

Supporting Students with Disabilities During COVID-19 and Afterwards



A Guide for Emotional Well-Being

Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services



Table of Contents

A MESSAGE FOR EDUCATORS.....	1
RESOURCES FOR IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE.....	2
THE TRAUMATIC IMPACT OF A CRISIS	3
POPULATIONS AT RISK	5
STATE OF MARYLAND ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS & RESOURCE INFORMATION.....	7
RESOURCES TO SHARE WITH FAMILIES	8
EARLY CHILDHOOD	8
SAFETY INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES.....	10
BEHAVIOR RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES	12
WELLNESS FOR CAREGIVERS & EDUCATORS.....	15
ADDITIONAL RESOURCE LINKS	18

A Message for Educators

FROM THE ASSISTANT STATE SUPERINTENDENT

It is time to get creative...to engage children and families

Schools and their staff have a critical role, not only in delivering educational opportunities to children, but in offering students the ability to interact with teachers and receive important behavioral and emotional health supports. As an educator, you are one of the most critical sources of connection, education, and well-being for students with disabilities and their families.

During a time of crisis, like the one we are living in, this valuable relationship may be disrupted, which can lead to families and children becoming more isolated, vulnerable, and in need of outside services and support. Maintaining these connections now and as we come back to school is vital; it is time to get creative to be able to engage children and families through virtual means.

Assessing safety, providing support, and ensuring individual children's needs are met can be very challenging as children are not currently in your classrooms and it is unknown when they will be returning to their school buildings. This resource is intended to provide information and strategies to support educators and families during these challenging times and as we return to what will be our new normal.

Marcella E. Franczkowski, M.S.

Assistant State Superintendent

Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services

Resources for Immediate Assistance

COVID-19 Assistance and Information

HOGAN ADMINISTRATION'S COVID-19 RESPONSE
<https://governor.maryland.gov/coronavirus/>

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH: CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)
<https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/>

MARYLAND EMERGENCY RELIEF
<https://mema.maryland.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

MARYLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS RESOURCES AND UPDATES - COVID-19
<http://marylandpublicschools.org/newroom/Pages/COVID-19/index.aspx>

Child Abuse

MARYLAND CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT REPORTING
<http://dhs.maryland.gov/child-protective-services/reporting-suspected-child-abuse-or-neglect/>

Crisis and Support Hotlines

Child Care

MARYLAND ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL - CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE
1-877-261-0060

Crisis Help

211 MARYLAND
Dial 2-1-1 or text 898211 in Maryland to find information & referrals for Maryland programs & services 24 hours a day. PRESS 1 FOR CRISIS HELP

FIRST CALL FOR HELP MARYLAND
410-685-0525

BALTIMORE CRISIS RESPONSE
410-433-5255

BALTIMORE CHILD & ADOLESCENT RESPONSE SYSTEM (BCARS)
410-752-2272

NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL ILLNESS
1-800-950-6264

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE
1800-799-SAFE (7233)

Substance Abuse Help

NATIONAL SUBSTANCE ABUSE & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION HOTLINE
1-800-662-HELP (4357)

FIRST STEP YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES CENTER MARYLAND
(410) 521-3800

Suicide Help

MARYLAND SUICIDE HOTLINE
1-800-422-0009

THE TRAUMATIC IMPACT OF A CRISIS

SOME CHILDREN AND STUDENTS MAY HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA IN THEIR LIVES MAKING THEM MORE VULNERABLE TO THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA DURING TIMES OF CRISIS.

Compared to adults, children, including those with disabilities, may be more vulnerable to the emotional impact of traumatic events that disrupt their daily lives. It is important to support and protect children's emotional well-being as the impact of COVID-19 unfolds and consider its impact moving forward.



Children, particularly those with disabilities, may struggle with significant adjustments to their routines (e.g., schools and child care closures, social distancing, home confinement), which may interfere with their sense of structure, predictability, and security. Young people—even infants and toddlers—are keen observers of people and environments, and they notice and react to stress in their parents and other caregivers, peers, and community members. They may ask direct questions about what is happening now, or what will happen in the future, and may behave differently in reaction to strong feelings (e.g., fear, worry, sadness, anger). They may act out without words that indicate their discomfort or fears. Children also may worry about their own safety and the safety of their loved ones, how they will get their basic needs met (e.g., food, shelter, clothing), and uncertainties about the future.

