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PRESS RELEASE
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NH DHHS Urges Support of Children, Youth and Families During COVID-19

~DCYF Sees Decrease in March Abuse and Neglect Referrals~

Concord, NH – The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is urging communities to continue to support children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Social distancing, economic uncertainty and less access to community supports can place additional stress on families, which can put children more at risk for abuse and neglect. This April, during Child Abuse Prevention Month, DHHS urges everyone to be on alert for signs of child abuse and neglect, as we all play a part in promoting the well-being of children and families throughout New Hampshire.

March data from the Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) shows a significant decrease in referrals to DCYF’s Central Intake, compared to the same time period over the past two years. New child abuse and neglect referrals are down nearly 50% each week overall, and DCYF is experiencing decreases in referrals from community members who normally see children face-to-face on a regular basis, including schools and child care settings (63%); mental health providers (43%); social workers (54%); and medical providers (40%). Referrals from law enforcement agencies were comparable and referrals from parents and families increased by 38%.

Today, Governor Chris Sununu issued [Emergency Order #22](#), which authorizes emergency funding for critical child protection services, including domestic violence and substance use supports, expansion of the DCYF Strength to Succeed Program, additional technology support for DCYF-involved families, and the creation of a support line to help families address and manage interpersonal challenges. This funding will ensure that New Hampshire families continue to receive the right services at the right time during the COVID-19 emergency.

“People who are not currently seeing children and families due to the necessary social distancing measures aren’t contacting us as they normally would, but our families are still feeling the stress of the disruption of family routines,” said DCYF Director Joe Ribsam. “It is as important as ever to make sure we check on our families, kids and even older youth to let them know we care. Ask kids how they’re doing, how their loved ones are doing, if they need anything. Follow social distancing rules, but remain social – our families need the community connections that keep them strong and healthy.”

There are several resources that can support New Hampshire families during the COVID-19 outbreak, including NH 211, the Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (1-866-644-3574), and the [New Hampshire Children's Trust](#). If you suspect child abuse or neglect, call DCYF at 1-800-894-5533.

For more resources for residents, please visit <https://www.nh.gov/covid19/resources-guidance/residents.htm>.