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Contact: Shiara Davila-Morales
DCFS Office of Public Affairs
publicaffairs@dcfs.lacounty.gov

****PRESS RELEASE****

Success of Los Angeles County's Online Child Abuse Reporting System Leads to Changes Statewide

Mandated reporters across California will soon be able to report non-urgent suspicions of child abuse and neglect online thanks to a new law and the success of a program piloted by the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services.

Assembly Bill 1929 (AB 1929), signed into law on Sept. 29, will allow child welfare agencies in other California counties to opt-in to receive online reports from mandated reporters anywhere in the state.

"Child well-being is a shared responsibility," Director Bobby D. Cagle said. "We cannot do this work alone and mandated reporters are a critical part of the safety net that we rely on to keep children safe. AB 1929 strengthens the fabric of the child welfare community beyond county borders."

"I am immensely pleased with the expansion of our Child Abuse Reporting Electronic System (CARES) and I commend DCFS' Child Protection Hotline (CPH) and Business Information Systems Division staff whose three-year commitment to this pilot program made all of this possible," Director Cagle added.

The bill was authored by Assemblymember Blanca Rubio (D-Baldwin Park) and co-sponsored by the County of Los Angeles, the County Welfare Directors Association of California and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. AB 1929 continues the ongoing authority to operate internet-based child abuse and neglect reporting systems established by Senate Bill 478 and expands its use to all mandated reporters effective Jan. 1, 2021.

CARES includes a standardized safety assessment of qualifying questions and excludes the submission of emergent reports where the child is subject to immediate risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or is in imminent danger of severe harm or death.



Since its launch in 2017, the online reporting system has exceeded the department's expectations. In 2019, more than 5,900 online reports were submitted – primarily by school personnel – compared to 1,838 online reports the year before.

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The project began as an effort to improve operations and create a more efficient reporting process, particularly for non-urgent situations. In order to manage the volume of calls to the CPH and still properly address all reports of suspected child abuse or neglect, the team sought to develop a mechanism to filter non-urgent calls in order to prioritize situations requiring immediate attention.

With the ability of mandated reporters to file non-urgent reports online, the CPH has reduced its wait times, ensuring that reports are more expeditiously addressed.

CARES earned the Best in Category award for the "County Administration and Management" category from the National Association of Counties in July 2019, as well as the Process Improvement Special Award at the Los Angeles County Productivity and Quality Awards in October 2019.

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 may also be reported to the CPH 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>.