

PARENTING DURING COVID-19

As a parent or caregiver of child or teen with a disability during COVID-19, you may be facing new challenges. Treatments may be disrupted. The right supplies may not be available to keep your family safe. Your child may be “high risk” due to health conditions. We are here for you - you are not alone! Here are some tips we hope may help:



STAY INFORMED

Stay informed, but don't overdo media. Identify a few trusted sources for accurate updates and limit social media.

TALK TO YOUR KIDS

Talk to your children and other family members about COVID-19. Kids may have difficulty expressing their feelings in words and sometimes anxiety, fear and frustration can be expressed through challenging behaviors. Other children may express these feelings through play. Answer their questions and assure them of the shared goal to keep everyone safe.

DON'T FEEL PRESSURED

Don't feel pressured to exactly replicate school and therapy at home. With flexibility, you may identify new ways to learn and grow together that would be more difficult in a typical time.

CHECK-IN WITH PROVIDERS

Check-in with your child's health-care provider by calling or using telehealth services if available. If your child has a chronic or acute medical condition, talking with the healthcare provider can guide decisions about how to access needed equipment, supplies, medications, etc., and whether it is best to visit a healthcare facility or stay at home.

STAY CONNECTED

Stay connected with others virtually; plan regular times to call family and friends. Seek support from those around you. For example, you might ask a friend to deliver food or medicine to your home.

BE KIND TO YOURSELF

Be kind to yourself. Since previously available respite options may no longer be available, focus on what can help you feel restored. This might mean taking short breaks from the immediate stress of the situation. This might mean spending some time watching animal videos to give yourself a brief mental break.

CREATE A SCHEDULE

Schedule coping and calming activities into a child's day and consider ways to introduce new calming activities. If previously established routines have been disrupted, create new routines for your child. This can help your child feel more secure and understand what is expected of them.

BE EMPATHETIC

Acknowledge that your child may not have their usual school or disability-related equipment, which may lead to added difficulties, discomfort or pain. Validate their feelings and try reaching out to therapists and other families in similar situations to brainstorm ideas to address any discomfort and/or sensory, communication, and movement challenges to the extent possible.

SHOW THE LOVE

Children with disabilities may internalize feelings that they and/or their care needs are burdensome to their parents. Remind your child of your unconditional love and joy of getting to spend extra time with them. Encourage them to talk about their feelings. Brainstorm ways for your child to interact with others virtually, dates and limit social media.

If you need more help, contact local disability or condition-specific organizations and support groups and see if they offer virtual support groups. You can also call:

- Michigan 2-1-1 (just dial 211) to get information about crisis helplines in your area.
- The State of Michigan hotline at 855-444-3911 if you suspect child abuse or neglect.
- Chesley or Bettie at the Arc NW at 313-532-7915 if you need help finding community resources for food, supplies, mental health support, or anything else.