in services. If they or any of their children were receiving therapy or medication management, make sure those services haven't stopped, and if necessary help facilitate the transition from face-to-face to online services.

**We are all facing this health crisis and supporting our children and families, together. If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, call the Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400**