While most children will eventually return to their typical functioning when they receive consistent support from sensitive and responsive caregivers, others are at risk of exacerbating current or developing significant mental health problems, including trauma-related stress, anxiety, and depression. Children with prior trauma or pre-existing mental, physical, or developmental problems—and those whose parents struggle with mental health disorders, substance misuse, or economic instability—are at especially high risk.

Recommendations to support and protect children's emotional well-being

- Understand that reactions to the pandemic and other crises may vary among children.
- Ensure the presence of a sensitive and responsive caregiver.
- Social distancing should not mean social isolation.
- Provide age-appropriate information.
- Create a safe physical and emotional environment by practicing the 3 R's: Reassurance, Routines, and Regulation.
- Keep children busy.
- Increase children's self-efficacy.
- Create opportunities for caregivers (which may mean yourself!) to take care of themselves.
- Seek professional help if children show signs of trauma that do not resolve relatively quickly.
- Emphasize strengths, hope, and positivity.

SOURCE: CHILD TRENDS

Resources on Trauma

[Supporting Children During Coronavirus \(COVID19\) - NCTSN](#)

[COVID-19, School Cancellation, and Trauma](#)

[Talking to Children About Coronavirus \(COVID19\)](#)

[Conscious Discipline: Free Covid19 Resources for Families and Educators](#)

Older Children and Teenagers

Research suggests that adolescents and high school students are more dependent on social interaction for well-being than any other age group.



Mary Alvord, mental health counselor and psychologist who runs a Maryland-based mental health and psychotherapy practice targeted to young people, said the client emails that overflowed her email in recent days are indicative of what's worrying teens nationwide: "How are we going to keep our social connections?" "How are we going to stay in touch?" "How are we going to not miss things?"

Understand this experience is different for teens who may see themselves as invincible and push back at social distancing restrictions and stay-at-home orders.

- Try to help them understand how the virus can still spread among people who do not appear visibly sick.
- Empathize with their frustration over not being able to see their friends or attend social events.
- Help your teens with remote learning by setting up a workable schedule with defined breaks.
- Remind them of the importance of getting enough sleep with regular bedtime and wake time.
- It is tempting to sleep too much but being active is important for their mental health.
- Validate your teen's frustrations and concerns with the current situation.
- If your teen begins to engage in behaviors that cause concern (appears depressed, spends too much time alone, is withdrawn, etc.) seek the advice of mental health professionals.

Resources on Youth

[Covid Response](#)

[Just for Teens: A Personal Plan for Managing Stress](#)

[NIDA for Teens: Teens - Drug Information](#)

POPULATIONS AT RISK

Families with Mental Health Needs

Today, more students, families, and school staff than ever before are experiencing increased levels of stress, anxiety, and isolation, and will need mental health support. Families experiencing mental health needs during times of lower stress may be at even more risk during this time. Limited access to services, disruptions in income and children remaining home for extended periods of time may exacerbate existing conditions. The resources below may assist families and others to understand and support.

Mental Health America

[Living with Mental Illness during COVID-19 Outbreak– Preparing for your Wellness](#)
[Mental Health and COVID-19 – Information and Resources](#)

CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19](#)

SOURCES: MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA AND CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

Families Affected by Substance Use

According to NIDA, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, “As people across the U.S. and the rest of the world contend with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), the research community should be alert to the possibility that it could hit some populations with substance use disorders (SUDs) particularly hard. Because it attacks the lungs, the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 could be an especially serious threat to those who smoke tobacco or marijuana or who vape. People with opioid use disorder (OUD) and methamphetamine use disorder may also be vulnerable due to those drugs’ effects on respiratory and pulmonary health.”

