



MICHIGAN  
CHILDREN'S  
TRUST FUND

COVID-19  
PARENT &  
CAREGIVER  
GUIDE

# COVID-19 PARENT/CAREGIVER GUIDE

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# FOR IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE

CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT HOTLINE

**1-855-444-3911**

DISASTER DISTRESS HELPLINE

**1-800-985-5990**

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE

**1-800-799-7233**

MICHIGAN CORONAVIRUS HOTLINE

**1-888-535-6136 or [COVID19@MICHIGAN.GOV](mailto:COVID19@MICHIGAN.GOV)**

MICHIGAN 2-1-1

*A one-stop connection to thousands of local agencies and resources that can help—24 hours a day, 7 days a week.*

**Call 211 or Text your ZIP Code to 898211**

**Chat Online - [Click Here](#)**

SUBSTANCE ABUSE & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES  
ADMINISTRATION HOTLINE

**1-800-985-5990 or Text TalkWithUs to 66746**

# PROTECTING YOUR FAMILY

**No matter how prepared you are, an outbreak can be stressful.**

**Follow these recommendations to promote your family's well-being during COVID-19:**

## STAY CONNECTED

Keep up to date on the status of the outbreak and further recommendations by following credible public health sources such as the Centers for Disease Control ([cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)) and Michigan Department of Health & Human Services ([michigan.gov/coronavirus](https://michigan.gov/coronavirus)).

Limit your family's exposure to news surrounding the outbreak and beware of news sources that promote fear and panic.

Utilize available resources to stay connected with your community; phone calls, texts, emails, video calls, social media, and written letters are all great ways to stay in touch. Many schools have additional resources to keep kids engaged with learning and connected with teachers and classmates.

Don't forget to engage with your own household! Check in with your children often to make sure they are coping with the sudden lifestyle change, emphasize that you're excited to have extra time to spend with them, and look at this as an opportunity to bond together!

## MAINTAIN PROPER HYGIENE

Find creative ways to encourage proper hygiene with your children; choose a fun song to sing while washing hands or set up a chart to track & reward consistent hygiene.

Take this opportunity to teach your children new household chores; provide praise while reinforcing a sense of accomplishment and importance of a clean environment.

## STICK TO A SCHEDULE

Remember- this is temporary, and it's essential to maintain consistent exercise, meals, and bedtimes. Set an example for your children by following the routine yourself.

Take advantage of the many distance learning opportunities offered by your school or other educational institutions.

*Source: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network*

# HEALTHY WAYS FOR PARENTS TO COPE

## NORMAL REACTIONS TO A CRISIS

**Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations such as an infectious disease outbreak that requires social distancing, quarantine, or isolation. It's important to recognize these reactions and realize they are normal. You may feel:**

### ANXIETY, FEAR

Over your health status or the health of others.

Due to time taken off from work, loss of income, job security.

Because of the obstacles to securing essential items.

Concern over the responsibility of effectively caring for your children and others in your care.

### ANGER, FRUSTRATION

Because of the uncertainty of how long you will be in this situation.

Over the challenges of being stuck at home, with no time to yourself, potentially while trying to work remotely.

Due to boredom or inability to participate in work or regular activities.

If you think you were exposed to the disease because of others' negligence.

Over insufficient healthcare resources to handle the crisis.

### HELPLESS

Due to a lack of control over the situation.

### LONELINESS

Due to feeling cut off from the world, your community, and loved ones.

### DEPRESSED

Symptoms of depression include feelings of hopelessness, changes in appetite, sleeping too little or too much.

### TEMPTATION

A desire to use alcohol or drugs to cope.

The urge to take your anger, frustration, anxiety, or sadness out on others.

*Source: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network*

# HEALTHY WAYS FOR PARENTS TO COPE MANAGING YOUR OWN RESPONSE

Check out these ways to manage your response to the outbreak:

## SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS

Modify your daily activities to meet the current reality of your situation. Focus on what you CAN accomplish, not what you are unable to do. Celebrate the small victories, especially when it comes to your children.

## SHOW YOURSELF COMPASSION

Try building more compassion, not only towards others, but also towards yourself. Try to recognize self-defeating statements and replace them with more encouraging thoughts. Self-compassion is known to enhance life-satisfaction, overall psychological and emotional well-being and mood.

## EXERCISE

Study shows that people who exercised adequately may be less likely to feel as stressed out, depressed, and lonely as compared to others. Even light exercise like a short walk can make a difference.

## INTERACT WITH FAMILY & FRIENDS

Make it a point to have some meaningful conversations with loved ones/ friends as often as possible. If you do not have family members around and are having difficulty initiating or maintaining friendships, seek professional help from a therapist. Therapy can help you develop a better relationship with yourself which itself can reduce loneliness and in turn, can enhance other relationships. Even one good relationship can make a marked difference.

## MAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

Time alone is important! Don't feel guilty for taking a walk by yourself, enjoying a warm bubble bath, or whatever makes you feel at ease. Your kids won't mind a little extra screen time.

**Remember, you are a role model for your children.  
How you handle this stressful situation will affect how your children manage their worries.**

Source: *The National Child Traumatic Stress Network*

# HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH A CRISIS

## WHAT TO EXPECT & HOW TO RESPOND

Regardless of your child's age, he or she may feel upset or have other strong emotions during the outbreak. Some children react right away, while others may show signs of difficulty much later. How a child reacts and the common signs of distress can vary according to the child's age, previous experiences, and how the child typically copes with stress.

AGE	REACTIONS	HELPFUL RESPONSES
PRE-SCHOOL (3-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of being alone, bad dreams</li> <li>• Speech difficulties</li> <li>• Loss of bladder/bowel control; constipation, bed-wetting</li> <li>• Change in appetite</li> <li>• Increased temper tantrums, whining, or clinging behaviors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patience and tolerance</li> <li>• Provide reassurance (verbal and physical)</li> <li>• Encourage expression through play, reenactment, story-telling</li> <li>• Allow short-term changes in sleep arrangements</li> <li>• Plan calming, comforting activities before bedtime</li> <li>• Maintain regular family routines</li> <li>• Avoid media exposure</li> </ul>
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (6-12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irritability, whining, aggressive behavior</li> <li>• Clinging, nightmares</li> <li>• Sleep/appetite disturbance</li> <li>• Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches)</li> <li>• Withdrawal from peers, loss of interest</li> <li>• Competition for parents' attention</li> <li>• Forgetfulness about chores and new information learned at school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patience, tolerance, and reassurance</li> <li>• Play sessions and staying in touch with friends through</li> <li>• Regular exercise and stretching</li> <li>• Engage in educational activities (workbooks, educational games)</li> <li>• Participate in structured household chores</li> <li>• Set gentle but firm limits</li> <li>• Discuss the current outbreak; encourage questions &amp; include what is being done in the family/community</li> <li>• Encourage expression through play and conversation</li> <li>• Help family create ideas for enhancing health promotion behaviors and maintaining family routines</li> <li>• Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school</li> <li>• Address any stigma or discrimination occurring and clarify misinformation</li> </ul>
TEENS (13-18)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical symptoms (headaches, rashes, etc.)</li> <li>• Sleep/appetite disturbance</li> <li>• Agitation or decrease in energy, apathy</li> <li>• Ignoring health promotion behaviors</li> <li>• Isolating from peers and loved ones</li> <li>• Concerns about stigma and injustices</li> <li>• Avoiding or cutting school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patience, tolerance, and reassurance</li> <li>• Encourage continuation of routines</li> <li>• Encourage discussion of outbreak experience with peers, family (but do not force)</li> <li>• Stay in touch with friends through phone, Internet, video games</li> <li>• Participate in family routines, including chores, supporting younger siblings, and planning strategies to enhance health promotion behaviors</li> <li>• Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school</li> <li>• Discuss and address stigma, prejudice and potential injustices occurring during outbreak</li> </ul>

Children react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with a disaster calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

Source: *The National Child Traumatic Stress Network*

# HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH A CRISIS

## TALKING THROUGH COVID-19

Communication is key during the outbreak. While it may seem safer to shelter children from potentially scary information, you can actually help them feel more at ease by calmly talking through the situation together. Focus on supporting children by encouraging questions and helping them understand the current situation.

### REMAIN CALM & REASSURING

Remember that children will react to both what you say and how you say it. They will pick up cues from the conversations you have with them and with others.

Provide comfort and a bit of extra patience.

Clarify misinformation or misunderstandings about how the virus is spread and that not every cough or sneeze means that they or others have COVID-19.

### MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE TO LISTEN & TALK

Make time to talk. Be sure children know they can come to you when they have questions.

Encourage them to talk about their feelings and be sure to validate them.

Help them express their feelings through drawing or other activities

### BE MINDFUL OF YOUR LANGUAGE

Remember that viruses can make anyone sick, regardless of a person's race or ethnicity. Avoid making assumptions about who might have COVID-19.

Give children information that is truthful and appropriate for their age and developmental level.

Consider having a separate discussion with young children in order to use language they can understand and to address specific fears or misconceptions they may have.

### EMPHASIZE YOUR SUPPORT

Reassure your children that you will take them to get medical care if needed.

Check back in with your children on a regular basis or when the situation changes.

