

The Effects of COVID-19 on Child Abuse: Now What?

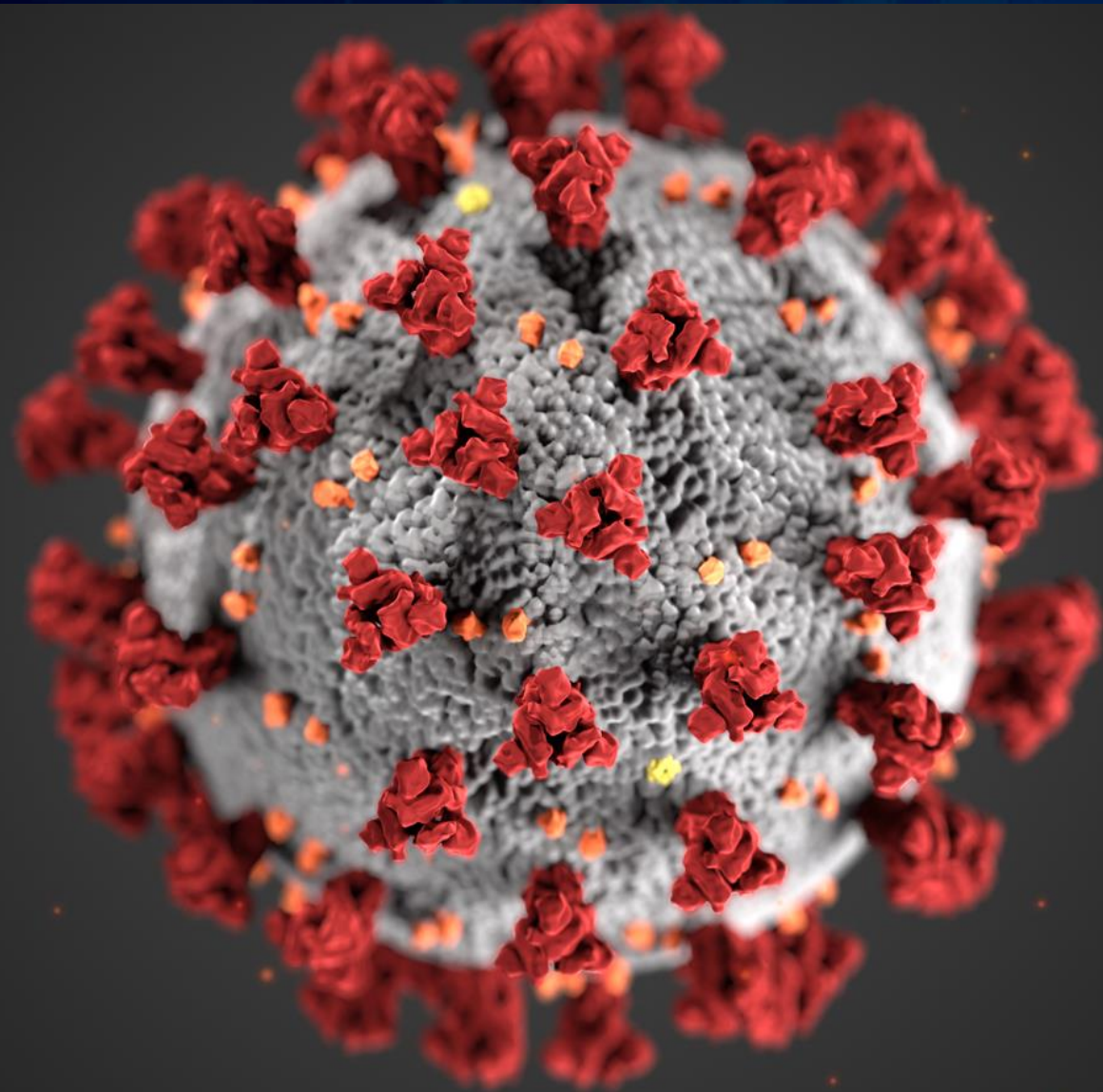