For those families that educators recognize as having current or previous struggles with substance use, whether as a result of COVID-19 or not, it may be valuable to review the following resources:

National Institute on Drug Abuse

[National Institute on Drug Abuse: COVID-19: Potential Implications for Individuals with Substance Use Disorders](#)

Groups that Occur by Phone:

[AA Phone Meetings](#)

[NA Meetings by Phone](#)

Groups that Occur Virtually:

[Alcoholics Anonymous Online](#)

[In the Rooms: A Global Recovery Community](#)

[My Recovery](#)

Families Impacted by Domestic Violence

The impact of increased stress and anxiety, coupled with isolation, may result in increased family discord and arguments. For families already impacted by family and domestic violence, limited interactions with the outside community may result in lowered awareness of domestic violence in the home. Limited access to services, disruptions in income and children remaining home for extended periods of time may exacerbate existing conditions.

If you notice decreased contact from someone you know is a survivor, do not assume that it is by their own choice, or a natural result of the crisis. It may be due to the chaos of the new situation or the active interference of the perpetrator. If you have a concern about the perpetrator's pattern of behavior, it is helpful to know about services available to the family in that area.

Take extra care when speaking to a survivor by phone, text or video chat. Assume that their calls and communications are being monitored by a perpetrator living in the home until you have partnered with the survivor to determine her freedom to talk openly.

Understanding the perpetrator's pattern of behavior as the family's situation changes is beneficial. Questions about what the survivor is most worried about related to the changes in the family's situation may be helpful.

Safety planning with adult and child survivors is essential. In many areas, women's sector and domestic abuse workers are ramping up their ability to work virtually with clients. Learn about the remote resources being developed in your area.

SOURCE: SAFE AND TOGETHER INSTITUTE

[Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence](#)

Phone: (301) 429-3601

[Women's Law Center of Maryland](#)

Phone: 410-321-8761

[House of Ruth Maryland: Home](#)

Phone: 410-889-7884

[The National Domestic Violence Hotline](#)

Phone: 1-877-842-8461 or 301-952-0063

STATE OF MARYLAND ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS & RESOURCE INFORMATION

Housing Resources

Governor Hogan's Executive Order dated March 16, 2020 provides protection from eviction of tenants suffering loss of income due to COVID-19:

A state of emergency and catastrophic health emergency was proclaimed on March 5, 2020, to control and prevent the spread of COVID-19 within the state. COVID-19 is a respiratory disease that spreads easily from person to person and may result in serious illness or death, is a public health catastrophe and has been confirmed in several Maryland counties.

The spread of COVID-19 is likely to result in the loss of work and loss of income for some residents of Maryland, which may impact their ability to pay for rental housing, and potentially result in their eviction.

To treat, prevent, or reduce the spread of COVID-19 caused by the transmission of the novel coronavirus, it may become medically necessary and reasonable to require individuals to remain in isolation or quarantine at their homes or to remain indoors.

To avoid the serious health, welfare, and safety consequences that may result if Marylanders lose their rental housing as a result of COVID-19, it is necessary and reasonable to impose a moratorium on certain evictions. This is in effect until the state of emergency is terminated.

SOURCE: GOVERNOR HOGAN EXECUTIVE ORDER DATED MARCH 16, 2020

Food Resources

Currently, the state is providing 3 meals a day and a snack to students who need it during the school closure. Call your local school or visit the websites below to locate food distribution for youth during the closure.

[School Districts Serving Meals During School Closures - Maryland | Maryland Maryland Summer Sites](#)

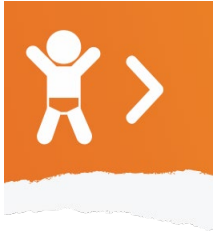
You can also visit [Maryland Meal Site Search](#) to find locations by zip code.

United Way 2-1-1 Hotline

United Way hosts a hotline to help individuals access necessary resources during times of crisis. Open 24 hours a day. Dial 2-1-1 from a cellphone or landline. If you cannot reach United Way through the 2-1-1 hotline, dial 410-685-0525 (in the greater Baltimore area) or 1-800-492-0618 (elsewhere in Maryland).

[211 Helpline](#)

Resources to Share with Families



Early Childhood

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCA)

"Early childhood care and education (ECCE) is more than preparation for primary school. It aims at the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing. ECCE has the possibility to nurture caring, capable and responsible future citizens." Therefore, resources can be very different and individualized.

