

**Child Abuse Prevention Month News Conference**

*SAFEline sees 42% increase in child abuse and parenting support related calls during pandemic*

**April 28, 2020, Austin, TX** – April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. As the month comes to a close, SAFE is holding a news conference to share what we have seen since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the update, we will be discussing what young people can do if they are experiencing violence at home, what adults can do if they witness child abuse, and information for parents who have used abuse in the past or are worried about how their actions can be traumatizing to their children.

Please join us at **11 a.m. Thursday, April 30** for a Facebook Live news conference. You can find us on Facebook at [@safeatx](https://www.facebook.com/safeatx).

During this COVID-19 crisis, reports of child abuse to government agencies are decreasing, however, SAFE is seeing an increase in calls related to child abuse and parenting support to our SAFEline. Between March 1 and the beginning of this week, our 24/7 SAFEline received over 2,500 total calls, texts, and chats.

Of those contacts, 100 were specifically about child abuse or the need for parenting support. Compared to the same time last year, that is a 42% increase in child abuse and parenting calls. We are seeing an overall increase of more than 7% in total calls to the SAFEline and an 11% increase in domestic violence calls compared this time last year.

“We know the majority of people who make reports are teachers, counselors, and professionals who support children outside of the home,” said Vincent Tovar, Project HOPES Outreach Specialist with SAFE. “This means a significant number of youth could feel unsafe and indefinitely trapped in their own home right now. SAFE wants children to know that we are here to help, and they can anonymously contact the SAFEline via phone call, text, or chat. Youth mainly use SAFE’s text line to reach out, and now is the time for more kids to know that it’s a way to get help.”

During the press conference on Thursday, Vincent will talk more about child abuse and parenting support. Additionally, Sophie Buechler, a local high school sophomore and part of the Changing Lives Youth Theatre Ensemble (a partnership between SAFE’s Expect Respect program and Creative Action), will talk about how teens and young people living at home can get support.

You or members of your news organization will be able to ask questions in the Facebook Live chat and Vincent, Sophie, and SAFE Communications Coordinator Antwon R. Martin will be available to answer those questions live at the end of the news conference.

If you would like to schedule an interview before or after the news conference, please contact Communications Coordinator Antwon R. Martin at 512.772.9374 or [amartin@safeaustin.org](mailto:amartin@safeaustin.org).

If you or someone you know needs support, the 24/7 SAFEline is available by phone at 512.267.SAFE (7233), by text at 737.888.7233, or by online chat at [safeaustin.org/chat](https://safeaustin.org/chat).

At SAFE, we strive to provide safety, stability, and healing for children, adults, and families who have experienced violence and abuse. We do this by providing shelter and housing, support services, and prevention programs to stop the cycle of violence. Learn more at [safeaustin.org](https://safeaustin.org).