*Source: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network*



# CONNECTING WITH YOUR CHILD

## CONVERSATION PROMPTS

Being intentional and specific when asking questions will allow you to facilitate meaningful conversation, aiding in your child's development as an individual as well as your growth as a strong, happy, and connected family.

### TO GET TO KNOW YOUR CHILD BETTER

- What traits do you look for when you're making friends and why?
- What's your favorite thing about yourself?
- What's something that you find embarrassing and why?
- What goal(s) do you have for yourself?

### TO ENHANCE FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

- What's your favorite thing about your family and why?
- What are some things you've learned from your family?
- If you could make three family rules, what would they be?
- What should we do more of as a family? What do you wish we did less of?
- What do you like best about your siblings? What about your siblings do you find challenging?

### TO HELP SHOW GRATITUDE

- What was the best part about your day and why?
- What are some things you feel grateful for today and why?
- What are some things that you don't need, but you're really happy to have?
- What are some things that are easy to complain about, but can actually be really great?

### TO HELP DEVELOP IMAGINATION

- What's something that makes you excited?
- What do you dream about? What do you wonder?
- If you wrote a book or made a movie, what would it be about?
- If you could have any superpower, what would it be and why?
- What color is the happiest? What color is the angriest? What color is the most excited?

### TO DEVELOP EMPATHY

- How were you able to be kind to someone today?
- How do you think other people feel about the way that you treat them?
- How can you support someone you see who is feeling down, being teased, etc.?
- If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be and why?

### TO DEVELOP MENTAL STRENGTH

- What's your favorite topic/subject to learn about?
- What feeling is the most uncomfortable for you?
- How do you face your fears when you have them?
- Who helps you achieve your goals?

# CONNECTING WITH YOUR CHILD

## ACTIVITIES TO DO TOGETHER

**Take advantage of this extra time with your children to have fun and engage in creative activities together. Here are some ideas with links to instructions:**

### OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

- Organize an educational scavenger hunt
- Go on a nature walk (learn about trees & plants, insects, birds, etc.)
- Do a gardening project
- Set up an obstacle course

### INDOOR ACTIVITIES

- Build a blanket fort
- Throw a dance party (Don't forget to play both of your favorite songs!)
- Put on a fashion show
- Design a Masking Tape Race Track
- DIY memory game
- Learn a magic trick
- Take up yoga
- Write letters to family & friends
- Look through family pictures & home videos
- Make a time capsule
- Bake your favorite treat
- Have a Career Day- ask your child what they want to be when they grow up and spend the day learning about the profession

### ARTS & CRAFTS

- Make a thumb print family tree while learning about family history
- Finger Paint
- Make instruments out of recyclables
- Learn origami
- Create window art

# CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Plotting a course through the COVID-19 pandemic is a trying experience for all. Caregivers supporting individuals with autism during this time face extra challenges. These 7 strategies and the associated resources and examples will allow individuals with autism to better understand COVID19, cope with the many changes associated with COVID-19, and practice communication, social, and adaptive skills that may reduce some of the trials during this very uncertain time.

## SUPPORT UNDERSTANDING

Describe the virus and current situation (e.g. closures, social distancing) in concrete language and terms and avoid flowery or abstract phrasing.

Use a social narrative, a story that clarifies a situation and possible responses through modified text, photos, or the use of technology. Click [here](#) for examples.

Provide visual supports to offer guidance on coronavirus specific actions and behaviors.



## OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPRESSION

Consider providing multiple opportunities for family members to express their feelings as they are able—through family and individual discussions, writing activities, movie making, or play.

Feelings and needs may be communicated through alternate forms of expression such as the use of augmentative and alternative communication (e.g. iPad, pictures), listening or playing music, dance, yoga, and various visual art forms.

## PRIORITIZE COPING AND CALMING SKILLS

Ideally, individuals with autism have some coping and calming strategies in their repertoire of skills to access with support during their most anxious times.

These may include rocking in a rocking chair, listening to music on headphones, deep breathing, watching a preferred video clip, brief periods of vigorous exercise, or accessing a favorite activity or material.

If coping or calming strategies are not yet part of the routine, caregivers can prioritize the teaching of these skills during this time of uncertainty.

*Source: UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute Autism Team*

# CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

## MAINTAIN ROUTINES

**Sleep/wake routines:** Maintaining physical health is key for all family members and ensuring proper sleep is an important contributor. Sleep disturbances are more common in individuals with autism, thus extra attention may be required to support good sleep hygiene and maintain bedtime and waking routines.

**Household chores/daily living skills:** Taking part in structured household chores and routines is a recommended strategy to support children and young adults coping with stress related to COVID-19.

