



# Keeping Our Families and Children Safe During COVID-19

Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, and Child Welfare Services rely on professionals and community members to recognize and report child abuse and neglect.

The current pandemic may increase stress, fear, and isolation and increase the risk of child abuse and intimate partner violence within families. Professionals and community members must remain vigilant, supportive, and outreach to report concerns related to child abuse.

<p><b>1</b> Regularly engage with children and their caregivers</p> 	<p><b>2</b> Ask questions and be curious</p> 
<p><b>3</b> Observe the environment</p> 	<p><b>4</b> Observe student behavior, demeanor, and appearance</p> 
<p><b>5</b> If a student discloses abuse or neglect and it is safe for the student to answer, ask open-ended questions to clarify (when, where, how, what)</p> 	<p><b>6</b> Educators are required by law to report any suspicions of abuse and neglect. Remember, you do not have to verify that abuse or neglect has occurred</p> 

## Child Abuse and Neglect: Types and Reporting

Some possible signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect are provided below. These reflect only some of the possible signs that a child is being abused or neglected. If you have any questions, please contact [Student Welfare and Compliance](#), MCPS, or Child Welfare Services for assistance and clarification.

### Physical



- Bruising, welts, burns, bite marks, broken bones, or other injuries that are not explained, appear to be inflicted, or are suspicious.
- Student report of pain caused by parent/guardian behavior, even though there are no obvious signs of injury.
- Student has been present in room where domestic violence has occurred.
- Student appears afraid of caregivers and even flinches when they are around.

### Emotional



- Student appears sad, withdrawn, or emotionally distant from caregivers.
- Caregivers are known or heard to repeatedly blame, belittle, or berate the student.
- Student is aware of and exposed to domestic violence incidents between caregivers.

### Sexual



- Student describes being touched sexually by parent, guardian, caregiver, or other person in the home.
- Student demonstrates unusual sexual knowledge or behavior, given their age.

### Neglect



- Student witnesses illegal substance use by caregivers or has access to unsafe items in the home (including medication and unsecured weapons).
- Student is not supervised adequately for their age or developmental level.
- Student's primary needs for food, education, medical, dental, or mental health care are not being met.

## When to Follow-up or Call Child Welfare Services

- Caregiver or student tells you something that raises concerns for student's safety.
- Caregiver or student demonstrates concerning or unexplained injuries, including bruises, cuts, or welts.
- You notice signs of illegal substance use (e.g., drug paraphernalia) or other dangers that place the student at risk for harm (e.g., unsecured weapon).
- Caregiver seems so impaired that their ability to safely care for the student is in question.
- Student looks or behaves in a significantly different manner than is usual or to be expected.
- You repeatedly are unable to get in touch with the family (i.e., not due to internet or phone access) and have serious concerns for the student's safety (e.g., due to prior safety concerns related to domestic violence, substance use, or weapons).

**MCPS Staff Members Only:**  
click here to make an online report of child abuse and neglect.

(Community Members, Call CWS Directly)



If you have any questions or concerns or are unsure of what next steps to take, please contact MCPS [Student Welfare and Compliance](#) or call Montgomery County Child Welfare Services 240-777-4417.

If you have any suspicions that a student is being abused or neglected, make a report.





**Do you feel unsafe at home?  
Are you concerned about a neighbor or loved one?  
Free help is available.**



**¿Se siente inseguro en su casa?  
¿Está preocupado por su vecino o ser querido?  
Hay ayuda gratuita disponible.**

**The Montgomery County Family Justice Center**

240-773-0444

safe@montgomerycountymd.gov

**The Montgomery County Crisis Center**

240-777-4000 (24 hours/horas)



**Warning signs of family violence**

- ◆ Insults, demeans, or shames you with put-downs
- ◆ Controls every penny spent in the household
- ◆ Controls who you see, where you go, or what you do
- ◆ Intimidates you with guns, knives, or other weapons
- ◆ Threatens or causes physical harm

**Signos de advertencia de violencia familiar**

- ◆ Le humilla haciéndole sentir vergüenza o deshonra
- ◆ Controla como se gasta cada centavo en la familia
- ◆ Trata de controlar con qué personas usted se reúne, a dónde va o lo que hace
- ◆ Le intimida con armas de fuego, cuchillos u otro tipo de armas
- ◆ Amenaza o causa daño físico