



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

## Disaster Preparedness Prompts DCFS to Upgrade Child Protection Hotline Phone System to Cloud-Based Technology

In Southern California, October denotes the month during which the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and other organizations prepare for the Big One.

While earthquake readiness is a necessity to ensure the preservation of life, property and the environment in the face of a large-scale quake, the region also must prepare for other types of natural and man-made disasters or, as we've recently learned, the possibility of future health pandemics.

To that end, the department has upgraded its analog Child Protection Hotline (CPH) phone system to Amazon Connect, an Amazon Web Services product. Amazon Connect is a secure, cloud-based system that streamlines call center functions and allows for the department's hotline workforce to take calls remotely. DCFS is the first child well-being agency in the nation to implement Amazon Connect in this capacity.

"The Child Protection Hotline is where the safety assessment of children begins and it is essential that it continues to operate after a major earthquake or disaster," Director Bobby D. Cagle said.

"This upgraded phone system mitigates the impact of what we can expect in the aftermath of a natural disaster and promises continuity of services to ensure that allegations of child abuse and neglect may still be reported," he added.

Last year, the CPH's received more than 200,000 calls and, in the last 10 years – up until the onset of the coronavirus pandemic – had experienced an increase of 20 percent in the number of calls.

Before the pandemic, the call center received as many as 21,000 reports of child abuse and neglect in a month. During peak times, up to 100 staff members would be logged on, taking as many as 120 back-to-back phone calls per hour, each with a duration of up to 20 minutes.

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Recognizing the need for a more modern phone system that could accommodate the volume of calls and would allow personnel to work offsite in the event that the call center needed to be evacuated or was inaccessible due to structural damage, the department began its exploration into a cloud-based system more than three years ago.

Amazon Connect's roll out in mid-July coincided with the pandemic-prompted need for staff to work remotely. The system's cloud-based infrastructure is available 24-7 and accessible from any location with internet connection, allowing staff to work from home or other DCFS offices.

In the event of an evacuation, caused by a natural disaster or otherwise, the Amazon cloud-based system provides an alternate path to the internet. Thereby, providing business continuity for the hotline's critical service.

To safeguard against the threat of widespread loss of internet connectivity, the department also will maintain a phone bank for emergency use.

In a county of 10 million inhabitants, DCFS relies on community members to be attentive and watchful to ensure children remain safe at home. Mandated reporters may make an electronic child abuse report at <https://mandreptla.org/cars.web/>. Suspicions of child abuse or neglect maybe also be reported to the CPH 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at 800-540-4000.

Click [here](#) to view the Press Release in Spanish.

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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>.