



LATEST NEWS L.A. County, City Abandon Curfews, One Day After ACLU Lawsuit

Home » Crime » This Article

# Joint Plan Unveiled to Protect Child Safety at Home during Pandemic

POSTED BY CONTRIBUTING EDITOR ON JUNE 3, 2020 IN CRIME | LEAVE A RESPONSE

Share this article:



The Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services and the Los Angeles County Office of Education Wednesday unveiled a joint plan to enhance the child safety net for families staying home during the coronavirus pandemic.

LACOE, the nation’s largest regional education agency, will assist DCFS in communicating with educators and school personnel in the county’s 80 school districts. It will also provide ongoing virtual training for school/district employees, administrators and athletic coaches, who are mandated to report child abuse or neglect.

Bobby D. Cagle, the department’s director, noted that DCFS relies heavily on those “mandated reporters” in investigating suspected child abuse.

“Our partnership with LACOE is incredibly important because teachers, in their online classrooms, have a unique opportunity to make virtual home visits and establish open lines of communication that students may lean upon if they feel unsafe,” Cagle said. “Without that lifeline, most children would likely lose access to mandated reporters altogether.”

In March, the county's Child Protection Hotline logged 23 reports from teachers compared to 262 reports a year ago, and school personnel reports dropped from 691 to 26.

Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools Debra Duardo echoed Cagle's concern for the safety and wellbeing of the county's 2 million children.

"Our top priority as educators is the safety of our children," Duardo said. "Children must feel safe in order to learn. We are grateful to DCFS for this partnership, which will help ensure that teachers and school personnel have the tools and information they need to continue to support student safety in a remote learning environment."

In addition to its partnership with LACOE, DCFS is calling on other county departments, law enforcement agencies, L.A. County cities and unincorporated communities and faith-based organizations to help generate greater awareness of the heightened potential for abuse and neglect.

Cagle emphasized the department's objective to prevent child abuse rather than removing children from their families. He said DCFS will not remove children from COVID-positive homes simply on that basis, which has been a misrepresentation circulating in some communities.

The most common type of maltreatment is neglect, and federal statistics reveal that in 2019, an estimated 678,000 children were found to be victims of child abuse or neglect nationwide. The year before, 4.3 million reports were made involving 7.8 million children.

DCFS said its goal is to help foster healthy relationships by imparting coping strategies to navigate difficult circumstances that can lead to neglect or abuse. The objective dovetails with its prevention and aftercare services.

During the 2019-2020 fiscal year, DCFS, the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health and Office of Child Protection collectively invested nearly \$20 million in services including provision of basic goods, parenting education, financial literacy and peer support groups — services available regardless of age, immigration or insurance status, for as long as needed.

To keep stakeholders informed about the department's ongoing child protection efforts, DCFS said it will begin issuing weekly news briefs on Tuesdays called, "DCFS at Work," starting June 9. The alerts will feature news items as well as human interest stories about personnel working to keep children safe during the pandemic and beyond.

The Child Protection Hotline can be reached 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at 800-540-4000.

*JOINT PLAN UNVEILED TO PROTECT CHILD SAFETY AT HOME DURING PANDEMIC was last modified: June 3rd, 2020 by Contributing Editor*