



Association of
Community
Mental Health
Authorities
of Illinois

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES OF IL COVID-19 CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TOOLKIT

I. Introduction

ACMHAI developed this toolkit to provide resources and ideas for ways to provide social and emotional support to children and families post-COVID. We have never faced a crisis like this before and the need for ways to help can feel overwhelming. We've heard from so many of our colleagues questions like "What can we do? Where do we start?" We have gathered resources from multiple sources to help answer those questions.

The idea for the toolkit began with an ACMHAI webinar in May 2020 led by Brenda Huber and Diana Cuddeback. Attendees at the webinar had many great suggestions, ideas and resources and encouraged ACMHAI to bring them together in a shareable document. We will continue to update the Toolkit as more information is shared.

The Toolkit is divided into sections for ease of use. There is a General Professionals section that can be helpful to anyone looking for resources. There are also specific sections for Schools, Families and Caregivers, and the Community. Please feel free to use the information in any of the sections to provide the support to children and their families they need.

A big thank you to Debbie Humphrey, Brenda Huber, Diana Cuddeback and the Children's Behavioral Health Committee of ACMHAI for their leadership and guidance. The following article gives context to the development of this Toolkit.



Community Spotlight: Addressing children's social-emotional development needs

Deborah Humphrey Contributing Columnist Updated 8:14 pm CDT, Tuesday, July 7, 2020

I am a grandparent raising twin boys, from birth, now age eleven. They are my pride and joy. My desire is for them to grow into physically and mentally healthy men. Like many, I have been working long hours remotely from home, deeply entrenched in learning virtual technology, Zoom, GoToMeeting and Ring. My husband, five years retired, became the home school teacher. The challenges and frustration he experienced at times were greater than mine, learning several different school applications, communicating with teachers and assisting with daily classwork. We adapted to our new “normal” the question is, did the children?



Thinking about what children have been experiencing the past months, I became consciously mindful of their social-emotional needs. While the boys successfully completed the school year, I had concerns about the sudden and drastic changes,

being disconnected from their usual routine, lost contact with their peers and hearing the constant news reports about a dangerous virus, people dying and having to wear masks for risk of their own exposure. To make matters worse, summer activities, youth camps, swimming and athletic events were canceled, lessening peer contact. In a few weeks, it is back to school with possibly more unknown of what the next school year will bring, homeschooling and more separation or traditional class. Children have faced altered normalcy, placing them at risk of experiencing anxiety, fear and the potential threat of harm. Trauma is defined in many ways and this spells out “trauma.”

In the words of Brenda Huber, PhD., Director of Neurobehavioral Health Center, Chicago, it is extremely important that parents and teachers take time out and allow children to share about what they have experienced, felt, whether positive or negative and acknowledged that their thoughts, feelings and presence matter. They need to be heard, encouraged, and feel valued and supported all the time, but especially when experiencing stressful or uncertain times. Communication can help build a basic sense of psychological-physical safety and trust which are foundational for building emotionally strong individuals. Children communicate easier through art, music, dance, poetry or writing. Whatever outlet, it is important to find creative ways to help them express themselves.

Children need socialization and can feel emotionally unstable when isolated. The lyrics in Cat Stevens song say “I know we’ve come a long way. We’re changing day to day. But tell me, where do the children play?” When things changed, I encouraged riding bikes, jumping on the trampoline in the backyard, and nature walks. With the seemingly, unending social isolation, my boys expressed wanting, needing face-to-face, social interaction with their peers. When there is a prolonged time of separation from peers, new, innovative opportunities for peer contact need to be initiated. For socialization, my children interacted with other children on their X Box, organized Zoom calls to talk and laugh with a group of friends and one friend’s family scheduled times for them to use their pool, respectful of distancing. This is definitely a time for professionals, parents, teachers and the community to think outside of the box and design opportunities that support our children’s social-emotional needs.

