



A Closer Look: Keeping Youth Safe During COVID19

Call **651-266-4500** to talk to a Ramsey County screener.

Research shows that family violence, child abuse and neglect can increase during times of great stress. As many of our interactions with youth and families have shifted to virtual platforms, we need to rethink how we assess and engage. In many ways, nothing has changed. For example- unexplained bruises are still a warning sign. But in other ways, everything has changed! For example- how do we interpret body language through zoom? Or, how do we create trusted connections via telehealth? The ideas and links below can help you to navigate our "new normal."



Increased Risks

- Past or current case with Child Protection
- Isolation; reduced connections
- Illness
- Financial distress; job loss
- Addiction/ substance use
- Mental health disorder or trauma history
- Family or community violence
- Cyber exploitation, bullying and "sextortion"
- [Increased Risks & Recommendations \(AAP\)](#)



Red Flags you might see/hear virtually

- Change in behavior, energy, speech, focus
- A caregiver using harsh physical discipline
- A dangerous object (ie. an unsecured gun)
- Unexplained bruises or marks on youth
- Talk about sex that is not age appropriate
- Young child caring for siblings/ left alone
- Weight loss or other health concerns
- Seems jumpy around caregiver
- Talk of suicide, sadness, anxiety



Connections & Questions

- Who is taking care of you? How are they doing?
- How is everyone getting along with each other?
Is anyone having a hard time?
- What things do you like to do at home? What don't you like to do?
- [List of Sample Questions](#)
- [Building Rapport with Youth During Telehealth](#)

Help youth create a private space to talk (shutting door or using chat.) Remember that questions are not connections. To be a trusted adult, you need to listen and respond.

Most youth & families are stressed out!

It's important to remember that some signs are NOT related to abuse/neglect.

- An absent student may need support with technology or internet access
- A disengaged caregiver may need interpreter services.
- Emotional or behavioral changes may indicate an emerging or underlying mental health issue related to feelings of isolation, anxiety, or grief and loss.
- A child's clothing or home may seem dirty or disheveled because the caregiver is now juggling work, child care and online school.
- A distracted, tired, or overwhelmed teen may be taking on extra obligations because a parent is sick or out of work.

A screener can help identify the best way to support the youth/family.

Signs of Child Abuse & Neglect

- Childwelfare.gov
- Mayo Clinic

Signs of Violence at Home/ Domestic Violence

- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)
- [Trauma Tips for Teachers \(OJJDP\)](#)

Youth Safety in a Virtual Environment

- [Best Practices \(ASCA\)](#)

Resources for Parents and Caregivers

- [Parenting in a Pandemic: \(AAP\)](#)
- [Keeping Kids Safe Online During COVID19](#)