When young children experience a change in their routines, they may be confused or upset. But most children under three lack the words they need to share their feelings. They may "tell" you through their behavior: by being fussy, by withdrawing, by going back to earlier behaviors like wanting their pacifier or waking frequently at night. It's easy to become frustrated, since as adults, we're already managing so much. But when you encounter a challenging behavior, pause to think about what your child might be telling you. How could you respond in a way that meets their needs best? For example, if your child misses seeing their grandparent who provided child care before COVID-19, you can arrange for a video chat or by explaining the separation.

SOURCE: THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF CHILD & ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY



Common Ways Young Children React to Trauma Common Reactions in Children

Young children are highly affected by the quarantine and the anxiety of their parents and other adults. Adults may think that children will not notice all the changes and the stress, but they are very sensitive to what is going on. Here are some of the ways in which children react to the stress and some of the things you can do to help them.

Frequent crying; difficulty staying still; problems falling asleep and staying asleep; nightmares; clinging to their caregivers; fears of being alone; repetitive play (they may repeat over and over again what they have heard; they may try to take special care of their dolls or stuffed animals and hide or cover them). Some children may become very aggressive and angry. Others may withdraw from contact. Some may act like younger children, lose their toilet training, want a bottle rather than drinking from a glass, want to eat baby food or refuse to eat, talk like a much younger child.

Young children are very sensitive to the stress experienced by their caretakers. It affects their ability to act in their usual ways and affects their emotions. Most often, they cannot talk about their fears and distress. Caretakers can protect them from some of the stress the adults feel, but caretakers must be aware that the children are upset.

Things you can do to help children:

- Routines are very important for young children. Disasters, forced isolation, and other traumatic situations often break their usual routines. Creating new routines or re-establishing usual routines can help children feel safe. Keeping regular mealtimes and bedtimes, setting a daily time to play games together, read to them, or sing songs together all help.
- Support from parents or caregivers is very important during periods of stress and during the time after the acute disaster is over. Parents may be physically present but not available emotionally because they are so stressed themselves. It is important to make time to reassure young children and spend time with them.
- Explain why things are different. Young children may not understand why things have changed (like why they cannot go outside or play with other children) but talking with them will help them feel supported by you. Help the children in a way that is appropriate for their age. Keep explanations simple.
- Take care of yourself. This is very important. Even if young children are not directly exposed to the trauma, they can recognize stress and worry in older children and adults in the house.
- If young children have been sent to stay with family members in another city talk to them using electronic means as often as possible during the day and at bedtime. If they are at home, try to arrange for them to see other children using a cell phone.

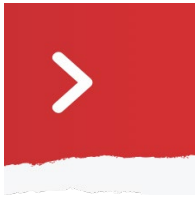
SOURCE: LSU HEALTH

Related Resources:

[Maryland Pyramid Model SEFEL - Coping with COVID-19](#)

[How to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus \(PBS\)](#)

National Institute for Early Childhood Education Research: [Taking Protective Steps During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)



Safety Information for Families

Normal Reactions to Crisis and What You Can Do to Manage

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations such as an infectious disease outbreak that requires social distancing, quarantine, or isolation. No matter how prepared you are, any crisis can be stressful. It's important to recognize normal reactions to crisis and ways your family can respond to promote well-being.

Normal Reactions to Crisis	What You Can Do
<p>You may feel:</p> <p>ANXIETY, FEAR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <p>ANGER, FRUSTRATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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, possibly 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. <p>HELPLESSNESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to a lack of control over the situation. <p>LONELINESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to feeling cut off from the world, your community, and loved ones. <p>DEPRESSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symptoms of depression include: feelings of hopelessness, changes in appetite, sleeping too little or too much. <p>TEMPTATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A desire to use alcohol or drugs to cope. The urge to take your anger, frustration, anxiety, or sadness out on others. <p><small>SOURCE: THE NATIONAL CHILD TRAUMATIC STRESS NETWORK</small></p>	<p>Consider the following recommendations to promote your family's well-being during COVID-19:</p> <p>STAY CONNECTED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 and Prevention (CDC) and Maryland Department of Health. 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! <p>MAINTAIN PROPER HYGIENE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 and 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. <p>STICK TO A SCHEDULE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.

