Protecting Children Amidst Crisis
A Mandated Reporter's Role
Webinar
April 14, 2020
Mandated Reporting During Crisis

Crisis and economic instability create conditions that fuel child abuse and neglect

COVID-19
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- Can impair social, emotional, cognitive, and physiological development
- Increase chance of health conditions and risky health behaviors
- Increase likelihood of disease, disability, and mental illness throughout adulthood
- Protects children against developing emotional, behavioral and mental health issues
- Profoundly influence brain development and form the foundation of human development
- Can provide the buffering that allows children to withstand, or recover, from adverse experiences

**Protective Factors**
- Support
- Love
- Stability
- Positive Experiences
- Caregiver
- Play
- Environments
- Resources
- Equity
- Learning
- Health
- Safety

**Such as Child Maltreatment**
- Sexual Violence
- Parental Abuse
- Substance Abuse
- Physical Neglect
- Incarceration
- Hunger
- Domestic Violence
- Exploitation
- Drugs

**Crime**
Mandated Reporting
Who is mandated to report?

Georgia law requires certain individuals to report suspected child abuse:
- Schoolteachers/administrators
- School guidance counselors, visiting teachers, school social workers, school psychologists
- Child Service organizational personnel
- Child welfare agency personnel
- Child counseling personnel
- Law enforcement personnel
- Licensed psychologists (interns)
- Physicians licensed to practice medicine; interns/residents
- Registered professional nurses / Licensed practical nurses
- Hospital or medical personnel, Dentists, Podiatrists
- Professional counselors, social workers, or marriage and family therapists
- Staff and volunteers at child and family-serving agencies
- Reproductive health care facility or pregnancy resource center personnel and volunteers
- Clergy - however not within the confines of confession

* Mandated reporters should know and follow the child abuse reporting protocol in their agency
Your Role

You are legally required to report your **SUSPICION** to the DFCS centralized intake or to your organization’s designated mandated reporter.

Familiarize yourself on your **organization’s reporting policy**.

**Advocate** for child safety policies in your workplace or community.

Not Your Role

**Investigating** information an individual or child has told you or injuries of a child
## Mandated Reporter Rights & Requirements

### Rights
- Anonymity or confidentiality
- Limited Liability
- Knowledge of the outcome of a report
  - Only whether the case was substantiated or not

### Requirements
- Report abuse **immediately** but at least within 24 hours
- Designated mandated reporters **MUST** submit all reports made to them
- Turn over illegal images or materials within 72 hours to police

The penalty for not reporting is a misdemeanor.
What’s Reportable to DFCS?

- Physical Abuse
- Neglect
- Sexual Abuse
  - Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)
- Emotional/Psychological Abuse
- Child Endangerment
  - Prenatal Abuse
  - Commission of a crime in the presence of a child
  - Driving under the influence with a child in the vehicle
  - Intimate Partner Violence in the presence of a child
## Indicators of Abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Abuse</th>
<th>Physical Indicators</th>
<th>Behavioral Indicators</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>Unexplained: bruises, welts, burns, fractures/dislocations</td>
<td>Feels deserving of punishment</td>
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<td>Bald patches on the scalp</td>
<td>Wary of adult/physical contact</td>
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<td>Frightened of parents/afraid to go home</td>
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<td>Self-destructive behaviors</td>
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<td>Wears clothing to cover body—inappropriate for weather</td>
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<td>Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>Difficulty walking or sitting</td>
<td>Inappropriate sex play or advanced sexual knowledge and promiscuity</td>
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<td>Torn, stained or bloody underclothes</td>
<td>Hysteria, lack of emotional control</td>
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<td>Pain, swelling or itching in the genital area</td>
<td>Sudden school difficulties</td>
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<td>Bruises, bleeding or laceration in external genitalia area</td>
<td>Withdrawal or depression</td>
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<td>Presence of STI or other infections</td>
<td>Excessive worrying about siblings</td>
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<td>Difficult peer relationships</td>
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<td>Self-imposed isolation, avoid physical contact</td>
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<td>Emotional Abuse</td>
<td>Speech or other communicative disorder</td>
<td>Habit disorders (sucking, rocking)</td>
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<td>Delayed physical development</td>
<td>Antisocial or destructive behaviors, including delinquency</td>
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<td>Exacerbation of existing conditions such as asthma or allergies</td>
<td>Neurotic traits (sleep disorders, inhibition to play)</td>
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<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td>Behavioral extremes (passivity or aggression)</td>
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<td>Neglect</td>
<td>Consistent hunger/underweight</td>
<td>Self-destructive behaviors</td>
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<td>Consistent lack of supervision</td>
<td>Begging, stealing food</td>
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<td>Unattended physical/medical needs</td>
<td>Extended stays at school (early arrival and late departures)</td>
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<td>Failure to thrive/poor growth</td>
<td>Constant fatigue, listlessness</td>
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<td>Poor hygiene</td>
<td>Assuming adult responsibilities</td>
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<td>Inappropriate dress</td>
<td>Says no caretaker at home</td>
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<td>Frequently absent / tardy</td>
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Updates and Response

