



Los Angeles County  
Department of Children  
and Family Services



Los Angeles County  
Office of Education

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**\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\***

## DCFS, LACOE TEAM TO ENHANCE CHILD SAFETY DURING SUMMER MONTHS

Los Angeles – June 3, 2020 – With the school year about to end and the coronavirus pandemic expected to continue through the summer months, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) today unveiled a joint plan intended to enhance the child safety net for homebound families.

LACOE, the nation's largest regional education agency, will assist DCFS in communicating with educators and school personnel in Los Angeles County's 80 school districts as well as provide ongoing virtual training for mandated reporters. DCFS has remained fully operational throughout the pandemic and recent civil unrest and social workers will continue their child welfare work through in-person and virtual visits.

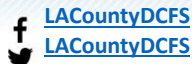
DCFS Director Bobby D. Cagle expressed gratitude for LACOE's support in this endeavor, indicating that the department relies heavily on mandated reporters to alert DCFS of suspected child abuse.

"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," Director Cagle said. "Without that lifeline, most children would likely lose access to mandated reporters altogether."

A statistical analysis for the month of March by the county's Child Protection Hotline revealed that the hotline only received 23 reports from teachers compared to 262 reports a year ago and school personnel reports dropped from 691 to just 26.

Promoting Child Safety and Strengthening Families

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Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools Debra Duardo echoed Director 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," Superintendent 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 also is calling on other county departments, law enforcement agencies, Los Angeles County cities and unincorporated communities, and faith-based organizations, among others, to help generate greater awareness of the heightened potential for abuse and neglect.

Director Cagle emphasized that the department's objective is to prevent child abuse (<https://bit.ly/2yXKhNo>) not remove children from loving families. He stressed that DCFS will not remove children from COVID-positive homes which has been a misrepresentation circulating in some communities.

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.

During these challenging times, DCFS is committed more than ever to supporting vulnerable families. 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, the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health and the Office of Child Protection collectively 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.

In an effort to keep stakeholders informed about the department's ongoing child protection efforts, DCFS 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.

In a county of 10 million inhabitants, DCFS needs every resident to be attentive and watchful to ensure children remain safe at home. The Child Protection Hotline may be reached 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 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>.