



PREVENTION DURING A CRISIS

TIPS FOR EDUCATORS & CAREGIVERS



alaska childrens trust

TOGETHER WE CAN PREVENT CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

alaskachildrenstrust.org

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YOU PLAY A KEY ROLE

Alaska's educators play a significant role in ensuring healthy outcomes for all our children; from preventing child abuse before it occurs to intervening when abuse is suspected. COVID-19 brings a new set of challenges, which we have never experienced. Historically, child abuse and neglect increases when families have faced stressors such as housing instability, financial hardships, isolation, anxiety and lack of access to childcare. During times of crisis, it becomes even more important to have strong connections between school personnel and children and their families.

Maintaining physical distancing is new to most of us. In a world where connections are critical to the health and wellbeing of children and families, it can be difficult to provide support and ensure safety. This guide is one of many steps we are taking to provide educators and caregivers with tools to support families and children, when they need us most. Visit www.alaskchildrenstrust.org and follow us on social media to learn more about working together to support Alaska's families and children.





FOR IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTING HOTLINE

1-800-478-4444

Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Report Child Abuse
reportchildabuse@alaska.gov

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE

1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

2-1-1

alaska211.org

Call and email 2-1-1 to find help in the community. Information on healthcare, food, housing, and other assistance. Free and available in almost any language - alaska211@ak.org

COVID-19 ALASKA HOTLINE

1-800-478-2221



RESOURCES

HELP ME GROW ALASKA

1-833-HMG-Alaska (1-833-464-2527) // www.helpmegrowak.org
contact@helpmegrowak.org

Information on child development, behavior, and assistance with parenting.

thread

1-800-278-3723 // www.threadalaska.org // info@threadalaska.org

Parent support with easy childhood specialist to provide individualized child development information, guidance, and discipline suggestions or support.

ALASKA CARELINE

MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCY COUNSELING LINE

1-877-266-4357 (HELP) // Text 4help to 839863 24 hours/day

Provides crisis intervention for individuals considering suicide or experiencing crisis, isolation, or depression.

BEACON HILL

SAFE FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN ALASKA

1-907-277-0925, 24 hours/day

Safe Families Helpline is open, with staff and volunteers available to respond to families needing support during crisis.

ANCHORAGE COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH

1-907-563-3200 // acmhs.com

Crisis line and appointments available (virtual and face-to-face). Serving children and adults who experience a range of mental health issues.

RECOVER ALASKA

1-907-272-0100, 24 hours/day // recoveralaska.org // info@recoveralaska.org

Partnering with organizations and individuals dedicated to reducing the harm associated with alcohol misuse as well as connecting those who need treatment/information.

AWAIC

ABUSED WOMEN'S AID IN CRISIS

1-907-272-0100, 24 hours/day // www.awaic.org

Crisis and support hotline. AWAIC provides a domestic violence safe shelter (including appropriate social distancing shelter), intervention, and prevention.

RCPC

RESOURCE CENTER FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN

1-907-456-9099 // www.rcpcfairbanks.org

Staff operators are available to share resources, parenting ideas and help with family problem solving.



ASSESSING COPING AND SAFETY

Discuss coping during social isolation

Teachers who have telephone or virtual contact with families during this time may be able to help identify needs or support the family in finding healthy coping strategies.

With caregivers

Maintaining this isolation and dealing with having everyone home is not easy. How have you managed thus far?

What have you most appreciated about yourself during this time? What have your children most appreciated about you?

People in a crisis often look to examples in their family and culture for how others have dealt with a crisis. Have people in your family had to face crises before? What did they do?

What's one thing you have done with your children, and one thing your children have done since this crisis that has made you proud?

If you could pick one thing you have started to make things a little better, but perhaps not done as much or as often as you'd like, what would it be? What kind of difference would it make to do more of it?

POPULATIONS AT INCREASED RISK

FAMILIES WITH MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

Families experiencing mental health needs during times of diminished stress may be at even more risk. 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](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#)

SUBSTANCE IMPACTED FAMILIES

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 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."



CONTINUATION OF POPULATIONS AT INCREASED RISK

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

If you are worried about a friend or family member, don't be afraid to let him or her know that you are concerned for their safety. Acknowledge that he or she is in a very difficult and scary situation. Remember that what they need most is someone who will believe and listen to them.

