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District Attorney's Office ready to respond to child abuse investigations

Today, Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill released a set of social media graphics to remind the public that the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline is open 24/7 during the COVID-19 pandemic and that the criminal justice system and its community based partners stand ready to respond to child abuse or neglect investigations.

"We are very concerned that cases of child abuse and child neglect are going unreported right now because children have been separated from their teachers, coaches and other mandatory reporters as we all work to slow the spread of COVID-19," said Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill. "Now more than ever, we are all on the frontline of doing everything we can to protect children and that includes calling the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline whenever we suspect a child is being harmed."

In Oregon, more than [20 professions](#) are bound by the state's mandatory reporting law.

Oregon law defines physical abuse as any injury to a child that is not accidental and neglect as failing to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, supervision or medical care.

The Multnomah County District Attorney's Multidisciplinary Child Abuse Team includes representatives from local law enforcement, public schools, hospitals, courts, health departments, the Oregon Department of Human Services, and the Oregon Department of Employment Child Care Division.

Our local Multidisciplinary Child Abuse Team encourages our community members to trust their instinct when it comes to reporting suspected child abuse or neglect. However, all observed instances of child abuse or neglect should be reported to law enforcement immediately by calling 9-1-1.

"We all have an obligation to do everything we can to protect children and teens," said District Attorney Underhill. "Our children must be able to live in a safe environment. Community members should report any reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect, and remember that they do not have to prove the abuse or neglect – that there are highly-trained experts to do that job, but those experts need to know where to look."

Although children, teens and parents may not be physically interacting as much with each other due to social distancing requirements, there are still ways for everyone to help:

- Continue to routinely check in with your kids and their friends to see how everyone is doing.

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- Continue to check in with kids in your neighborhood and remind them about your willingness to help, especially if you've had prior concerns about abuse or neglect.
- Remind your kids to immediately report any friend-to-friend disclosures about abuse or neglect and then report that information to Oregon DHS or law enforcement.
- Continue to responsibly and appropriately supervise your child's social media use.

The Multnomah County District Attorney's Multidisciplinary Child Abuse Team is responsible for reviewing and managing child abuse and neglect cases in Multnomah County. The team also handles all child homicides, felony child physical abuse cases, felony child abandonment cases, custodial interference cases, and felony sex crimes where the victim is currently under the age of 18 and where the perpetrator is determined not to be a stranger to the child.

CARES Northwest, Multnomah County's child abuse assessment center, is a community-based medical program for the assessment, treatment and prevention of child abuse. The organization is one of the largest child abuse assessment centers in the nation and serves more than 5,000 children annually.

Download & share our social media graphics:

- <https://www.mcda.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID-19-Child-Abuse-Hotline-Still-Open.jpg>
- <https://www.mcda.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID-19-Your-Concerns-Are-Real.jpg>
- <https://www.mcda.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID-19-YOU-ARE-NOW-ON-THE-FRONTLINE-OF-ENDING-CHILD-ABUSE.jpg>
- <https://www.mcda.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID-19-WE-WONT-KNOW-UNLESS-YOU-CALL.jpg>
- <https://www.mcda.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID-19-Keep-Children-Safe-During-COVID-19.jpg>
- <https://www.mcda.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID-19-Its-OKAY-To-Tell-Someone.jpg>
- <https://www.mcda.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID-19-Child-Abuse-Hotline-Still-Open.jpg>

COVID-19 Notice:

The health and well-being of all employees and community members we serve is a top priority for the Multnomah County District Attorney. Our office is working with the court, defense bar, local law enforcement and other system partners to carefully balance the needs of public health and public safety.

For information about the operational changes implemented by the District Attorney's Office in response to the novel coronavirus, please [click here](#).

#MCDA#

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