

Article #2

Protective Factor: Creating Family Rules for COVID-19 times (otherwise known as policies)

Hi everyone! This week's article is going to focus on creating family rules or policies. Since we find ourselves in constant contact with our family right now, it can start to feel a little cramped no matter the size of our home. It is important to build in outdoor time and personal time, so everyone gets a break. Think about how your family can have rules such as: everyone has a right to personal time (whatever space they have), or (bedroom time is OK). Another rule or policy to consider would be the importance of getting fresh air every day (either sitting by an open window, weather permitting, taking a walk if possible, or sitting in the sun). Rules (aka policies) can and should be positive and support health (mentally and physically) as well as rules regarding what behaviors are not permitted.

So, some of you may be thinking "my kids KNOW the rules". I have a question for you: Have you discussed the family rules with your kids lately, or are you assuming they know? Full disclosure moment here: I did not even think about this until I attended a prevention training program for parents. Really, it makes sense, right? We all are more likely to follow rules that we were able to have input in. Your kids may even have great ideas that you haven't thought of (it happens to me all the time:).

Homework: As a family create a list of what your family values are, then break them down into action steps or expectations. When you have done that, come up with rewards and consequences for each. This helps your kids be crystal clear on what your expectations are AND what happens if they follow the rules or break them.

Some examples include: no drug or alcohol use, follow screen time rules, be kind to others (with hands, words, actions), tell the truth, ask for help, avoid get togethers that are in-person, check in with a friend by phone/text at least once a day (someone outside your home), etc.

Consequences and rewards should match the rule or policy: if you use alcohol or drugs then you lose your phone/tablet, earn extra phone time, do extra chores, grounded from friends/technology,

Here are some examples of what you could include- don't forget to involve your kids in this:

Family Policy Topics

Chores- who, when, how

Developmental Stages- match rules with ages of children (older kids get more choice and freedom)

Family Fun activities- games, movie night, music

Technology- when is it ok and for how long?

Schedule a Family Meeting- preferably weekly

Drug and Alcohol use- for children and adults

Manistee Substance, Education, & Awareness (SEA) Coalition was started in 2016, formed as a work group of the Human Services Collaborative Body (HSCB). The SEA uses the Communities That Care framework that looks at local data to determine priorities for programs in our community. For more information you can visit www.communitiesthatcare.net. The SEA is funded through funds from Public Act 2 (Liquor Tax Funds) through the Northern Michigan Regional Entity. Sarah Garthe is the program facilitator of the SEA and is a Certified Prevention Specialist. Anyone in the community can join the SEA Coalition, please send an email to Sarah Garthe @ sgarthe@centrawellness.org for more information.