GA Division of Family & Children Services
Intake Reports March 2019 thru March 2020

- Initial Safety Assessment: 60%
- Screenout: 36%
- Special Investigation: 4%
March 2020 Intake Reports

- March 18-March 31: 28%
- March 1-March 17: 72%
School Mandated Reporters Compared to All Other Mandated Reporters (MR)

- March 1st-17th:
  - School: 2520
  - All Other MR: 2941

- March 18th-31st:
  - School: 255
  - All Other MR: 1724
Updates and Response

• CPS Intake Communications Center (CICC) inquiring and documenting reporter knowledge if families are currently or have recently been sick.

• Primarily utilizing Skype, FaceTime, or similar applications to facilitate virtual “face to face” contacts with children and families when there is a reasonable assumption there is no safety concerns in the home.

• Taking precautions when preparing for and responding to assigned assessment cases requiring an in-person contact.
Updates and Response

GA Department of Education
School Closure Timeline

• March 10 – Fulton County
• March 16 – Georgia schools closed through March 31
• March 26 – school closure order extended through April 24
• April 1 – school closures extended for remainder of school year
COVID-19 and Schools

Governor Kemp: Georgia schools to remain closed for remainder of this school year;
USED approves Georgia’s testing and accountability waivers

Open Letter from Superintendent Woods:
School buildings are closed, but the hearts of educators remain open

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and Schools

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) is working closely with the Office of the Governor, the Georgia Department of Public Health (GaDPH), and other agencies to ensure local school districts, parents, and students have the most accurate and up-to-date information regarding COVID-19 (commonly called coronavirus). State School Superintendent Richard Woods is a member of Governor Brian Kemp’s Coronavirus Task Force, and GaDOE’s Office of School Climate and Safety is communicating regularly with GaDPH and its Commissioner, Dr. Kathleen Toomey.

This site contains the most up-to-date guidance for school districts along with resources for parents and families.

Trending K-12 Topics

- GaDOE Guidance: Grades/course correlation, promotion/retention, graduation requirements, SBPE waivers for districts
- Georgia Home Classroom
- Graduating Seniors
- Public WiFi locations (interactive map)
- Testing Guidance
- Serving Students with Disabilities Online
- Georgia Aquarium’s At-home Learning Resources
- COVID-19 Emotional Support Resources

Quick Links

- School closure information
- CDC Guidance | FAQs
- DPI Guidance
- GaDOE: Pandemic Planning Guidance for School | Office of School Safety & Climate
- President’s Coronavirus Guidelines for America

Georgia’s COVID-19 Hotline

The State of Georgia has a new COVID-19 hotline. If you believe that you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to the novel coronavirus, please contact your primary care doctor, an urgent care

https://www.georgiainsights.com/coronavirus.html
Georgia Insights
COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and Schools

Crisis Contacts

**Georgia Crisis & Access Line (GCAL) 1-800-715-4225**
GCAL is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year to help you or someone you care for in a crisis.

**1-855-GA-CHILD (1-855-422-4453)**
Report concerns or suspected child abuse.

**CRISIS TEXT LINE**
Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a Crisis Counselor. Free support is available 24/7.

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline · 1-800-273-TALK**
The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals.

**Georgia COVID-19 Emotional Support Line · 1-866-339-8938**
The Georgia COVID-19 Emotional Support Line provides 24/7 free and confidential assistance to callers needing emotional support or resource information as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Emotional Support Line is staffed by volunteers, including mental health professionals and others who have received training in crisis counseling.