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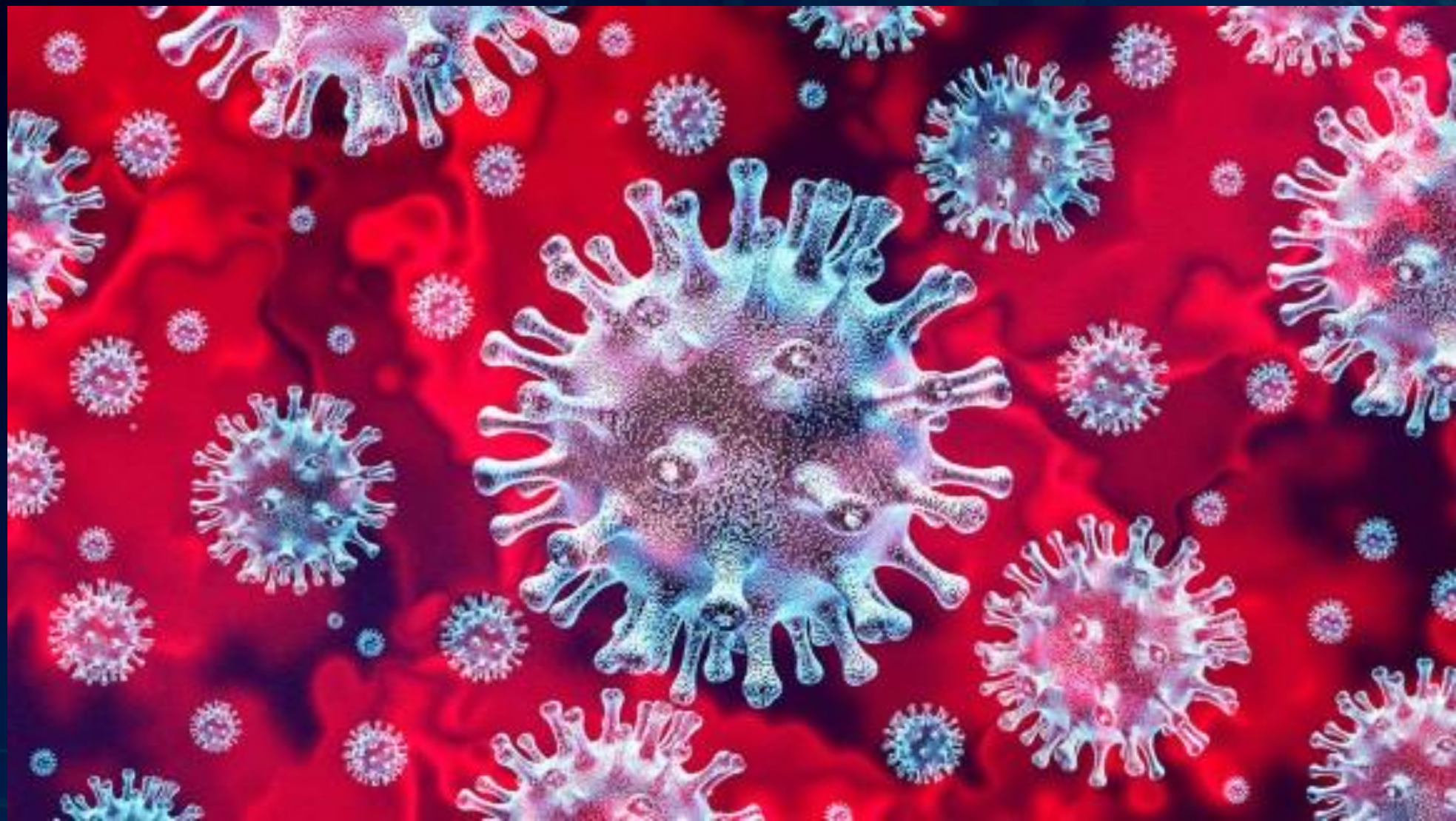
