

# Support & Referrals

A report to the SCR is one tool to keep children safe and should only be used by mandated reporters when they are legally obligated to make a report. In your professional role, you may encounter families whose needs would be met by a **wide variety of community-based services**.

If possible, a “warm hand-off” is always better than a simple referral; this means that you assist the family with outreach to the resources and supports, guiding them through the process.

**Find more resources:**

<http://nysmandatedreporter.org>

## **OCFS HEARS Family Line**

(Help, Empower, Advocate, Reassure and Support)

1-888-55HEARS ( 1-888-554-3277 )

Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

# NYS Office of Children and Family Services

The Office of Children and Family Services serves New York's public by promoting the safety, permanency and well-being of our children, families and communities.

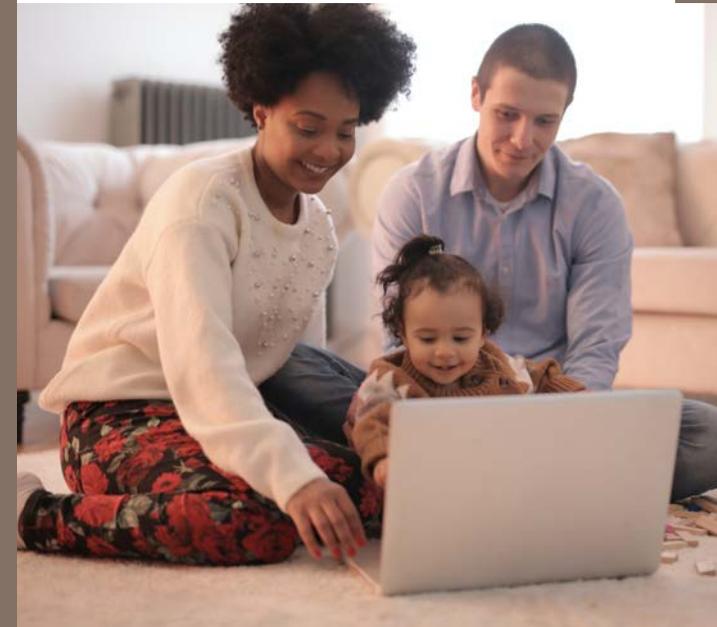
For more information about OCFS, please visit our website at: <https://ocfs.ny.gov>

For resources and more information for mandated reporters:  
<http://nysmandatedreporter.org>

The Mandated Reporter Hotline for child abuse and maltreatment reports:  
1 (800) 635-1522



## Mandated Reporting



## SIGNS OF ABUSE & MALTREATMENT IN VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS





As a mandated reporter, you may have interactions with children that occur in a virtual space. Children may attend school remotely, visit doctors using telemedicine, and participate in therapy sessions on virtual platforms.

It is important to remember that if you are interacting with children in your professional role, your responsibilities as a mandated reporter remain the same. It is important to continue to assess the safety of children during all your professional interactions with them.

### Questions that could be helpful to ask:

- What are you eating today and who makes the food?
- Do you have electricity, is your house warm, etc.?
- What happens at your house when people get angry?

### To do this:

- Be **alert for indications that a child is trying to communicate something** to you without someone else in the room noticing.
- Pay attention to **non-verbal cues**. Note if a child's demeanor is different when someone else enters the room.
- **Listen** for concerning statements a child makes to you, siblings, or their peers.
- A virtual meeting may cause you to **observe an altercation** between children or adults. If what you observe does not rise to a level of a report, it may still create an opportunity for a conversation about safety or managing stress.
- Try to **observe** the child's body for **suspicious injuries**, even if you can only see the child's face, neck, shoulders, and chest. Does the child appear depressed or anxious?
- Use **reliable technology** with adequate lighting and sound.
- Depending on your profession and the nature of the visit, ensure the child is **present** for at least part of the visit.

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- Make sure that everyone in the room, including anyone who enters during the visit, is **introduced**.
  - Ask if there is enough **privacy** for the child and/or parent to discuss sensitive matters. This may mean asking nonparticipating household members to move to a different room.
  - Watch carefully and repeat anything questionable. **Verbalize** what you think you see and ask if the family agrees.
  - Confirm the child's **physical location** in the event you need to contact emergency services.
  - **Make it clear** how the child or family can reach you by email, phone, text, or online tool.
  - Be alert if a child **turns off a webcam**, or is hesitant to use one. Rely on your instincts if you believe something is wrong.
  - Look at the **environment**, does the home appear to have or to be in unsafe conditions? Is there appropriate **supervision**? Are young children watching even younger siblings?
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