Resources

[Trauma- Informed Parenting during our "Staycation"](#)

[Children's Mental Health Matters: Coronavirus Resources](#)

[Talking to Children About Coronavirus \(COVID19\)](#)

[Young Children at Home during the COVID-19 Outbreak: The Importance of Self-Care \(Zero to Three\)](#)

[SAMHSA: Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health During and Infectious Disease Outbreak \(English\)/\(Spanish\)](#)

Maintaining Routines

Maintaining the routines that you had in place prior to the outbreak is very important. Children and families benefit from knowing what to expect. Consider the following needs when developing or maintaining your routine

- Social needs: attention and connection
- Physical needs: food, cleanliness, and sleep
- Emotional needs: stress release and well-being

SOURCE: BRIGHT HORIZONS



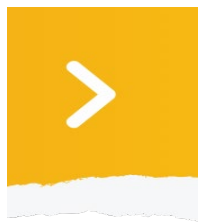
Routines for Children with Special Needs

These 7 strategies and the associated resources and examples will allow individuals with special needs to better understand COVID-19, 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.

Considerations for children with special needs:

- Offer Support and Understanding
- Offer Opportunities for Expression
- Prioritize Coping and Calming
- Maintain Routines
- Build New Routines and Adjust as Needed
- Foster Connections from a Distance
- Be Aware of Changing Behaviors

SOURCE: ASSERT



Behavior Resources for Families

Behavior Supports

[Resources for Supporting Children's Emotional Well-being during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Prevent

It is best to prepare children for any potential changes. Make children and youth aware of any changes to their expected schedule or routine as soon as possible and provide reminders. For example, if your son or daughter is accustomed to going to the playground after lunch but now they are all closed, let them know in the morning that the family has to come up with an alternative. If possible, try to provide two to three choices that could be equally enjoyable (e.g. playing a board game as a family, an indoor scavenger hunt, or hide and seek). Have them select another option and then remind them as lunch is prepared of the fun that will be had engaging in the new activity. The important piece is to be both proactive and positive. Children and young adults take their cues from their adult caregivers. If the adult in their life is able to adapt and be calm about these new situations, they will be able to follow suit.

It is important to provide a consistent and stable environment to help everyone feel secure. This will lower anxiety, frustration, and fears. Consistency is key to supporting positive behaviors. When children and youth know what the rules are and what you expect from them, challenging behavior is less likely to occur. This is because there is less uncertainty when expectations are made clear.

It is essential that children be recognized for small changes that they make. It is fundamental to creating an environment where they feel valued and supported.

- Talk to children about changes to their normal routine
- Prepare them for unexpected transitions
- Offer choices whenever possible (2 or 3 is optimal)
- Give a substitute item when usual items are unavailable
- Provide support and verbal praise (especially for cooperation)
- Move away when behavior is unsafe, talk to a professional for advice

Respond

At times, when a behavior occurs, the most important tool in your toolbox is being calm. If you are unable to be calm, then sometimes it is best to walk away from the situation to give you and your child a break from one another. There will always be another opportunity to practice calm intervention. The response to the behavior depends on the behavior, the age of the child, and the situation. For example, younger children who are crying may be redirected when unable to have a preferred item that is not available. However, if violent or aggressive behavior is displayed, your safety is of critical importance. You must know your limitations to keep yourself well and able to continue to provide the care a child requires.

Older children and young adults may be capable of more aggressive behavior, again move away from them for safety and wait until the behavior stops. In both instances, if your child showing increased aggressive behavior seek assistance from the professional behavior staff at your child's school. Request that they help assess the situation and determine the need for further professional help.