<https://www.theintelligencer.com/news/article/Community-Spotlight-Children-8217-s-15392378.php>.



II. THREE PRINCIPLES

When we think of the needs of children both during and after the pandemic, it is important to remember the three C's. They serve as our guide to helping children thrive during this stressful time.

Connection

Tools that share opportunities for children to expressive themselves creatively, encouraging emotionally “being with;” need to be seen, heard, valued and supported

Control

Tools that have information and opportunities that impact/choices children have about what happens around/to oneself

Containment

Tools that can help children feel a basic sense of psychological/physical safety/trust.

The following section provides numerous resources with information that can help Professionals, Schools, Families and Communities address the three C's-principles.



III. RESOURCES

Section A: GeneralTools-Resources

Important Considerations for Professionals, Schools-Educators, Parents-Caregivers and Communities

In this section we have included information about how to give children and their families opportunities, where possible, to have opportunities for choice in their lives. These opportunities can include a choice about when, where, and how something happens (Example: On-line real-time, recorded, or Face-to-Face instruction). Create opportunities to contribute (Example: Cloth mask making; send messages to kids in another country/state). Interpret misbehavior as unmet need for control, also known as safety; reinforce/meet needs; don't punish or engage in power struggles

Suggested Tools- Resources

Crisis Resources Helping Children to Cope-NASP Helping Children Cope with the Changes of Covid-19

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/helping-children-cope-with-changes-resulting-from-covid-19?fbclid=IwAR1GQI4pxVlpupqRNEYaZOc0kZXSBRM05kDAB5c4hoUcZWfPcbCthTE3Kw>



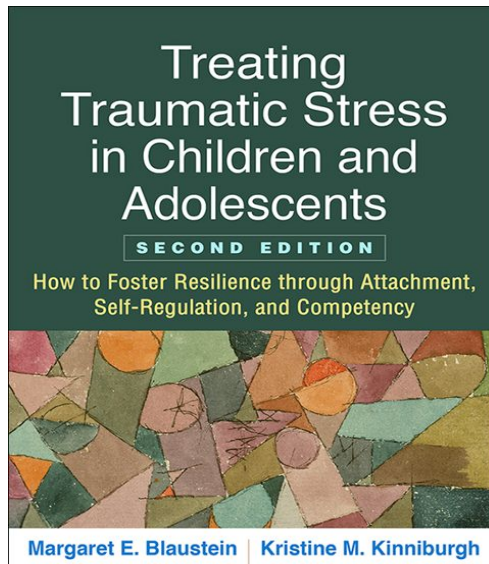
Section B: Professionals Tools-Resources

Important Considerations for Professionals working with Children

Give children permission/encouragement to tell their story to another; express emotions/experiences both positive and negative; acknowledge that their thoughts/feelings/presence matter.

Suggested Tools- Resources

- [Counseling After COVID-19: What Should Providers Do?](#)
- Create opportunities to expressive themselves creatively (individually or collectively): dance/movement, imaginative play, music, poetry, art, writing. Examples: A mosaic or quilt; each child or family gets a tile or a fabric square to decorate and an agency/school puts them all together and displays them in a public venue “Flash mob” (Examples: cultural center or parks & rec launches an instructional Youtube video of a particular dance to an empowering/unifying song; everyone spreads out at a big park wearing masks and does the dance to the song being played on a loudspeaker; local businesses sponsor and play it on social media or local tv station).
- Treating Traumatic Stress in Children and Adolescents, How to Foster Resilience through Attachment, Self Regulation and Competency, Second Addition, Margaret E. Blaustein and Kristine M. Kinniburgh



- [Helping Children with Anxiety About COVID-19](#)
- [Child Therapy: 19 Counseling Techniques & Worksheets for Kids \[+PDF\]](#)
- [COVID-19 Information — Rush NeuroBehavioral Center | Building on the strengths of children, teens, and young adults](#)
- [Tips to Help Teens Cope During COVID-19](#)
- [COVID-19 Resources](#)
- Youth Cafe's group meetings with peers using virtual meeting platforms. Offering connection with peers and support. Example:

Centerstone Summer Virtual Youth Cafe.

