



Are you a Teacher?

Helping children during the Corona Virus may look different

Every household across America has been impacted in some way by the Corona Virus. This may be due to stay-at-home orders, school cancellations, social distancing, a positive COVID-19 test, or an exposure to a person with a positive COVID-19 test. Youth who would normally be in the classroom could now be in a situation where they are exposed to parental or caregiver substance use, possession, distribution, manufacturing, or cultivation of both legal and illegal drugs. Many states have allowed liquor stores and marijuana dispensaries to remain open as essential businesses, increasing access and availability at a time when many individuals are facing uncertainties.

During this difficult time, teachers have quickly adapted and are connecting with their students virtually and can identify children who may be at risk in a time when no one may have eyes on them.

What to look or listen for when on a phone call or Zoom or other webinar-based call:

- Is what you can see in the background dangerous?
- Are there hazards in the background such as drug paraphernalia, disarray or broken items?
- Is the child acting out or acting different than they normally act?
- Does the child appear to be afraid?
 - Are they shifting in their seat?
 - Are they making eye contact?
- Can you hear yelling in the background?
- Can you hear any other inappropriate conversations in the background?
- When a parent or caregiver walks within view, is the child's behavior the same or does the child act differently?

What can teachers do to see if a child is at risk:

- Connect with the child via Zoom or other webinar-based calls so a visual can be made
- Ask children to use headphones to have private conversations if there is concern
- Observe the background environment on Zoom or webinar-based calls
- Listen for others in the background
- Talk to siblings via Zoom or webinar-based calls to check in with them
- Talk with parents on Zoom or webinar-based calls
- Connect with children via email as necessary or available
- Connect with children you feel are at risk more frequently

Being aware of these issues can make a difference for endangered children.

If you are a teacher and suspect that a child may be at risk of harm in a household due to substance abuse or drug activity, you have a mandatory duty to contact your child welfare hotline and report. Your mandatory duty does not stop because the school is closed. For more information on your role in preventing and responding to child abuse and neglect, visit:

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/educator.pdf>.

In the event that you do suspect child abuse or neglect, contact 911 if you believe your student is in immediate danger. Otherwise, contact your local child protective services or law enforcement office to make a report. For a list of child abuse and neglect reporting toll-free numbers by state, visit:

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/organizations>.

Drug Prevention Educational Resources

Take this opportunity to engage your students in virtual drug prevention learning. Check out the following free resources to implement into your lesson plans:

- Teachers: Classroom Resources on Drug Effects – offers various lessons, activities, Kahoot! games, drug facts, and more for teens
<https://teens.drugabuse.gov/teachers>
- DEA Resource for Educators – offers various lesson plans, activities, and videos for different grade levels
<https://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.gov/content/resources-educators>
- United Nations Office on Drugs & Crime Youth Initiative – platform for engaging and empowering youth on substance use prevention
<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/prevention/youth-initiative.html>
- Publications for Teachers
<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/finder/t/53/Teachers>

Additional Resources

Whether you are looking for assistance on how to speak to your students about this pandemic or need tips on how to engage your students in online learning, check out these resources:

- Guidance on communicating with children about COVID-19
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/talking-with-children.html>
- Tips on helping kids adjust to online learning during COVID-19
<https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/helping-kids-adjust-online-learning-during-coronavirus-pandemic/37106>
- Strategies on engaging students via distance learning
<https://edu.google.com/latest-news/covid-19-support-resources>