- Catch your child doing something good and offer praise
- Try a reward chart (use stars or stickers that count towards a treat)
- Engage your child in helping around the home
- Redirect to another activity to compete with behavior
- Ignore behaviors like crying, tantrums, whining
- Move away when a behavior is unsafe, talk to a professional for advice

Related Resources

[Managing Child Behavior Problems at Home](#)
[Supporting Families During COVID-19](#)
<https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Implementation/family.html#collapse2>
[Challenging Behaviors Tool Kit](#)
[Behavior at Home | Center for Parent Information and Resources](#)

Helping Children Cope

Children may respond differently to situations depending on their age. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) provides an assortment of reactions according to age group, and provides ways adults may respond.

AGE GROUP	REACTIONS	HOW TO HELP
PRESCHOOL	Fear of being alone, bad dreams Speech difficulties Loss of bladder/bowel control, constipation, bed-wetting Change in appetite Increased temper tantrums, whining, or clinging behaviors	Patience and tolerance Provide reassurance (verbal and physical) Encourage expression through play, reenactment, story-telling Allow short-term changes in sleep arrangements Plan calming, comforting activities before bedtime Maintain regular family routines Avoid media exposure
SCHOOL-AGE (ages 6-12)	Irritability, whining, aggressive behavior Clinging, nightmares Sleep/appetite disturbance Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches) Withdrawal from peers, loss of interest Competition for parents’ attention Forgetfulness about chores and new information learned at school	Patience, tolerance, and reassurance Play sessions and staying in touch with friends through telephone and Internet Regular exercise and stretching Engage in educational activities (workbooks, educational games) Participate in structured household chores Set gentle but firm limits Discuss the current outbreak and encourage questions Include what is being done in the family and community Encourage expression through play and conversation Help family create ideas for enhancing health promotion behaviors and maintaining family routines

AGE GROUP	REACTIONS	HOW TO HELP
		Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school Address any stigma or discrimination occurring and clarify misinformation
ADOLESCENT (ages 13-18)	Physical symptoms (headaches, rashes, etc.) Sleep/appetite disturbance Agitation or decrease in energy, apathy Ignoring health promotion behaviors Isolating from peers and loved ones Concerns about stigma and injustices Avoiding/cutting school	Patience, tolerance, and reassurance Encourage continuation of routines Encourage discussion of outbreak experience with peers, family (but do not force) Stay in touch with friends through telephone, Internet, video games Participate in family routines, including chores, supporting younger siblings, and planning strategies to enhance health promotion behaviors Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school Discuss and address stigma, prejudice and potential injustices occurring during outbreak



Wellness for Caregivers & Educators

Wellness

Adverse psychological and behavioral responses to infectious disease outbreaks are common and can include difficulty sleeping, reduced feelings of safety, increased use of alcohol, as well as somatic symptoms (physical symptoms such as lack of energy and general aches and pains). While media can be a useful tool for sharing knowledge, increased exposure can increase distress in children and families.

SOURCE: CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

During this difficult time, taking care of ourselves is of vital importance. Self-care is not selfish or indulgent. It is how we keep ourselves well to ensure we are physically, emotionally, and mentally capable of being there for our family, especially when we have children at home. When you feel calmer, it is easier to be there for your family and meet their needs.

The realities of COVID-19 make self-care even more important. With long periods of uncertainty, other stressors can emerge like concern for family members, worries about lost income, having groceries, balancing job roles with child care, and more. But children need their caregivers and educators to offer a calm, stable, and predictable home base for them, especially now. It is a challenge, but the best way to help children be at their best is to take care of yourself.

Self-Care

Living with the impact of coronavirus has many challenges, and self-care may not seem like a priority, especially while balancing working from home and caring for out of school children. But remember that keeping ourselves supported and sustained is exactly what we need to ensure our families stay strong.

Make Time for Self-Care!