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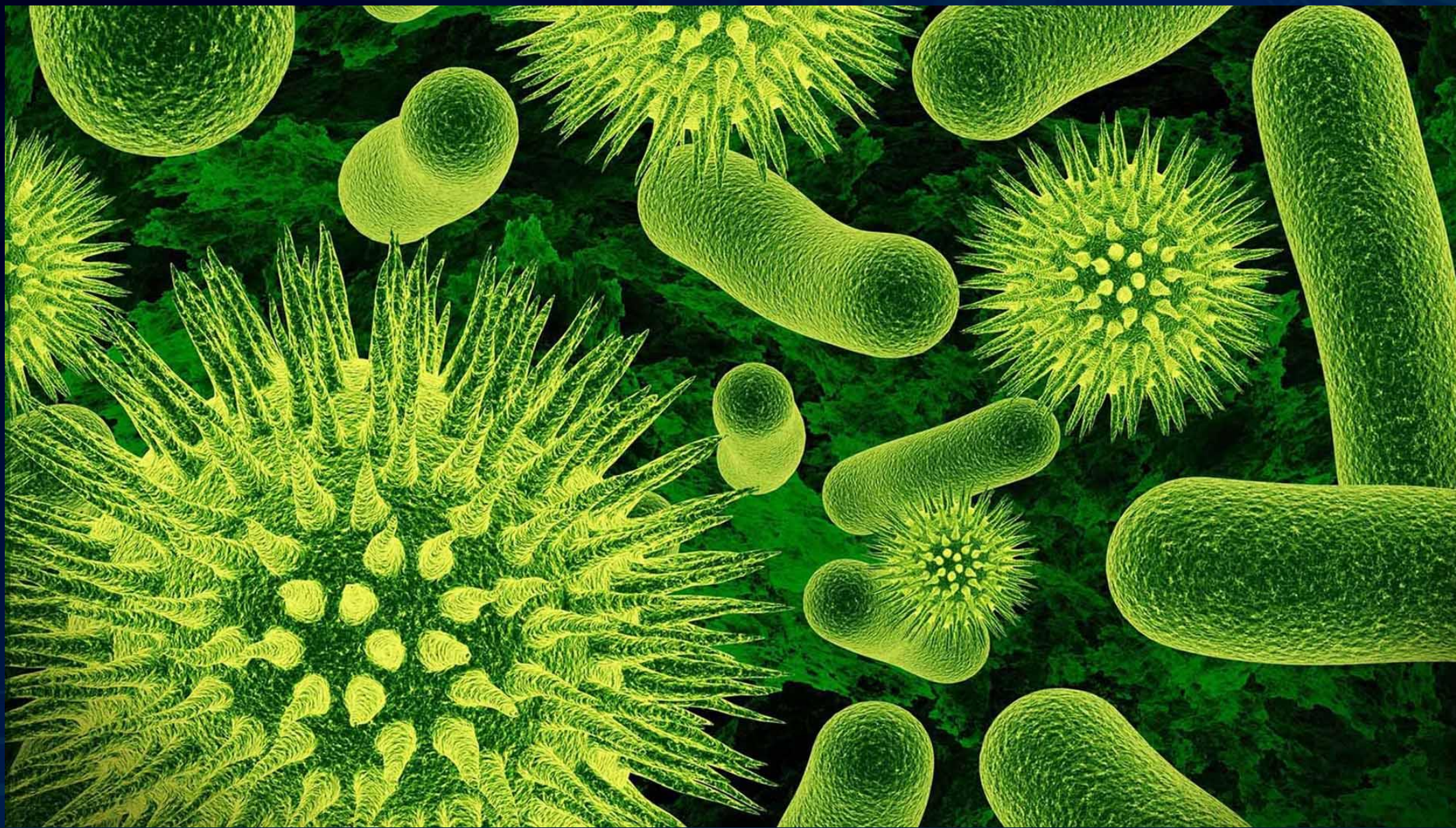


