

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 Puppets in Education, the University of Vermont Children's Hospital has put together a 9-minute video <https://youtu.be/Od-Zw15O5UI> for children to discuss what to do if they are experiencing abuse at home. Dr. Lewis First, chief of our children's hospital, offers advice to children, with the key points being:

- 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.
- It's not your fault if something is happening to you. It's a grownups job to keep kids safe.
- You can reach out to one of your helper grown-ups, including teachers, if you aren't feeling safe.
- You can call 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 DCF (800-649-5285) and emphasize that it can be called any time of day or night.

Additional resources:

- The Trevor Project (confidential, 24/7 text or phone support for LGBTQ youth). Text START to 678678 or call 1-866-488-7386.
- 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>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Metz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large loop for the letter "J".

**James B. Metz, MD MPH**

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