Be non-judgmental. Respect your friend or family member's decisions. There are many reasons why victims stay in abusive relationships. Know that he or she may leave and return to the relationship many times. Do not criticize his or her decisions or try to make them feel guilty. He or she will need your support even more during those times.

Be extra careful in talking 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 his or her freedom to talk openly.

Help them develop a safety plan and encourage them to talk to people who can provide help and guidance. Offer information about a local shelter and give them the national domestic violence hotline: 1-800-799-7233.

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 AND REASSURING

- Remember **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 – not every cough or sneeze means they or others have COVID-19.

BE MINDFUL OF YOUR LANGUAGE

- Remember 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.

MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE TO LISTEN AND TALK

- **Make time to talk.** Be sure children know they can come to you with questions.
- Encourage them to **talk about their feelings** and be sure to validate them.
- **Help them express their feelings** through drawing or other activities.

EMPHASIZE YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

- **Check in with your class to ensure they and all household members remain well.** If you have reason to think anyone in the home is not well, direct them to a hospital, health care professional, or telehealth resource.
- **Check back in with your children on a regular basis** or when the situation changes.

Source: *The National Child Traumatic Stress Network*

HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH A CRISIS

WHAT TO EXPECT & HOW TO RESPOND

Regardless of age, children 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.

Children react, in part, to 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.

AGE	REACTIONS	HELPFUL RESPONSES
PRESCHOOL (3-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience and tolerance • Provide reassurance (verbal and physical) • Encourage expression through play, reenactment, storytelling • Allow short-term changes in sleep arrangements • Plan calming, comforting activities before bedtime • Maintain regular family routines • Avoid media exposure
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (6-12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience, tolerance and reassurance • Play sessions and staying in touch with friends • 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; encourage questions, and include what is being done in the family/community • Encourage expression through play and conversation • Help generate ideas for promoting health and maintain family routines • Limit media exposure, talking about what they have heard/seen at school • Address any stigma or discrimination occurring and clarify misinformation
TEENS (13-18)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 stigmas and injustices • Avoiding or cutting school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience, tolerance and reassurance • Encourage continuation of routines • Encourage discussion of outbreak with peers, family (but do not force) • Stay in touch with family and friends through phone, internet or video games • Participate in family routines, including chores, supporting younger siblings and enhancing healthy behaviors • Discuss and address stigma, prejudice and potential injustices occurring during outbreak

VIRTUAL LEARNING

Social distancing leads to unique considerations. Now more than ever, we will want to build connections and reduce social isolation. Virtual learning may assist teachers to better understand the educational and social needs of their students and ensure continued educational opportunities.

AT HOME ACTIVITIES

Department of Defense

[Learn more](#) about careers in STEM fields

Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics

[Kids' Zone](#)

Department of Energy

[Games and Activities](#); [Virtual Field Trips to National Energy Labs](#)

Environmental Protection Agency

[Games, quizzes and videos about the environment](#)

The Library of Congress

[Presentations and activities](#) to help students learn history

NASA

[Interactive lessons about space, earth, the solar system and universe](#); [Lessons from astronauts about living in space](#); [STEM activities](#) for students of all ages

The Kennedy Center

[Lunch Doodles with Mo Willems](#); [Tour the Kennedy Center](#) with The Pigeon

The Smithsonian

[Free Smithsonian STEM Games and Simulations](#); [Meet the Animals of the National Zoo](#); [3D Exhibits and Virtual Tours](#); [Smithsonian Magazine Ten Museums You Can Virtually Visit](#); [The Museum of Natural History Virtual Tour](#); [Digital Smithsonian American Art Museum](#); [Distance Learning Resources](#)

NOAA

Use Real-Time Ocean Data to [Explore the Environment](#)

USGS

Learn from home about [physical science, geography and maps](#)



ALASKA RESOURCES

Many resources are available to help ease the burden of closed childcare facilities and schools. Local resources are provided below. And remember- it's ok if children are sometimes "bored." Unstructured play and free time helps children express creativity and develop problem-solving strategies.

