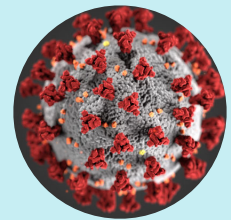


# Mahoning County Children Services Foster Parent Newsletter



## **Covid-19 and Children**

The CDC guide to Covid-19 and Children

## **Working and Learning**

from Home during the Covid-19 Outbreak

## **Talking to Kids About the Coronavirus**

Child Mind Institute

## **A Letter from Our Program Administrator for Foster Parents**

## *A Newsletter compiling news for you*

This newsletter has some relevant articles helping you locate information to help you, as our valued foster caregivers, navigate this unprecedented time.

**1**

### **STAY HEALTHY**

Help children practice good hand washing and practice social distancing.

**2**

### **STAY SAFE**

Only go out when you need to for groceries or work purposes.

**3**

### **STAY ACTIVE**

Take walks, play in the yard, and enjoy the sunshine, when we have it!



## COVID-19 and Children

Info From: [CDC Website](#)

### **What is the risk of my child becoming sick with COVID-19?**

Based on available evidence, children do not appear to be at higher risk for COVID-19 than adults. While some children and infants have been sick with COVID-19, adults make up most of the known cases to date. You can learn more about who is most at risk for health problems if they have COVID-19 infection on CDC's current Risk Assessment page.

### **How can I protect my child from COVID-19 infection?**

You can encourage your child to help stop the spread of COVID-19 by teaching them to do the same things everyone should do to stay healthy.

- Clean hands often using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Avoid people who are sick (coughing and sneezing)
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces daily in household common areas (e.g. tables, hard-backed chairs, doorknobs, light switches, remotes, handles, desks, toilets, sinks)
- Launder items including washable plush toys as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely. Dirty laundry from an ill

person can be washed with other people's items.

### **Are the symptoms of COVID-19 different in children than in adults?**

No. The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar in children and adults. However, children with confirmed COVID-19 have generally presented with mild symptoms. Reported symptoms in children include cold-like symptoms, such as fever, runny nose, and cough. Vomiting and diarrhea have also been reported. It's not known yet whether some children may be at higher risk for severe illness, for example, children with underlying medical conditions and special healthcare needs. There is much more to be learned about how the disease impacts children.

### **Should children wear masks?**

No. If your child is healthy, there is no need for them to wear a facemask. Only people who have symptoms of illness or who are providing care to those who are ill should wear masks.



## Working and Learning from Home During the COVID-19 Outbreak

Info From: [Healthychildren.org](#)

By: Corinn Cross, MD, FAAP

To help contain COVID-19, many schools are moving children to online learning at home. In addition, many parents are being asked to work from home. These forms of social distancing are needed to help slow the spread of the virus and prevent overloading the health care system.

But many families now face new challenges: how do we care for our children while working and schooling at home, and not panic during this unprecedented outbreak? The first step: take a deep breath. Know that we are all in this together. And together we will get through it.

Here are some other tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics to help you cope with this “new normal” until the virus is under control.

### **Slow the spread**

It may be tempting to get kids together for play dates or sleepovers, but this should be avoided. Social distancing only works if we all participate. And slowing down or preventing the spread of the virus will save lives.

**Protect grandparents.** This is also not the time to visit grandparents or ask them to help out with child care duties. People who are over age 60 are at higher risk of severe illness with COVID-19 and should not increase that risk by being around children who may be ill with mild symptoms. However, they may feel alone or disconnected during social distancing, so keep up communications through phone calls, texting, or video chats.

### **Keep a routine**

Since changes in routine can be stressful, it will be helpful to talk with your kids about why they are staying home and what your daily structure will be during this time. Let them help create a daily schedule that can hang on the refrigerator or somewhere they can see it each day. Be sure to include breaks from tele-work or schoolwork to relax and connect with each other.

Here are some ideas to help you create a daily schedule:

- Wake up, get dressed and have breakfast at the normal time.
- Decide where everyone can do their work most effectively and without distractions.
- List the times for learning, exercise and breaks.
  - For younger children, 20 minutes of class assignments followed by 10 minutes of physical activity might work well.
  - Older children and teens may be able to focus on assignments for longer stretches, taking breaks between subjects.
- Include your hours as well, so your children know when the work day is done.
- Schedule time for nutritious lunches and snacks. Many schools are providing take-home school meal packages for students who need them.
- Don't forget afternoon breaks as well!
- Have dinner together as a family and discuss the day.
- Enjoy more family time in the evenings, playing, reading, watching a movie or exercising together.
- Stick with normal bedtime routines as much as possible during the week to make sure everyone gets enough sleep.

## Talking to Kids About the Coronavirus

Info From: [Childmind.org](https://www.childmind.org)

By: Rachel Ehmke

News of the coronavirus COVID-19 is everywhere, from the front page of all the papers to the playground at school. Many parents are wondering how to bring up the epidemic in a way that will be reassuring and not make kids more worried than they already may be.

Here is some advice from the experts at the Child Mind Institute.