**CARES Warm Line · 1-877-443-5454 (8:30AM - 11:00PM)**
Call or text the CARES Warm Line for substance abuse challenges every day of the year.

**COVID-19 Hotline · (443) 442-2081**
The State of Georgia has a new COVID-19 hotline. If you believe that you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to the novel coronavirus, please contact your primary care doctor or an urgent care clinic. Please do not show up unnoticed at an emergency room or health care facility.

**Meet2Peer Warm Line · 888-945-1414**
The Warm Line provides Georgians the opportunity to receive peer support over the phone 24 hours a day.
Reporting During a Pandemic

• Still **required**

• Who's reporting?
  • Teachers
  • Calls
  • IT reports (Go Guardian, etc.)
Reporting During a Pandemic

- 181 school districts
- 2400+ schools
- Distance Learning/School at Home will vary widely
- Access to students will vary widely
  - Digital platforms
  - Cell service
  - Restrictions
  - Meal service
How to Help

• Call
• Email
• REPORT
• What is the new safety net?
School Re-entry

What will mandated reporting look like?

• Timelines?
• What's reportable?
• New schools?
• New guardians?
Reporting
Child Maltreatment
Report by calling 1-855-GACHILD (422-4453)

It is helpful to know

• Demographic information of child
• Care takers, who is in the house
• Injury/ situation specifics
• Risk factors
• Prior concerns
• Child’s current safety

1-855-GA-CHILD
What might DFCS ask?

1. What happened and who is involved?
2. Describe your observations.
3. When and where did the incident occur?
4. What was going on before, during, and after the specific incident/circumstances/alleged maltreatment you are concerned about?
5. Can you describe the caregiver’s ability to protect/provide for the child and the child’s ability to protect/provide for themselves?
6. Family supports, additional comments, or worker safety concerns?

Report Child Maltreatment by calling 1-855-GACHILD
Electronic Ways to Report

Two options for submitting this completed form electronically.

- **Option One:** E-mail the completed Georgia Mandated Reporter form to [customer_services_dfcs@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:customer_services_dfcs@dhs.ga.gov) or fax the form to **229-317-9663**. You will receive an auto-reply confirmation and possibly a return phone call within 2 hours to acknowledge your report and collect any additional information needed. Please include a number where you can be reached on the report.

To request a PDF version of the form, contact [customer_services_dfcs@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:customer_services_dfcs@dhs.ga.gov)
Electronic Ways to Report

• **Option 2:** Complete the digital form located at [https://cps.dhs.ga.gov](https://cps.dhs.ga.gov). A private code is needed to access the digital form which requires you to complete the online mandated reporter training through Prosolutions.

  [https://prosolutionstraining.com](https://prosolutionstraining.com)
When to call **911**

Present Danger:

- Currently occurring
- Serious unexplained injury
- Left unattended in a parking lot
- Parent is unconscious due to drugs and there are young children in the home, or parent behavior is very bizarre

Calling 911 and DFCS may be necessary. Law enforcement is designed to respond within minutes, whereas DFCS may respond as soon as they get the report or within 24 hours.

Report Child Maltreatment by calling 1-855-GACHILD
After the Report is Made

• School personnel
  • Will receive confirmation of report, additionally they will also receive case outcome within 5 days of completion of investigation if the case is substantiated
  • DFCS must send confirmation of report receipt to mandated reporter within 24 hours of the intake report.

• You may be called back to gather more information needed or to clarify.

• There is the potential that you will need to appear in court.

• Individuals with reports of child abuse that have been investigated and substantiated by DFCS will be placed on a state Child Abuse Registry
Resources for Mandated Reporters
Prevention Resources for Professionals

• Share signs of abuse and mandated reporting tips with frontline helpers
  • Build rapport and provide encouragement.
  • Ask open-ended questions to engage children. Ex: “How is learning from home going?” “How do you feel today?” “Tell me more about that.”

