

Virtual Settings: Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse & Neglect

Reporting Requirements in South Carolina

South Carolina law requires mandated reporters to report suspected child abuse or neglect when, in their professional capacity, they receive information giving them reason to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect. Reporting to a supervisor or person in charge of an institution, school, facility, or agency does not relieve a mandated reporter of his or her individual duty to report, and the duty to report is not superseded by an internal investigation within an institution, school, facility, or agency. S.C. Code § 63-7-310.

Keep in mind that when you report, you are asking for a professional to help a child and their family. Proof of abuse or neglect is not required.

The following information and tips were developed by KNOW & TELL, an education program of the Granite State Children's Alliance (GSCA). GSCA serves as the network of Child Advocacy Centers in New Hampshire, providing technical assistance, training, and organizational resources across the State. For more information, visit KNOWandTELL.org.

Tips for Communicating During Remote Learning

Communicating with students, their families, and caregivers looks very different during this time of social distancing. We know not all children are safe at home. Mandated reporters must, and everyone else is encouraged to, report suspicions of child abuse or neglect to the Department of Social Services or law enforcement. Here are some questions/talking points that may help you check in on the well-being of children, their families, and caregivers while communicating in a virtual setting.

Routine Check In

- How are you feeling today?
- How was your night?
- How can I help you today?
- Who is home to help you with learning today?
- How are you doing with our new way of learning?
- What has been working well?
- What has not been working well?
- What fun things do you have planned today?
- What else would you like to share with me today?

Wellness

- What did you have for breakfast? For lunch? For dinner?
- What have you been doing inside/outside during the day?
- What is the best part about your day?
- What was the hardest part about your day?
- What do you like about being home from school?

- What do you miss about not going to school?
- What have you been doing for exercise?
- How is your family? Is there anything that you or your family need during this time?
- I know you and ____ are friends, have you been able to keep in touch with each other?
- Have you been able to talk to other family members or friends during this time? How are they doing?
- How are you sleeping? Are you getting enough sleep?

Observations & Responses

- I know you like to ____, have you been able to keep up with it?
- I've noticed/it was shared that you have been struggling; how can I help you with that?
- I'm hearing some other noises in the background, what else is happening at your house today?
- I saw a younger/older person walk by your screen, who is home with you today?

Possible Signs a Child is Not Safe

- Multiple, documented attempts to reach a child/family/caregiver have gone unanswered/ignored, and all opportunities to make contact (e.g., phone calls, email, reaching out to emergency contacts, etc.) have been exhausted.
- The child is missing from programming/appointments (after multiple, documented attempts to engage the family/caregiver).
- You notice unexplained bruising, welts, cuts, burns or other injuries on a child, adult, or caregiver.
- The child presents drastically different from how they have in the past (e.g., significant weight loss, change in hygiene, behaviorally aggressive, depressed, despondent, etc.).
- You believe the child, adult, or caregiver is under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- You observe, or it is reported to you, that there are illicit drugs/paraphernalia or other hazards that create safety concerns in the home (e.g., weapons within reach).
- You hear yelling or screaming that gives rise to concerns that the health or safety of the child may be at risk.
- There is an outcry of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence.

Additional Information

For a detailed overview of mandated reporting, see the Mandated Reporter Guide found on the Children's Law Center website at <http://childlaw.sc.edu>.

To schedule a free training on mandated reporting or for more information or resources, contact the Children's Law Center at 803-777-1646.

Proof of abuse and neglect is not required to make a report, and you may report confidentially.

South Carolina law encourages all persons to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

If you witness or suspect a situation that threatens the safety and wellbeing of a child or vulnerable adult, please call the S.C. Department of Social Services:

888-CARE4US (888-227-3487)