



## LASD - Department Operations Center

# COVID-19



## Child Welfare Checks

Due to the COVID-19 Health Officer Order, all schools in the State are closed for the remainder of the school year. Although students have continued their studies online, distance learning has made it difficult for teachers to monitor student appearance and behavior for indicators of possible abuse. The lack of student access to teachers has also prevented students who may be suffering abuse, from reporting it. This fact in part, has been reflected in the recent decline of mandated reporter generated Suspected Child Abuse Reports (SCARs).

Despite the barriers created by the quarantine order it is of the utmost importance, that the Department deploys resources, ensuring children are not suffering abuse or neglect.

On May 7, 2020, the director of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) notified the Sheriff of his decision to rescind the temporary agreement, by which DCFS was to identify children in their system who require monitoring and follow-up and provide that information, for the purpose of a welfare check by our Department.

Despite the reverse in decision by DCFS, the Department will continue to make every effort to identify children who may be suspected of being abused and to follow up on the information given by school superintendents, as outlined in the following plan. This process neither circumvents nor replaces standard calls for service or SCARs procedures or requirements.

**Effective immediately, all patrol station unit commanders, their respective designated school resource deputies, or designated deputy or team, shall attempt to identify and contact the school superintendents for all K-6 schools within their station jurisdictions and convey and implement the following:**

- Discuss concerns regarding student inability to communicate with mandated reporters due to the Health Officer Quarantine and Isolation Order;
- Ask superintendents to brief all teachers regarding this concern, including asking teachers to report suspected abuse through the proper mandated reporting channels, (if observed via current learning avenues, i.e., a video chat, heard during a phone call or suspected through objective signs during a one-on-one learning appointment);
  - For elementary school aged students unable to be contacted by teachers, identify the school's plan or procedure to check on the welfare and intended participation of their student.



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- Attempt to identify any students who have gone without contact with their teacher, while complying with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- Welfare Check protocol:
  - Each station shall identify a person and email address, or email group, to be the recipient of all student information provided by schools in their areas;
  - Welfare Check calls for service shall be conducted for ALL children provided to the station designee by their school(s);
  - Calls resulting in no observed criminal abuse, neglect, or another crime, shall be cleared with a COVID-19 stat code; and
  - Calls resulting in observed criminal abuse, neglect, or another crime, shall be handled according to patrol procedures dictated by the crime(s) found.
- Reinforce the availability of all resources and avenues of reporting:
  - If witnessed, call 9-1-1 immediately;
  - If suspected, call the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Child Protection Hotline at (800) 540-4000 or local Sheriff or police station; and
  - Follow-up will be completed when information is provided by superintendents regarding suspected child abuse.

Note: Truancy (by way of failure to participate in online learning) is not in itself a reason to believe a child is being abused, and shall not be the sole basis of a law enforcement generated SCAR.

Department personnel shall handle all suspected child abuse according to Department policy regarding child abuse, officer safety, tactical considerations and prevention of exposure to COVID-19. This includes wearing proper personal protective equipment (PPE) as each situation warrants.

Station watch commanders shall continue to monitor all eSCARs assigned and ensure they are handled to completion within the mandated time frame, and in accordance with [Department Field Operations Directive 03-004](#). In addition, watch commanders shall make note in the watch commander's log of an influx of emergent calls for service involving child abuse, domestic violence, eSCARS reports, or deputy-generated SCARS during the COVID-19 pandemic.



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For questions or guidance regarding child abuse cases, Special Victims Bureau can be reached [REDACTED], Monday through Friday [REDACTED] on weekends, holidays and after hours, by calling the SIB-Operations Center for the On-Call SVB Detective.

**If you have any questions or require additional information, the DOC is available 24 hours [REDACTED].**

### **RESOURCES**

Department Policy

4-06/023.00 - Child Abuse

<http://pars.lasd.sheriff.sdn/Viewer/Manuals/10008/Content/11386?Source=TextSearch&searchQuery=child%20abuse>

5-02/010.05 - Release of Information by School Officials

<http://pars.lasd.sheriff.sdn/Viewer/Manuals/10008/Content/11596?Source=TextSearch&searchQuery=child%20abuse>

Field Operations Directive 03-004 Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act

<http://pars.lasd.sheriff.sdn/Viewer/Manuals/13233/Content/14367?Source=TextSearch&searchQuery=child%20abuse>

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>