- Pay Attention to How You Are Feeling: pause and reflect before responding to stressful situations. Use deep breathing as needed.
- Do something for Yourself: activities that make you happy, that reduce your stress, that leave you feeling calm and rejuvenated (read a book, cook, do an art project).
- Stay in Touch with Your Support System: physical distancing does not mean isolation. Take advantage of technology to stay in contact with relatives and friends.
- Take Time to Relax: our minds and bodies just need a break. Meditation, mindfulness, and other replenishing activities (yoga, long baths, etc.) are a great way to let go of the pressures of the day.
- Practice Gratitude: focus on the positive aspects of your life (your loving family, having a safe place, being able to work from home, etc.).
- Exercise: think about ways of adapting activities to formats that encourage social distancing:

SOURCE: ZERO TO THREE



Self-Care Resources:

- [Taking Care of Your Emotional Health \(CDC\)](#)
- [Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19 \(CDC\)](#)
- [Self-Care in the Time of Coronavirus](#)
- [Virtual Calming Room](#)

Resilience

Defining Resilience

- Recovering from or adjusting to misfortune or change
- The ability to bounce back
- Overcoming the odds

Nurturing responsive relationships with adult caregivers supports resilience. "Children's brains have the ability to change and reorganize in response to new experiences; therefore, having healthy and consistent interactions with early childhood educators can greatly influence their brain development and their ability to engage successfully in the early childhood setting" (Cole et al. 2013).

Strategies to promote Resilience:

- Positive relationships
- Positive environment

Building Resilience:

- Help meet families' basic needs
- Foster strong responsive parent child relationships
- Promote parents' self-care
- Help parents develop their own self-regulation capacities

SOURCE: PYRAMID MODEL

Adapt and Move Forward!

- Remind yourself and others that the crisis is temporary.
- Tap into memories, experiences and stories that illustrate you and your families' strengths and ability to get through hard times.

Check out The Behavioral Health Administration's Resilience website for resources and activities: [Mind Resilience | Nurture your Well-Being](#).

SOURCE: CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR INFANT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH

Resilience Resources

[COVID-19 Resilience Training](#)

[Resilience Toolkit | Vanderbilt Faculty & Staff Health and Wellness](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE LINKS

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

[Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope With the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

Child Trends

[Resources for Supporting Children's Emotional Well-being during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

The Children's Bureau

[COVID-19 Resources | Children's Bureau](#)

Zero to Three

[Tips for Families: Coronavirus](#)

[Maryland Resources and Services](#)

[Zero to Three - Resources for Professionals](#)

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

[NAMI Maryland Chapter](#)

[Coronavirus Resources](#)

[COVID-19 Resource and Information Guide](#)

Early Childhood Resources

[Resources for Early Childhood Policy Makers \(NIEER\)](#)

[Division of Early Childhood | Supporting Child Care and Early Learning](#)

Helping Kids Deal with Stress/Anxiety

[Talking to Kids About the Coronavirus](#)

[How to Talk to Your Anxious Child or Teen About Coronavirus](#)

[Tips to Support Families Through Coronavirus Pandemic \(Video\)](#)

[Helping Children Cope With Changes Resulting From COVID-19](#)

[Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope With the Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

[Responding to COVID-19 Outbreak Through PBIS](#)

[Creating a PBIS Behavior Teaching Matrix for Remote Instruction](#)

[Getting Back to School after Disruptions: Resources for Making Your School Year Safer, More Predictable, and More Positive](#)

Helping Children with Special Needs

[Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs in Emergencies \(CDC\)](#)

[Keeping Children with Disabilities Safe \(CDC\)](#)

Wellness/Resilience

[Wellness and Resilience Strategies: Mind Section 8](#)

[What can schools do to build resilience in their students?](#)

Resources for Families

[Emergency Resources: Helping Children and Families Cope](#)

[Helping Homebound Children During the Covid-19 Outbreak](#)

[Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress - Talking to Children and Teens about Coronavirus](#)

[Helping Children Cope with Emergencies \(CDC\)](#)

[A Parents Guide to Surviving COVID-19- Strategies to keep children healthy and happy](#)

Maryland's Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Community on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/iECMHMaryland/>

Activities for Students

[COVID-19 and At-Home Resources](#)

[Brain POP Coronavirus](#) (4-minute video, activities, and games)

[PBS How to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus](#) (includes a list of videos, games, and activities about handwashing and staying healthy at the bottom of the article)

[Simple Activities for Children and Adolescents](#) (activities for students with no available screen time)

[Brain Break – MindUP at Home](#) - teaches students how to take a brain break (breathing, relaxation mindful lessons)

University of Maryland COVID-19

[COVID-19 Resources for Children's Services](#)

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