• Participate in online prevention trainings
  • Darkness to Light's Stewards of Children training – free at www.FlipTheSwitchCampaign.org
  • Protecting Children During a Crisis – www.D2L.org

• Call/Zoom and check in on children you are concerned about

• Darkness to Light's Safe Online Learning: For Teachers
Prevention Resources for Parents

• Participate in online prevention trainings
  • Darkness to Light's Talking to Children about Safety from Sexual Abuse – free using code TALK2020

• Help parents create a COVID-19 Family Safety Plan
  • Use this example from Stop It Now!
  • Talk to children about safe touch, consent and personal boundaries
  • Hot Chocolate Talk from Committee for Children – What to Say at Every Age

• Blog for Parents about Online Safety – NetSmartz
  • https://www.missingkids.org/blog/2020/child-online-safety

• Committee for Children - Second Step: https://www.secondstep.org/covid19support

• Monique Burr Foundation - Child Safety Matters: https://www.mbfpreventioneducation.org/covid-19-important-announcement/

• For related questions please contact: prevention@gacfca.org
1-800-CHILDREN
(1-800-244-5373) Se Habla Español

Why People Call
• Caregiver Support, Counseling
• Community Programs
• Domestic Violence
• Housing and Basic Needs
• Afterschool and Child Programs

The Helpline Serves
• Professionals that work with families
• Parents and Grandparents
• Relatives or Other Caregivers
• Crime Victims or Survivors of Abuse
• Faith Communities

Sometimes a family may just need RESOURCES!

www.PCAGeorgiaHelpline.org
Childhelp

• Resources for children and youth who want to make a report via text or chat.
  • Live Chat Line: https://www.childhelp.org/childhelp-hotline/
  • Text or Call 1-800-422-4453

• A great alternative for children and youth who cannot call the 1-855-GA-CHILD Hotline directly.

In Georgia, report by calling 1-855-GACHILD (422-4453)
Mandated Reporting Tip Sheets - Adults

Kids Need All Adults to Report Abuse During COVID-19 Crisis
A resource for all adults describing signs of child abuse and where to report. Reporting child abuse and neglect is everyone’s responsibility.

Some Signs a Child is Not Safe

Physical abuse
- Child appears frightened of the caregiver.
- Child has burns, broken bones, broken teeth or complaints of pain.
- Caregiver offers no explanation of a child’s injury, the parent “blames” the child’s behavior or personality for the injury. Ask yourself “Does the story match the injury?”

Sexual abuse
- Child attaches very quickly to strangers or new adults in their environment.
- Demonstrates unusual sexual knowledge or behavior for their age.
- Difficultly walking or sitting.
- Witnessing an adult inappropriately touching a child, watching pornography with a child or saving sexual things to a child.

Emotional Abuse
- Child shows extremes in behavior: overly aggressive or compliant.
- Appears emotionally unattached to caregiver and others.
- Caregiver constantly blames, belittles or berates the child and refuses to help the child when needed.

Neglect
- Child begs or steals food, has severe poor hygiene or states that no one at home provides care.
- Witnessing a child using alcohol or other drugs.
- Highly stressful family situations and/or adults in home abusing alcohol or other drugs.
- Uncleaned weapons or guns in the home.

Where To Report
24-hour/7 days a week:
1-855-GAC-HILD (1-855-422-4453)
online at https://cps.dhs.ga.gov/
If a child is in immediate danger, call 911.

Free mandated reporter training available at www.PCAGeorgia.org, click on the Training tab.
To locate support resources for families wherever you live in Georgia go to www.PCAGeorgia.org/

Mandated Reporting Tip Sheets - Adults

Kids Need Schools to Continue Reporting Abuse During COVID-19 Crisis
Empowering teachers, counselors, bus drivers and nutrition staff in their role as mandated reporters during the COVID-19 Crisis.

Students Not Being in School Creates Barriers to Reporting Abuse
In times of crisis and economic instability, child abuse and neglect rates increase. However, reports of child abuse and neglect in Georgia have declined dramatically. The ability to speak up for kids’ safety is crucial at this time.

To Report Effectively, Explain how the Suspected Abuse has Impacted the Child
Example: (Child) has not engaged in the virtual classroom in 15 days, but has internet access. I have made 5 failed attempts to contact parents. Concerned that (child)’s lack of participation is negatively impacting his/her education. (Child) experienced physical abuse one year ago.

Making a Report is Asking for Help and Services
If you reasonably suspect a child is unsafe - report. You do not need proof. You are not making an accusation. You are asking for a professional to help a child and their family.

