

April 29, 2020

Dear Educators,

We are reaching out to you for your help in keeping children safe. During this time of the Coronavirus pandemic, with children staying at home and schooling being done remotely, we have lost one of the primary safety nets for children, namely schools and educators. We also know that during times of stress children are more vulnerable to abuse.

In collaboration with Vermont Family Network's (VFN) Puppets in Education (PiE), the University of Vermont Children's Hospital is working to keep children safe in their homes during this Covid-19 pandemic. VFN's PiE programs have been working for over 30 years to help children navigate experiences like abuse, bullying, and inclusion with presentations in schools all over New England. We are excited to be partnering with them to bring this abuse prevention program to children now staying within their individual homes.

This 9-minute video <https://youtu.be/Od-Zw15O5UI> is intended to help children discuss what to do if they are experiencing abuse at home. Dr. Lewis First, chief of our UVM Children's Hospital offers advice to children, with the key points being:

- It's not your fault if something is happening to you. It's a grownups job to keep kids safe.
- It is never ok to hurt someone else.
- You can say "no" to an adult if you are trying to keep your body safe.
- Everyone should have a list of helper adults with whom they can share secrets.
- You can reach out to one of your helper grown-ups, including teachers, if you aren't feeling safe.
- You can call 1-800-649-5285 anytime if you are not feeling safe.

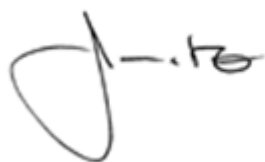
We ask that you help keep children safe by sharing this video with your students. Remember, it is *all* our responsibility to keep children safe by reporting suspicions and concerns. It is our duty as mandatory reporters. Some suggestions for after-video discussion:

- Everyone should have a list of people that they can reach out to if they aren't feeling well or have something they want to talk about. Discuss ideas for developing a list of helper adults.
- Reemphasize the phone number for Vermont Department of Children and Families (DCF) (1-800-649-5285) and emphasize that it can be called any time of day or night.

Additional resources:

- Child Help National Child Abuse Hotline (24/7 national hotline to help children experiencing abuse of any kind). Call 1-800-4-A-CHILD or text 1-800-422-4453.
- Crisis Services through your local community mental health agency. Find which agency serves your county at: <https://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/services/emergency-services/how-get-help>
- The Trevor Project (confidential, 24/7 text or phone support for LGBTQ youth). Text START to 678678 or call 1-866-488-7386.

Sincerely,



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