**Don't be afraid to discuss the coronavirus.** Most children will have already heard about the virus or seen people wearing face masks, so parents shouldn't avoid talking about it. Not talking about something can actually make kids worry more. Look at the conversation as an opportunity to convey the facts and set the emotional tone. "You take on the news and you're the person who filters the news to your kid," explains Janine Domingues, PhD, a child psychologist at the Child Mind Institute. Your goal is to help your children feel informed and get fact-based information that is likely more reassuring than whatever they're hearing from their friends or on the news.

**Be developmentally appropriate.** Don't volunteer too much information, as this may be overwhelming. Instead, try to answer your child's questions. Do your best to answer honestly and clearly. It's okay if you can't answer everything; being available to your child is what matters.

**Take your cues from your child.** Invite your child to tell you anything they may have heard about the coronavirus, and how they feel. Give them ample opportunity to ask questions. You want to be prepared to answer (but not prompt) questions. Your goal is to avoid encouraging frightening fantasies.

**Deal with your own anxiety.** "When you're feeling most anxious or panicked, that isn't the time to talk to your kids about what's happening with the coronavirus," warns Dr. Domingues. If you notice that you are feeling anxious, take some time to calm down before trying to have a conversation or answer your child's questions.

**Be reassuring.** Children are very egocentric, so hearing about the coronavirus on the news may be enough to make them seriously worry that they'll catch it. It's helpful to reassure your child about how rare the coronavirus actually is (the flu is much more common) and that kids actually seem to have milder symptoms.

**Focus on what you're doing to stay safe.** An important way to reassure kids is to emphasize the safety precautions that you are taking. Jamie Howard, PhD, a child psychologist at the Child Mind Institute, notes, "Kids feel empowered when they know what to do to keep themselves safe." We know that the coronavirus is transmitted mostly by coughing and touching surfaces. The CDC recommends thoroughly washing your hands as the primary means of staying healthy. So remind kids that they are taking care of themselves by washing their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds (or the length of two "Happy Birthday" songs) when they come in from outside, before they eat, and after blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing or using the bathroom. If kids ask about face masks, explain that the experts at the CDC say they aren't necessary for most people. If kids see people wearing face masks, explain that those people are being extra cautious.

**Stick to routine.** "We don't like uncertainty, so staying rooted in routines and predictability is going to be helpful right now," advises Dr. Domingues. This is particularly important if your child's school or daycare shuts down. Make sure you are taking care of the basics just like you would during a spring break or summer vacation. Structured days with regular mealtimes and bedtimes are an essential part of keeping kids happy and healthy.

**Keep talking.** Tell kids that you will continue to keep them updated as you learn more. "Let them know that the lines of communication are going to be open," says Dr. Domingues. "You can say, 'Even though we don't have the answers to everything right now, know that once we know more, mom or dad will let you know, too.'"



# A Letter to our Foster Parents from Our Program Administrator

Dear Mahoning County foster parent,

Under the current circumstances we all must deal with due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I wanted to reach out to foster parents of Mahoning County Children Services. As the Program Administrator for Placement Services, I want to personally thank you for your commitment to the children of Mahoning County. Most of us have not seen anything like the current pandemic in our lifetime, and it has caused anxiety and stress for all of us. The children that you are providing a loving home for, are also very distressed and likely fearful of what could happen to not only themselves, but also their parents, siblings, relatives and you! Therefore, it is crucial that you respond to each child, if they should ask any questions about the pandemic when this is age appropriate. Please be sure to respond in a calm, reassuring fashion. I know that all our staff agree that the love and care you provide our children is crucial and essential to their safety, permanency and well-being. Now more than ever, this is true!

It is important to remember that, each child has a caseworker assigned to them, and you have an assigned licensing worker. Both are available to provide information and referral as needed to assist you in caring for the children. If you cannot reach an assigned worker, please contact their supervisor, the foster care unit supervisor/ Mercia Stevens or myself. Our staff are available to provide emotional support to you and the children in these trying times as well. Therefore, do not hesitate to call, or email them if the need arises.

I want to provide you with some information which also may be helpful. As you know, Governor Mike DeWine issued a Stay at Home Order this past weekend. The order was issued to reduce the rate at which the COVID-19 virus is spreading. The Governor's order also identifies employers deemed as an "Essential Business" and "Essential Operations" employers. If you are employed by either, you likely still must report to work as a result of this order. To accommodate families in this situation, 900 daycare centers were issued a temporary pandemic license and remain open. I am providing you with the link below which takes you to the list of daycare centers available should the criteria mentioned above apply to you. Please be sure to notify your licensing worker and the child's assigned worker if you need to utilize one of these daycare centers.

<http://jfs.ohio.gov/cdc/docs/Pandemic-Provider-Approved-List.pdf>

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) provide a tremendous amount of information related to the COVID-19 virus. They provide tips on preparing for and protecting you and your family from exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

You can access information from both sources online at: <https://www.cdc.gov> and <https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/home> You can also call ODH at: 1-833-427-5634 to ask questions related to the pandemic if you do not have internet access. Finally, I wish you all well!

Sincerely,

*Tony Paris*