You May Be the Only Person to Act
If you reasonably suspect a child is unsafe-report. Anonymous reports are accepted from anyone. Anyone making a report in good faith is protected against civil/criminal penalty or adverse employment action. Your identity is held confidential and will not be revealed.

Helpful Tips for Protecting Children
Continue to let students know you remain a supportive, caring adult in their lives:

- Check in regularly with students and/or caregivers.
- Provide encouraging messages.
- Ask questions to engage children. Ex: “Give me one word that describes how you feel today?” “How is learning from home different from learning at school?”

Signs of Concern:
- For students with technology/internet access lack of virtual attendance or homework not completed over a long period of time.
- If you have no contact at all with a family after many repeated phone calls/messages.
- If a child communicates they feel unsafe, you see a child in a dangerous environment or you notice a significant change in a child’s mood/behavior.

Make an extra effort with children who:
- Have a history of emotional, sexual, physical abuse or neglect, drugs use or discussion/attempted suicide.
- Are responsible for the care of other children or live in a highly stressful family situation with limited support systems.
- Require assistance due to physical, mental, behavioral or medical disabilities or delays.

Legal Responsibilities and Protections:
- School personnel are mandated reporters. If you have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, you must directly report it immediately.
- No administrator or supervisor may inhibit or inhibit any report.
- When you make a report in good faith you are protected against civil/criminal penalty or adverse employment action.

Free mandated reporter training available at www.PCAGeorgia.org, click on the Training tab.
To locate support resources for families wherever you live in Georgia go to www.PCAGeorgia.org/
If someone hurts you,
IT’S OK TO TELL!
Si una persona te hace daño, no tengas miedo de contárselo a alguien confiable.

GO to a safe place
Busca un lugar seguro.

TELL a trusted adult, teacher, counselor
Avisa a un adulto, maestro, o consejero confiable.

OR Report
to DFCS 1-855-GA-CHILD
(1-855-422-4453)
O reportalo al DFCS 1-855-GA-CHILD

For questions or support call: 1-800-CHILDREN
Si tiene alguna pregunta o necesita apoyo llame al
(1-800-244-5373)

Have you ever been forced or pressured to engage in sexual activity in exchange for money, food, drugs, shelter, or anything else?
¿Alguna vez, alguna te haya presionado a tener relaciones sexuales a cambio de dinero, comida, drogas, un lugar donde vivir o cualquier otra cosa?
Call: 1-844-8GA-DMST (1-844-842-3678)

Elementary Schools

IT’S OK TO TELL
if someone hurts you!
Si una persona te hace daño, no tengas miedo de contárselo a alguien confiable.

HELP

GO to a safe place
Busca un lugar seguro.

TELL a trusted adult, teacher, counselor
Avisa a un adulto, maestro, o consejero confiable.

OR CALL
Child Protective Services
1-855-GA-CHILD
(1-855-422-4453)
You are not alone!
O llama a los servicios de protección de niños 1-855-GA-CHILD

For questions or support call
Si tiene alguna pregunta o necesita apoyo llame al
1-800-CHILDREN
(1-800-244-5373)
Free Online Mandated Reporting Training

ProSolutions offers free, online mandated reporting (MR) training

Three types of MR trainings:

1. Mandated Reporters: Critical Links in Protecting Children in Georgia
2. Child Abuse and Neglect: Mandated Reporting Requirements for Employees, Volunteers, and Contractors of Georgia Public Schools
3. Mandated Reporting Requirements: A Track for Georgia Medical Professionals

Visit https://prosolutionstraining.com to access the trainings
Free In-Person Mandated Reporting Training

PCA Georgia offers free, in-person mandated reporting (MR) training

• Over 50 approved trainers throughout the state
• Interactive activities and scenarios
• Questions answered in real-time by trained professionals
• Hosting two Trainings of the Trainer in June

Visit [www.PCAGeorgia.org](http://www.PCAGeorgia.org) to learn more

** We are not taking in-person training requests for dates from now until the end of April based on best practices to prevent COVID-19 transmission.
Contact

Prevent Child Abuse Georgia
PreventChildAbuseGA@gsu.edu

www.PCAGeorgia.org

Webinar Recording