

BREAKING NEWS

LOCAL NEWS

Child abuse will spike with stressed families stuck at home during quarantine, experts say

Community asked to look out for possible abuse, report it to child abuse hotline

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SAN ANTONIO – Child abuse is predicted to rise as families are stuck at home during the COVID-19 self-quarantine period.

Experts say it's similar to what happens during summer or winter breaks -- cases spike.

"It's even worse when there's so much stress when people aren't working. They're worried about people being sick in their family," said Childsafe CEO Kim Abernathy.

Childsafe is a San Antonio agency that offers trauma-focused care for children who have been abused or neglected.

Abernathy said in a typical situation, teachers and health care providers are trained to look for the signs.

"Because schools are closed down, the children aren't being seen by anyone, so that's always a red flag for us," Abernathy said.

She said the agency's physical office is closed, but services are all still available.

"We had to close the facility because we had three exposures on staff, so in order to be safe, we had to do that and keep the children safe. So we're doing interviews now at (the San Antonio Police Department). With their new facility, they included an interview room specially designed for children, so it's comforting," Abernathy said.

The children being brought in for interviews are "priority one."

"Kids that, if they stay in the home, they are in danger; the alleged perpetrator has access to them, or easy access, if they're not in the home; or if the child witnesses a homicide or some sort of violent crime," she said about priority one cases.

Childsafe is still doing all Child Protective Services intakes and consistent counseling sessions by phone or video.

Some teachers can assess kids' well-being through tele-education, but for students who aren't doing that, the community is being asked to look out for concerning or unusual activity. If they see it, they're asked to report it to the [Texas Child Abuse Hotline](#).

"Observe families, even if you're delivering a package or delivering food. If you're a delivery person, mailperson, please report it," Abernathy said.

She said people often don't report because they're not sure whether abuse is happening.

"If you suspect it, have that feeling, you don't have to know if it's real or not. We have investigators to investigate that," Abernathy said.

She wants to remind people that all calls to the hotline are anonymous.

If you believe abuse may be happening, immediately call the [Texas Child Abuse Hotline](#) at (800) 252-5400.
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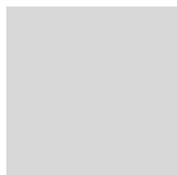
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[Courtney Friedman](#)

Courtney Friedman is a KSAT anchor and reporter. She has an ongoing series called Loving in Fear, confronting Bexar County's domestic violence epidemic. She's also covered Hurricane Harvey, the shootings in Sutherland Springs and Santa Fe, and tornadoes throughout Texas. She's a California native and proud Longhorn who loves calling SA home.

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Before starting at KSAT in August 2011, Ken was a news photographer at KENS. Before that he was a news photographer at KVDA TV in San Antonio. Ken graduated from San Antonio College with an associate's degree in Radio, TV and Film. Ken has won a Sun Coast Emmy and four Lone Star Emmys. Ken has been in the TV industry since 1994.

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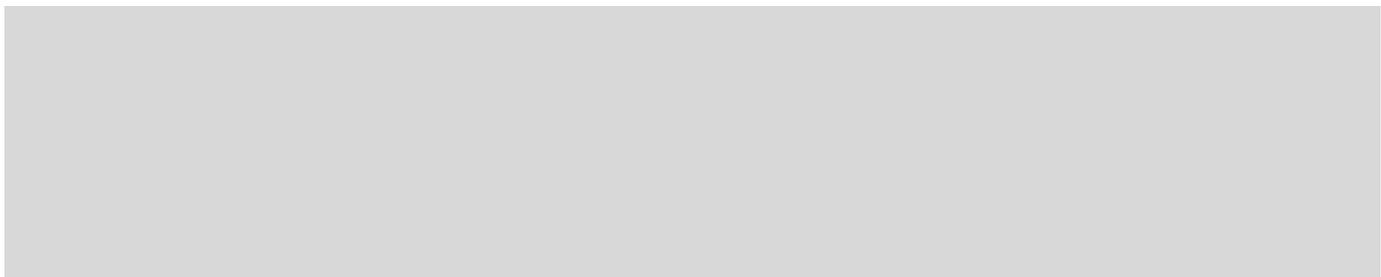
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