With the stresses of the ever changing world and transition to online learning, it is normal for students to feel stressed, confused, or worried. Centerstone is hosting a Youth Café, a space where 7- 8th grade students can virtually meet to help navigate these feelings. A licensed counselor will facilitate weekly meetings to provide a space for students to learn new skills and share their experiences. The meetings are held on Wednesdays from 2-3 p.m.

For more information, contact [Centerstoneconnect.org](https://centerstoneconnect.org) or 1-877-HOPE123.



Section C: Schools-Educators

Important Considerations for Children Returning to School

Let them know what to expect when school resumes. Acknowledge that they are seen/recognized as an important part of school. Explain why change is happening. Create a safe, comfortable, calm environment, music, lower the lights. Let children choose what they wear-gives them a feeling of control. Establish consistent, predictable communication routines with schools, check-in with students, peers, adults. Examples: check & connect, show & tell, circle time, and clubs. Superintendents, principals can provide supportive positive messages, signs in yards/windows, T-shirts.

Suggested Helps-Resources

- <https://www.weareteachers.com/kids-mental-health-covid-19/>
- 8 Strategies for Building a Sense of Belonging With Students and Families Virtually (via Panorama)
- 5 Equity-Centered SEL Strategies for Addressing Learning Recovery (via Panorama)
- 17 Apps to Help Kids Stay Focused (via CommonSense Media)
- Apps That Act Like Math and Science Tutors for Homework Help (via CommonSense Media)
- 5 Online Learning Resources to Build Belonging and Connectedness with Students and Families (via Panorama)
- How Student Services Leaders Can Adapt to Distance Learning (via Panorama)

- CommonLit Resources to Support Teleschool Plans: COVID-19 (via CommonLit)
- Distance Learning Reflection and Planning Toolkit (via Achievement Network)
- Schools build in time for mindfulness exercises at the start of the school day
- E-Learning Tools for Distance Education (via Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence/RULER)
- Free BrainPop Access for Schools Closed Due to the Coronavirus (via BrainPop)
- Free SEL Activities and Practices (via Greater Good in Education)
- Free Workshop On Creating Kick-Ass Online Workshops (via The Flourishing Center)
- Managing Anxiety Around COVID-19: Tips for You and Your School Community (via Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence/RULER)
- Movement Apps, Games, and Websites (via CommonSense Media)
- Most Schools Are Not Ready For Coronavirus, But They Can Be (via Digital Promise)
- Navigating Uncertain Times: How Schools Can Cope With Coronavirus (via EdSurge)
- SEL and COVID-19 (via CASEL) (Click to go to Website)
- School CASEL
https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CASEL_Leveraging-SEL-as-You-Prep-to-Reopen-and-Renew.pdf
- Social Emotional Learning Alliance-SEL4US-Resources for Educators, Families and Communities for the United States
- Social Emotional Learning Supports around Covid-19
<https://sel4us.org/blog/social-emotional-learning-supports-around-covid-19>
- Panorama-<https://www.panoramaed.com/blog/sel-resources-for-educators-school-communities-and-parents-related-to-covid-19>
- Trauma-Informed SEL Toolkit via Transforming Education-(Click to go to website)
- Create an Area of Free Resources-Comprehensive Resource List for College Students and Their Supporters - Transitions ACR- (A spreadsheet of resources for College Students and their Families)
- The Latest in School Segregation: Private Pandemic 'Pods'-
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/22/opinion/pandemic-pods-schools.html?referringSource=articleShare>
- Graduation Parades-Daycare, Schools Elementary, Hold Choir and Band Lessons during the summer months, Schedule group and/or individual music lessons scheduled 30 minutes one day a week. Via Zoom or virtual platform.



