5 WAYS PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS CAN PROTECT CHILDREN FROM ABUSE DURING THIS COVID-19 CRISIS

1. **Know you’re not alone – and reach out for help.** The kind of stressful, isolating conditions you’re facing right now are high risk factors for increases in child abuse. But child abuse is preventable. If you’re feeling overwhelmed and alone, know that there are resources out there for you, that you can still connect to even while maintaining social distance. See local and national resources on the following page.

2. **Set a daily schedule and stick to it.** When tensions are running high in our lives, a schedule can help everyone know what to expect and what’s coming next. That alone can keep tempers from flaring and abuse from happening. This consistency also keeps all the adults in the household accountable for their role throughout the day while providing vulnerable kids with a greater sense of safety and comfort. And it allows anyone who might be at risk of causing harm to be aware you are paying attention and leaving no room for inappropriate behavior.

3. **Be clear about house rules.** When people are spending a lot more time in close proximity at home, it’s important to reinforce existing rules or set new clear and specific ones for boundaries and privacy around the house, such as one person in the bathroom at a time, or expectations that everyone keeping their hands to themselves.

4. **Be careful about childcare.** With most schools and many daycares closed, reliable childcare is hard to come by. We recommend caution in allowing children to be cared for by just anyone, even in a pinch. Our friends at Stop It Now! put together helpful information about this topic and recommendations for securing safe childcare in emergencies: stopitnow.org/covid19

5. **Watch out for online predators.** Now more than ever, children are spending time on the internet. It’s essential to have regular prevention conversations at an age-appropriate level. See our internet safety resources for specific suggestions to reduce the risk of sexual abuse online: chicagocac.org/internet-safety
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

CHILD ABUSE, SEXUAL OR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

If you suspect or know that a child (someone 17 or younger) is being abused, call the Illinois DCFS Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873). If a child is in immediate danger, also call 911.

If you need support or have questions about sexual assault, call Chicago’s confidential rape crisis hotline: 888-293-2080. The hotline operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Isolation can also increase risk of intimate partner violence, which may involve or occur in the presence of children. If you are experiencing violence at home, call Chicago’s confidential domestic violence helpline: 877-863-6338.

MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Talk with a mental health counselor through NAMI Chicago’s Helpline: 833-626-4244 or dial 311 and ask to be connected.

Talk with a trained trauma counselor through Bright Star Community Outreach’s counseling helpline: 833-TURN-123.

Connect to free teletherapy services through Chicago Department of Public Health Mental Health Centers: 312-747-1020.

Illinois residents seeking support can contact the Human Services Mental Health Division’s new Call4Calm line: text TALK or HABLAR to 552020.

Speak to a trained counselor at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990, or text “TalkWithUs” or “Hablanos” to 66746.

INFANT CARE

Parents struggling with infants’ sleeping, crying or feeding can reach out to the Fussy Baby Network’s warmline: (888) 431-BABY (2229) to speak with an infant specialist in English or Spanish. Operating hours are Monday to Friday 9a-5p. After hours calls will be returned the next business day.

For additional local resources updated daily, see City of Chicago’s COVID-19 resources: chicago.gov/city/en/sites/covid-19/home/resources.html