[The Alaska Club](#)

Free online yoga and exercise classes

[The Meditation Space AK](#)

Free ten and thirty minute guided meditation classes online

[Anchorage Museum](#)

Offering online tours and virtual First Fridays

[Alaska Zoo](#)

Free distance learning opportunities

[Best Beginnings](#)

Imagination Library, a program started by Dolly Parton in 1996, sends a new, age-appropriate, high-quality book in the mail each month to children under the age of five at no cost to their families.

[Anchorage Library](#)

Anchorage library is offering extra virtual story time sessions- including bedtime stories and mindfulness stories! Parents can also get a library card online, access eBooks and audio books.

For more ideas, follow Alaska Children's Trust [Facebook page](#).

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

AND THE FIVE PROTECTIVE FACTORS



Alaska Strengthening Families™ is a statewide collaborative using research-informed approaches anyone can take to strengthen families and ensure healthy child development. This collaborative uses five protective factors found to mitigate the long-term effects associated with childhood trauma. Research indicates when these factors are present, families are better equipped to cope with stress and bounce back in times of distress. Each protective factor has been adapted with examples associated with COVID-19.

PARENTAL RESILIENCE

Ensuring families can bounce back when faced with challenges.

- Don't just target families you believe to be "at-risk." Focus on all families regardless of perceived income levels, gender or race.
- Build relationships with families through phone calls, text messages and email.
- Empower parents to be in the driver's seat. We want families to maintain a routine, while encouraging caregivers to guide a healthy routine that works for their family.
- Provide resources to parents/caregivers on self-care. Give the parent a break by engaging their child through a virtual activity (phone call, ZOOM, Face Time).
- Praise parents and comment on their strengths.
- Have parents share their parenting victories while working from home. Create a hashtag for parents to share via social media and have some fun with it.

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Ensuring caregivers, children and youth have connections they can count on.

- Maintain contact with the child in your classroom and the adult caregiver. When possible, use virtual tools that allow you to see the child and the child to see you.
- Don't make it an option for parents to "opt out" of communication with you and the school. Parents have a lot going on, so ask what time works best for them and their child.
- Offer all families resources on virtual mental health services, support groups and substance abuse meetings/services.
- Promote engagement between parents and children. Set up a time for parents to chat with each other. Create a buddy system, ask if parents would like to partner with another parent in the classroom virtually. Set up times for children to communicate with each other via phone, ZOOM or the virtual means available to that family.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

AND THE FIVE PROTECTIVE FACTORS



ALASKA
strengthening families
A PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK



KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Ensuring families understand the basics of child development and have realistic expectations for their child's age range.

- Share information with parents on child development ranges and what they can expect from their child cognitively and behaviorally.
- Help parents temper their expectations, we can't all be "Pinterest Parents."
- Share information on how to talk to children about COVID-19. Review the resources listed in this guide. If sharing a flyer, don't provide a link but send a picture of the flyer via text to increase visibility.
- Use Facebook Live, ZOOM or other virtual tools for school personnel to share information with parents and caregivers.
- Provide parents with tips on working from home while simultaneously supporting their child's school work.

CONCRETE SUPPORT IN TIMES OF NEED

Ensuring families have access to basic needs.

- Ensure all families receive information for food assistance, and COVID-19 resources made available at 2-1-1.
- It can be difficult to ask for help. Reiterate to families that everyone will need help during this time.
- Check in with caregivers and ask if they have immediate needs. You do not have to fix their need, but you can provide a resource. Refer parents to the resources found in this guide.
- Share resources with other educators and ask for their resources.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

AND THE FIVE PROTECTIVE FACTORS



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF CHILDREN

Ensuring families teach children how to recognize, communicate, and regulate their emotions.

- Families and children need a routine that works for them. Ensure families understand the appropriate amount of time needed to spend on academics, screen time and play time!
- Ensure families understand developmentally appropriate social/emotional skills & behaviors.
- Create assignments that explore a child's diversity and culture.
- Allow children to express themselves through art. Encourage them to send you a picture of their work and provide them with feedback.
- Provide parents with tips on talking to their children about their fears and uncertainty associated with COVID-19. Refer to the information in this guide.

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 seven strategies and the associated resources and examples will allow individuals with autism 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 uncertain times.

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 WITH 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.



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.