Section D: Family and Caregivers Tools and Resources

Important Considerations for Parents and Caregivers

Family plays a vital role in helping children through the pandemic and its aftereffects. Caregivers need resources and tools to help them help their children through these uncertain times. Caregivers also need to engage in their own self-care.

Suggested Tools and Resources

- [How to talk to your kids about COVID-19](#)
- National Association of Gifted Children (NACG)-Parent Resources
- National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health-COVID-19 Resources <https://www.ffcmh.org/covid-19-resources-for-parents>
- Supporting Mental Health at Home: Activities, Worksheets, and Resources for Families (via Move This World)
- <https://www.childlife.org/resources/covid-19-resources#parents>
- 17 Apps to Help Kids Stay Focused (via CommonSense Media)
- Best Documentaries (via CommonSense Media)
- Best Family Movies (via CommonSense Media)
- Best Music Apps and Games for Kids (via CommonSense Media)
- BrainPop on Coronavirus
- Dance Games (via CommonSense Media)
- Device-Free Dinner Guidelines (via CommonSense Media)

- Free Educational Apps, Games, and Websites (via CommonSense Media)
- Free SEL Activities and Practices (via Greater Good in Education)
- How to Talk to Kids About Coronavirus (via Open Circle)
- How To Talk To Your Kids About Coronavirus (via PBS)
- Designing Learning From Home Experiences with UDL (via Novak Education)
- Meditation Apps for Kids
- My Kid's School is Closed, So Now What? (via Confident Parents, Confident Kids)
- Sibling Watch-Together TV (Via CommonSense Media)
- Talking to Children About COVID-19 (via NASP)
- Teaching Kids Media Smarts During Breaking News (via CommonSense Media)
- Virus Anxiety Resources
- 5 Ways to Help Teens Manage Anxiety About the Coronavirus (via New York Times)
- Information Sharing- Parents Resource Websites can provide a means to parent information sharing the Sandy Hook website is a good example of <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/Page/58833> how to construct an information website.



Section E: Community

Acknowledge that children are seen/recognized as important part of community. The Governor, local municipality leaders, mayors can offer positive messages to families and children through signs in yards/windows, T-shirt, and find creative ways to organize local-community recreation, sports, youth activities, and social events that respect social distancing and maintain safety precautions.

Suggested Tools and Resources

- Chambanamoms Outdoor Summer Guide
<https://www.chambanamoms.com/2020/06/03/ultimate-outdoor-summer-champaign-urbana/>
- Family & Community Engagement-Virtual Community-Wide Parent Cafe's
- Birthday Celebrations-Monthly Birthday Train, decorate cars, Boys and Girls Club Birthdays, One Person, Dresses Up, and delivers one large gift, Meal Programs
- Church-Family Meals delivered to the home three times a week. Include family activities in the delivery that encourage family interaction. Church Meal Drive Thru Pick Up-One family volunteers on Saturday to prepare and distribute meals.
- Local coffee shop sets out small containers of free baked oatmeal for children
- Boys & Girls Library Book Club, free books, small group discussions about the books
- Neighborhood mailbox, table, shelf with free books for neighborhood children to take
- Share social stories
- Sports and Activities-Parks and Recreation schedule small group sports (Granite City, IL), Trampoline for exercise, Outdoor Movies-social distancing, Neighborhood Walks to find Scavenger Hunts, Connect Sprinklers in the Yard, Portable Pools and Pool Toys
- Games-Virtual Scavenger Hunt, Board Games
- Relaxation & Mindfulness-Give children a private space, tent, daily walks, dance
- Art Work-Heart Bears in the windows to connect to others, Red Cross sew pillowcases, Color Rocks with messages, Chalk the Walk Art-Positive Messaging, Chalk Drawing to connect, decorate Art Mosaic Tiles, Quilt pieces each person contributes a square, decorate masks

