



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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****PRESS RELEASE****

Department of Children and Family Services Calls on Community to be the
Voice for Children Amid Coronavirus School Closures

Los Angeles – April 6, 2020 – On the heels of the announcement that students will remain out of school for the remainder of the academic year due to the current public health crisis, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is calling on residents to help ensure that children remain safe.

During this unprecedented time, families may experience higher levels of stress and uncertainty and the department is asking that community members be observant of children who may be experiencing neglect or abuse.

DCFS Director Bobby D. Cagle said that with children out of the line of sight of mandated reporters, such as teachers and medical personnel, the concern for child safety has significantly increased.

“Social workers rely heavily on mandated reporters to initiate contact with our department in order for us to protect children,” Director Cagle said. “With this safeguard now gone, I am calling on Los Angeles County residents to be the voice for children who may be experiencing physical abuse, severe food insecurity or other forms of neglect.”

April marks National Child Abuse Prevention Month, an observance that strives to bring awareness of tools and resources available to families in need of support. The most common type of maltreatment is neglect. Federal statistics reveal that in 2019 an estimated 678,000 children were found to be victims of child abuse or neglect nationwide and, the year before, 4.3 million reports were made involving some 7.8 million children.

For those who work with families at risk of becoming involved with the child welfare system, the goal is to help foster healthy relationships by imparting coping strategies to navigate difficult circumstances that can lead to neglect or abuse.



This objective, dovetails with DCFS' prevention and aftercare services. During the 2019-2020 fiscal year, DCFS invested nearly \$20 million in services including provision of basic goods, parenting education, financial literacy and peer support groups. These services are available regardless of age, immigration or insurance status, for as long as needed.

Recognizing that family dynamics may be challenging even on the best of days, Director Cagle stressed the need for child abuse prevention awareness and community involvement now more than ever.

"This situation is sure to test the limits of even the most patient individuals," he said. "But I want to emphasize that there are services available in the community to help. If you or someone you know is in need of extra support during this time of heightened uncertainty, please contact DCFS to find out what services are available in your area."

To learn more about child abuse prevention month and how you can help, please visit: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/about/>.

The DCFS Child Protection Hotline may be reached at 800-540-4000.

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About the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)

The Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) promotes child safety and well-being by partnering with communities to strengthen families, keeping children at home whenever possible, and connecting them with stable, loving homes in times of need. As the largest child protective services agency in the nation, DCFS is responsible for ensuring the safety of more than two million children across 88 diverse cities in Los Angeles County. Established in 1984 to keep children safe and support families in crisis, it is one of the 35 Los Angeles County Departments governed by the five-member Board of Supervisors with nearly 9,000 staff across 20 regional offices, specialized bureaus, and administration that cover a broad array of services and programs. The department is led by Director Bobby D. Cagle - a former foster child and longtime social worker. For more information, visit <http://dcfs.lacounty.gov>.