



CALICO During COVID-19: The Good, The Bad, and The Hopeful

During this global crisis and shelter in place order, we have heard how children are not only being exposed to more domestic violence in their homes but also are more susceptible to neglect and abuse. This is alarming and a major concern for those working in the field of child protection. Since the shelter in place order was put in place, CALICO staff has been working remotely, yet our commitment to the children of Alameda County continues to be our number one focus.

CALICO is currently only available to conduct emergency forensic interviews. Child Interview Specialists will be on call until the shelter-in-place order ends or we develop the capacity to conduct tele-forensic interviews. All interviews for non-urgent cases will be postponed until the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted or until we get a safe and confidential system for conducting forensic interviews online. While our Family Advocates are also on call to remotely provide services to the families during emergency interviews, they have also been providing continuous service to caregivers and families who received services at CALICO prior to the coronavirus pandemic.

While many of the resources and referrals that are being provided to the caregivers are the same, such as crisis counseling and support, housing and shelter needs, assistance with filling out Victims of Crime applications, and making referrals for therapy to Center for Child Protection at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital (CCP) and partners like Family Paths and La Clinica to name a few; our Family Advocates are also making themselves more accessible to families needing the extra support during this stressful time.

The families that we see, day in and day out, are already dealing with an added level of stress, anxiety, and uncertainty; and now the world has thrown in a global pandemic on their laps. As a result, our Family Advocates have been providing the caregivers they are assisting with an online guide with mental health, mindfulness, and coping resources. Here is a copy of that helpful tool:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1P-EQwCqjThr93fGBk4fqB1sM735390dg/view>.

Just like the caregiver's in their lives, the children we work with have an elevated level of worries and fear, which has also increased. Some of them do not understand what COVID-19 actually is. What they do know is that their world has once again, changed overnight. They can no longer go to school, see their friends, visit loved ones, or play at the park. The World Health Organization (WHO) created a book that may help children cope with COVID-19. This is the link we are giving the caregivers and families we are working with: <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/09-04-2020-children-s-story-book-released-to-help-children-and-young-people-cope-with-covid-19>.

Despite all of the stressful news we hear on the news or from our clients, one of our Family Advocates shared some uplifting news. While working with some of the families, she learned that some of the children that were the most anxious before, during, and after their disclosures of abuse, are some of the ones that are doing exceptionally well. The caregivers' are attributing this to having their family at home, all the time. Even though many families are struggling financially, they are finding ways to be more supportive and by spending quality time with one another other. Many of the children are continuing their counseling by participating in telehealth therapy. It is amazing what quality time can do for the resilience in children.