Expanding the use of a visual schedule, and using one more regularly throughout the day, may help facilitate participation in activities at home and reduce anxiety.

## BUILD NEW ROUTINES

**Transition off screens.** Establishing a clear, consistent, and concrete routine for this transition can better prepare the individual for the coming transition and offer support throughout.

**Offer choices.** In a time of crisis, when most people feel like so much is out of their control, providing choices can increase a sense of autonomy and motivation. Creating regular opportunities across the day where family members have a voice about what happens and when it happens can serve as an effective anxiety reducing strategy and a communication tool.

## FOSTER CONNECTIONS FROM A DISTANCE

Caregivers may need to check in to ensure social contact is continuing via text or direct messaging, and/or build in opportunities for daily social contact with family, friends, neighbors, teachers, or others via FaceTime, What's App, Google Hangout, Marco Polo, or other apps. Scheduling time to connect with others via online platforms to attend religious services, play chess, participate in socially engaged gaming, complete online schoolwork, or virtually volunteer are ways to safely promote social interaction and stave off isolation.

## BE AWARE OF CHANGING BEHAVIORS

Individuals with autism may not be able to verbally express their fear, frustration, and anxiety about the many changes and/or their health, so these expressions may be demonstrated through other means. Caregivers should be aware of the behavior of individuals with autism during these uncertain times and be alert for signs of anxiety and depression. These may include a change in sleeping or eating patterns, increases in repetitive behaviors, excessive worry or rumination, increased agitation or irritability, or decreases in self-care.

# WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU'RE EXPECTING DURING COVID-19

## PREGNANT WOMEN

It is not currently known if pregnant women have a greater chance of getting sick from COVID-19 than the general public nor whether they are more likely to have serious illness as a result.

Pregnant women should do the same things as the general public to avoid infection. You can help stop the spread of COVID-19 by taking these actions:

- Cover your cough (using your elbow is a good technique)
- Avoid people who are sick
- Clean your hands often using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer

## DURING DELIVERY

It is not currently known if a pregnant woman with COVID-19 can pass the virus that causes COVID-19 to her fetus or baby during pregnancy or delivery. No infants born to mothers with COVID-19 have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. In these cases, which are a small number, the virus was not found in samples of amniotic fluid or breastmilk.

## INFANTS

We do not know at this time what if any risk is posed to infants of a pregnant woman who has COVID-19. There have been a small number of reported problems with pregnancy or delivery (e.g. preterm birth) in babies born to mothers who tested positive for COVID-19 during their pregnancy. However, it is not clear that these outcomes were related to maternal infection.

## BREASTFEEDING

Breast milk is the best source of nutrition for most infants. However, much is unknown about COVID-19. Whether and how to start or continue breastfeeding should be determined by the mother in coordination with her family and healthcare providers. A mother with confirmed COVID-19 or who is a symptomatic PUI should take all possible precautions to avoid spreading the virus to her infant, including washing her hands before touching the infant and wearing a face mask, if possible, while feeding at the breast. If expressing breast milk with a manual or electric breast pump, the mother should wash her hands before touching any pump or bottle parts and follow recommendations for proper pump cleaning after each use. If possible, consider having someone who is well feed the expressed breast milk to the infant.

*Source: Centers for Disease Control*

# STRENGTHENING FAMILIES & THE 5 PROTECTIVE FACTORS

**Strengthening Families™** is a research-informed approach including everyday actions parents and providers can use to increase family strengths and enhance child development. These five key protective factors are attributes that serve as buffers, helping parents find resources, support, or coping strategies that allow them to parent effectively, even under stress.

## PARENTAL RESILIENCE

Managing stress and functioning well when faced with challenges, adversity and trauma.

## SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, instrumental and spiritual support.

## KNOWLEDGE OF PARENTING AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Understanding child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development.

## CONCRETE SUPPORT IN TIMES OF NEED

Access to concrete support and services that address a family's needs and help minimize stress caused by challenges.

## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF CHILDREN

Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions and establish and maintain relationships.

*Source: Strengthening Families*

# RESOURCES

Click the links below for more resources & assistance:

## [MEET UP AND EAT UP - MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION](#)

A map created to ensure that children could continue to receive nutritious meals during long school vacations, when they do not have access to the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs. Use the map to locate a site near you.

## [FREE EDUCATIONAL APPS, GAMES & WEBSITES](#)

You don't always have to pay big bucks for great educational games, apps, and websites: These resources are either completely free or full of quality free content for kids to explore.

## [ONLINE THERAPY PROGRAMS](#)

## [APPLY FOR ASSISTANCE WITH HEALTH INSURANCE, FOOD & OTHER NEEDS](#)

## [APPLY FOR UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS](#)