

Child Maltreatment Prevention and Response During COVID-19

Empowering physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses and other clinical staff in their role as mandated reporters during COVID-19

Stressed Families in Isolation Creates Risk for Abuse

With most of the Alaska's children now remaining at home (and out of the eyes of mandatory reporters, such as teachers and coaches, and medical providers), some children are in a vulnerable position. With an increase in isolation, stress, unemployment, substance misuse, and financial instability, rates of child abuse and neglect are likely to rise as well.

How Can Medical Providers Help Families During this Time?

- Conduct virtual visits. Ask how they are doing and if they need help with resources or referrals. Use virtual visits to assess for child safety.
- Offer information on positive discipline during virtual visits – it is challenging to be a parent without a break.
- Remind parents to be good role models during this challenging time as children sense parental stress and how their parents manage that stress.
- Remind parents to take care of themselves. Let them know they are not alone – validate their feelings and provide hope.

You May Be the Only Person to Act

If something does not look safe, sound safe or feel safe – report it.

WHERE TO REPORT

24-hour/7 Days a Week
Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline
1-800-478-4444

Make an online report at
Email: reportchildabuse@alaska.gov

Tips for Protecting Children

LISTEN

- Talk to the child and caregiver and listen to their story.
- Is the explanation of the mechanism of injury consistent with the physical assessment?
- Is the story consistent with the child's developmental level? Does the parent show concern for the child?
- Does the parent deny the existence of- or blame the child- for the injury?
- Is there a delay in reporting an injury?

OBSERVE

- How are the child and caregiver interacting?
- What is the child's demeanor like- does he or she appear engaged or fearful and withdrawn?
- Is the child meeting your gaze or guarded?
- Is the child behaving in age appropriate ways?

ASK

- Make an extra effort to talk with children who have a history of emotional, sexual, physical abuse or neglect, drug use or discussed/attempted suicide.
- Ask if children are responsible for the care of other children. Ask about children who require assistance due to disabilities.

LOOK

Look at the general appearance of the child- is he or she clean and dressed appropriately? Consider the location and mechanism of injury, history, and age. During your physical assessment, look for the following signs of physical abuse:

- Bruises in infants less than six months of age away from bony prominences and bruises with a unique shape (for example, an object).
- Human bite marks
- Oral injuries (frenulum tears, lip lacerations, tongue lacerations, fractures)
- Limping
- Unexplained hair or tooth loss
- Retinal hemorrhages
- Unexplained bruising on abdomen
- Altered consciousness (indicative of head injury)
- Intentional burns (scalds from hot tap water, cigarette burns)