



April 17, 2020

Dear Educators and Support Staff,

In times of crisis and economic instability, risk factors for child abuse and neglect increase. However, reports of child abuse and neglect in San Diego County have declined dramatically as schools have closed in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The ability to speak up for kids' safety is crucial at this time.

Students not being physically in school classrooms brings new challenges to reporting abuse, but our obligation as mandated reporters remains unchanged. While campuses are closed and we have transitioned to distance learning, all school employees still have a duty to report child abuse, which can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, emotional abuse, or neglect of any person under the age of 18.

If you have reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect, report it immediately or as soon as practically possible, by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-344-6000 or any police or sheriff's department (excluding a school district police or security department). Within 36 hours, you must also send, fax, or electronically submit a completed suspected child abuse report, also known as [Form 8572](#). Child Welfare Services continues to answer calls to the Hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days per week and is still conducting child abuse investigations. Law Enforcement also continues to respond to calls for service including Child Abuse calls.

When you make a report in good faith, you are protected against civil/criminal penalty or adverse employment action. You do not need proof. You are not making an accusation. You are asking for help for a child and their family.

We are asking educators to make an extra effort to reach out to children who have a history of emotional, sexual, physical abuse or neglect, drug use, or discussed/attempted suicide; who are responsible for the care of other children or live in a highly stressful family situation with limited support systems; or who require assistance due to physical, mental, behavioral, or medical disabilities or delays. These children are especially vulnerable now and are counting on us.

It takes all of us together to make sure our kids stay safe. Thank you for exercising your duty to report and for helping ensure that children are protected.

Sincerely,

Paul Gothold, Ed.D.
County Superintendent of Schools

Summer Stephan
San Diego County District Attorney