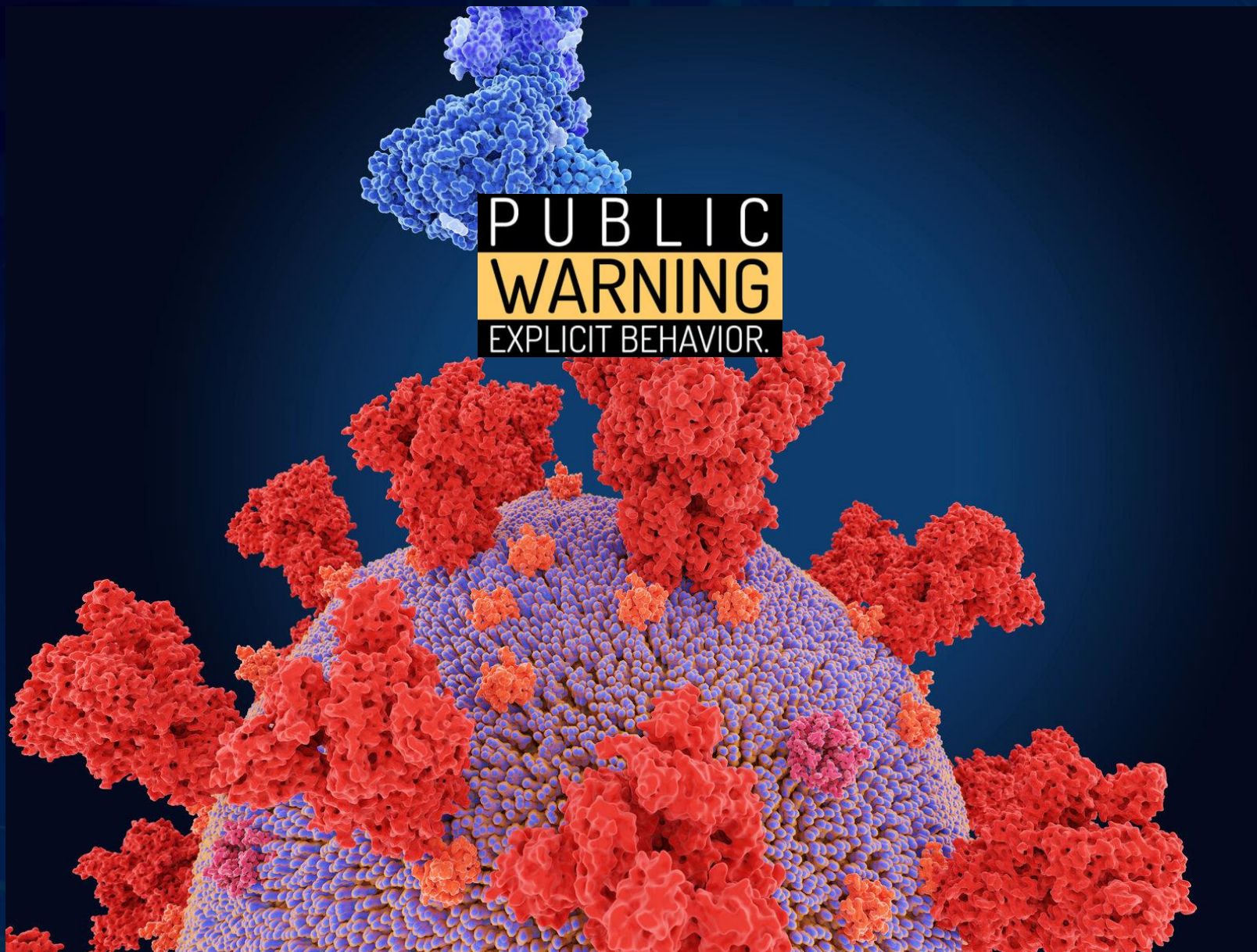
Disclosures

- No financial conflicts of interest









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EXPLICIT BEHAVIOR.





Signs that abuse may be happening

- Almost all are non-specific
- If a child discloses, believe them
- Abuse is usually not a one-time event
- Keep lines of communication open
- Make sure child knows *by word* and *by deed*, that they can trust you and can talk to you

Behavioral Symptoms—Younger Children

- Anxiety/Depression
- Unusual fearfulness
- New onset bedwetting
- Social withdrawal
- Increased behavioral problems
- Increased separation anxiety
- Increased tantrums
- Increased sleep disturbances
- Increased clinginess

Behavioral Symptoms—Children & Teens

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Excessive anger
- Mistrust
- Flashbacks/dissociation
- School issues/truancy
- Self-injury
- Suicidal ideation
- Social withdrawal
- Substance abuse
- Impulsive behavior

The Cover-Up

- Clothing inappropriate for season
- Makeup in places it shouldn't be
- Unusual refusal to send photos of child
- Unusual sequestering of child
- Refusal to return child
- Unusual school/daycare absences

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Who Is a Mandated Reporter?

- Professionals
 - Health-care
 - Mental health
 - Social work
 - Education
 - Childcare
 - Law-enforcement
- ...or “any other person called upon to render aid or medical assistance to any child.”

Who Is a Mandatory Reporter?

- Attorney/client
 - Communications are privileged
 - If knowledge is obtained during a privileged communication, not required to report
- Clergy
 - Are mandated reporters in Alabama
 - Privileged if in the course of a “pastoral communication.”

Why Don't People Report?

- *I don't see abuse in this population*
- Uncertain that abuse has occurred
- Lack of expertise in child abuse
- Abuse or neglect not serious enough to report
- Situation will resolve itself

Why Don't People Report?

- “I can do better than the system.”
- “DHR may mishandle the case.”
- “Report would put child at greater risk.”
- “I can help the child better myself.”

Reasons to Report

- Abused/neglected children cannot be protected unless they are identified
- Reporting is the key to identifying
- DHR cannot respond unless a report is made
- DHR can provide follow-up/monitoring services

Child abuse is usually not
a one time event.

Child abuse occurs in all
types of families

Myth: If a parent brings a verbal
3 year old who at home disclosed
physical abuse, you need to
interview the child to get
information to make a report.

What about interviewing kids?

- Do not interview young children
- Do not obtain history *in presence of a verbal child*
- Clearly document any reported disclosure
- Clearly document any disclosure made to you

Consider effect of COVID-19 on services

- Food pantries
- Social supports in the community
- WIC availability
- Loss of insurance due to job loss
- Increased utilization of mental health services

