

## BECOME A PARTNER

### You are #Essential4Kids

#### What is #Essential4Kids?

On April 1, 2020, Missouri KidsFirst kicked off #Essential4Kids, a campaign designed to educate adults on what to do if they suspect a child has been abused or neglected. The campaign was viewed over 250,000 times on social media and was adapted in over 20 other states. The need for the campaign was clear, so Missouri KidsFirst has created new resources, including a comprehensive website.

### Missouri's kids are counting on adults to report child abuse and neglect during social distancing.

#Essential4Kids highlights the dramatic decline in Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline reports, as reported by the Missouri Department of Social Services. This drop is concerning to child advocates. Research shows that in times of crisis and economic instability, child abuse and neglect rates increase.

#Essential4Kids will continue to educate adults about the signs of abuse and neglect and why it is important to take action! We invite you to join us as a partner!



### Join Us

#### Go to [www.essential4kids.org](http://www.essential4kids.org)

Resources are available for all adults. Specialized resources include downloadable one-page flyers for: schools, youth serving organizations, faith communities, law enforcement, and childcare providers. More to come!

#### Start a conversation with your community

about the information and share the resources provided in the #Essential4Kids campaign. This campaign is for ALL adults: friends, family, neighbors, faith communities, community organizations, schools, and anyone who cares about child safety.

Share the information you learn from the #Essential4Kids campaign on your social networks.

Subscribe to the #Essential4Kids Newsletter and follow Missouri KidsFirst on social media.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY.

## TALKING POINTS FOR PARTNERS

### Learn the facts and share

#### **Child advocates have cause for concern for kids in this time of social distancing. Here's why.**

In Missouri, reports of child abuse and neglect have dropped dramatically since March. That does not mean child abuse has declined, it means abuse is not being reported.

Two factors affect the reporting of child abuse: where the abuse happens, and where the abuse is disclosed or discovered.

Social distancing, while necessary to keep children and families safe from the deadly pandemic, is a perfect storm for child abuse to go unreported.

In Missouri, there has been a dramatic decrease in reports of child abuse and neglect. As compared to 2019, reports were down 54% in April 2020 and 40% in May 2020.

#### **Abuse most frequently happens in the home. Kids are at greater risk at home than anywhere else.**

- It is a sad fact that the vast majority of abuse already happens in the home. 81% of perpetrators are either a parent or an unmarried partner of a parent.
- Additionally, 87% of cases happen within the family.
- National Children's Alliance statistics collected at Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) show that in about 20-25% of cases are when kids harm other kids. In many cases, that's a sibling.

#### **How can you keep kids safe?**

- **Making a report is asking for help and services:** You are not making an accusation when you report, you are requesting professional help for a child and their family.
- **You may be the only person to act:** Do not assume that someone else has already made the call. Make a call to Children's Division and let them know you are concerned. Anonymous reports are accepted.

#### **We may already be in a child sexual abuse crisis, even without the pandemic.**

- The latest national data showed a marked increase in child sexual abuse cases for the first time in over 15 years, up 6% from the previous year.
- For the first time in the history of the National Sexual Assault Hotline, the majority of calls after March 2020 have been from minors.
- Reports to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's Cyber Tip Line has experienced a 93% increase in child enticement reports from January- June 2020 as compared to the same time period in 2019.



#### **Trust Your Gut**

If something does not look safe, sound safe, or feel safe – report.

**1-800-392-3738**

#### **Kids in isolation have less or no contact with teachers.**

- Kids in isolation have less contact with others who might spot abuse.

Teachers and other school staff make the largest proportion of child abuse reports; about one-in-five reports comes from a professional at school.

- **If a child expresses to you that they have been abused – Stay calm and listen with compassion.** Tell the child, "I believe you." Only ask open ended questions, like "Tell me more." Avoid trying to dig for details or having different adults question the child's story. This can re-traumatize the child and damage the investigation and/or prosecution.

All national child abuse statistics cited from U.S. Administration for Children & Families, Child Maltreatment 2018. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/child-maltreatment-2018>

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For more resources: [essential4kids.org](https://essential4kids.org)  
For free child abuse or neglect reporting training:  
[protectmokids.com](https://protectmokids.com)

**#Essential4Kids**

[missourikidsfirst.org](https://missourikidsfirst.org)  
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