



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

To: School Superintendents, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Lead Persons, Administrators of Nonpublic Schools

Route to: Elementary, Middle and High School Principals, Health Teachers, School Nurses, School Counselors

From: Christine Norbut Beyer, Commissioner
New Jersey Department of Children and Families

Date: September 30, 2020

As New Jersey school districts determine the best approach for the 2020-2021 school year, whether with a remote-only, in-person learning model, or a hybrid version, our partnership with the state's educators and school professionals is more important than ever to ensure that children and families are safe, healthy and connected.

The stress and uncertainty of the last six months – and likely the next six months – is unprecedented. Families are experiencing many COVID-19 related challenges, including furloughs, unemployment, reduced work hours, health and childcare concerns, and more.

The impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic is difficult on everyone, but even more so on children and families who are already at-risk. This includes families with:

- toddlers
- children with disabilities
- a history of addiction or mental illness
- a history of violence
- economic/housing insecurity

Abuse and neglect can thrive in isolation. So, when a child isn't physically reporting to school, regularly visiting friends or family in the community, or seeing a pediatrician for routine physical checkups, it is much more difficult to spot the warning signs.

As valuable partners who have their "eyes and ears" on children every day in some capacity during the school year, we need your help.

The school year has begun in most districts and we're asking educators to be alert to the signs and to find creative, discreet ways to let students signal their need for intervention. [These posters](#) can help teachers, social workers, guidance counselors, paraprofessionals and others that may interact virtually with students to know the signs.

One of the posters is a [QR code](#) that can be used by educators as a virtual background or email signature. It can even be used as a place-holder slide during lunch or class breaks.

Using any mobile device's camera, one can 'capture' a web address that leads to a poster designed specifically for youth, with a list of hotlines and helplines. The QR code is discreet, which allows children to access the information or resources they need to be safe.

Thank you.