

Covid-19 Parent & Caregiver Guide



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For Immediate Assistance

Statewide Information and Help of All Kinds	211
Parents Help Line	1-800-CHILDREN or 802 229 5724
Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence	DV: 1-800-228-7395 SV: 1-800-489-7273
Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services	1-800-639-6071
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration	24 hr hotline: 1-800-985-5990 Text: Talk WithUS at 66746
National Domestic Violence Hotline	1-800-799-7233
Vermont Support Line (Open 3 PM to 6 AM):	Call or text: 833-888-2557
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	1-800-273-8255
For Immediate Assistance	911

Protecting Your Family

No matter how prepared you are, an outbreak of a virus can be stressful. These recommendations to promote your family's well-being during COVID-19 may be helpful:

STAY CONNECTED

- 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 (cdc.gov) and the Vermont Department of Health.
- Limit your family's exposure to news surrounding the outbreak and beware of news sources that promote fear and panic.
- Use local 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.
- Talk with your own household members. 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 be together!

CLEAN HANDS AND HOME EQUAL PREVENTION

- Find creative ways to encourage hand washing 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 nurturing a sense of accomplishment and importance of a clean environment.



STICK TO A SCHEDULE

- 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 including aquariums and museums.

Source: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations such as an infectious disease outbreak that requires physical distancing, quarantine, or isolation. It's important to recognize these reactions and realize they are normal. You may feel:

ANXIETY, FEAR

- Over your health or the health of others.
- Due to time taken off from work, loss of income, job security.
- Difficulties securing essential items.
- Concern over safe childcare and others in your care.

ANGER, FRUSTRATION

- Because we do not know how long we will be in this situation.
- Over the challenges of being stuck at home, with no time to yourself, potentially 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 the possibility of not enough healthcare resources to handle the crisis.



HELPLESSNESS

- Due to a lack of control over the situation.

LONELINESS

- Due to feeling cut off from the world, your community, and loved ones.

DEPRESSION

- Symptoms of depression include feelings of hopelessness, changes in appetite, sleeping too little or too much.

TEMPTATION

- A desire to use alcohol or drugs to cope.
- The urge to take your anger, frustration, anxiety, or sadness out on others.

Source: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Check out these ways to manage your response to the outbreak:

SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS

- Change your daily activities to meet the current reality of your situation. Focus on what you CAN accomplish, not what you are unable to do. Celebrate the small victories, especially when it comes to your children.



SHOW YOURSELF COMPASSION

- Try building more compassion, not only towards others, but also towards yourself. Try to recognize self-defeating statements and replace them with more positive thoughts. Self-compassion is known to improve life-satisfaction, overall psychological and emotional well-being and mood.

EXERCISE

- Study shows that people who exercised adequately may be less likely to feel as stressed out, depressed, and lonely as compared to others. Even light exercise like a short walk can make a difference.

INTERACT WITH FAMILY & FRIENDS

- Make it a point to have some meaningful conversations with loved ones/friends as often as possible. If you do not have family members around and are having difficulty initiating or maintaining friendships, seek professional help from a therapist. Therapy can help you develop a better relationship with yourself which itself can reduce loneliness and in turn, can make other relationships more likely. Even one good relationship can make a great difference.

MAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

- Time alone is important! Don't feel guilty for taking a walk by yourself, enjoying a warm bubble bath, or whatever makes you feel at ease. Your kids won't mind a little extra screen time.

Remember, you are a role model for your children. How you handle this stressful situation will affect how your children manage their worries.

Source: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Being clear when asking questions will allow you to have meaningful conversation, aiding in your child's development as an individual as well as your growth as a strong, happy, and connected family.

TO GET TO KNOW YOUR CHILD BETTER

- What traits do you look for when you're making friends and why?
- What's your favorite thing about yourself?
- What's something that you find embarrassing and why?
- What goal(s) do you have for yourself?

A TIME TO STRENGTHEN FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

- What's your favorite thing about your family and why?
- What are some things you've learned from your family?
- If you could make three family rules, what would they be?
- What should we do more of as a family?
What do you wish we did less of?
- What do you like best about your siblings?
What about your siblings do you find challenging?

HELP SHOW GRATITUDE

- What was the best part about your day and why?
- What are some things you feel grateful for today and why?
- What are some things that you don't need, but you're really happy to have?
- What are some things that are easy to complain about, but can actually be really great?

HELP DEVELOP IMAGINATION

- What's something that makes you excited?
- What do you dream about? What do you wonder?
- If you wrote a book or made a movie, what would it be about?
- If you could have any superpower, what would it be and why?
- What color is the happiest? What color is the angriest?
What color is the most excited?



DEVELOP EMPATHY

- How were you able to be kind to someone today?
- How do you think other people feel about the way that you treat them?
- How can you support someone you see who is feeling down, being teased, etc.?
- If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be and why?

DEVELOP MENTAL STRENGTH

- What's your favorite topic/subject to learn about?
- What feeling is the most uncomfortable for you?
- How do you face your fears when you have them?
- Who helps you achieve your goals?

Connecting with Your Child | Activities to do Together

Take advantage of this extra time with your children to have fun and engage in creative activities together. Here are some ideas with links to instructions:



- Organize a scavenger hunt
- Go on a nature walk (learn about trees & plants, insects, birds, etc.)
- Do a gardening project
- Set up an obstacle course
- Build a blanket fort
- Throw a dance party (Don't forget to play both of your favorite songs!)
- Throw a dress up dance party!
- Put on a fashion show
- Design a Masking Tape Race Track
- DIY memory game
- Learn a magic trick
- Take up yoga
- Write letters to family & friends
- Look through family pictures & home videos
- Make a time capsule
- Bake your favorite treat
- Have a Career Day—ask your child what they want to be when they grow up and spend the day learning about the profession
- Make a thumb print family tree while learning about family history
- Finger Paint
- Make instruments out of recyclables
- Learn origami
- Create window art
- Write letters to relatives and friends

Finding a way through the COVID-19 pandemic is a trying experience for all. Caregivers supporting children, teens, and adults with autism during this time face extra challenges.

These 7 strategies and the associated resources and examples will allow people with autism to better understand COVID19, 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.



1. SUPPORT UNDERSTANDING

- Describe the virus and current situation (e.g. closures, social distancing) in concrete language and terms and avoid flowery or complicated wording.
- Tell a story that clarifies a situation and possible responses through writing, photos, or the use of technology.
- Provide pictures to offer guidance on coronavirus specific actions and behaviors we can do.

2. OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPRESSION

- Consider providing multiple ways 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.

3. PRIORITIZE COPING AND CALMING SKILLS

- Ideally, individuals with autism have some coping and calming strategies already, including skills to access 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.

4. MAINTAIN ROUTINES

- Sleep/wake routines: Maintaining physical health is key for all family members and ensuring good sleep is an important contributor. Sleep disturbances are more common in individuals with autism, thus extra attention may be required to support good sleep and maintain bedtime and waking routines.
- Household chores/daily living skills: Taking part in 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 participation in activities at home and reduce anxiety.



5. 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.

6. 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, others via Face Time, 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 reduce feelings of isolation.

7. BE AWARE OF CHANGING BEHAVIORS

- Children, youth, and adults with autism may not be able to verbally express their fear, frustration, and anxiety about the many changes and/or their health, so these feelings may be shown through other ways.
- 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.

Strategies 1-3 Source: UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute Autism Team,

What to Expect When You're Expecting During Covid-19

PREGNANT WOMEN

- It is not currently known if pregnant women have a greater chance of getting sick from COVID-19 than the general public nor whether they are more likely to have serious illness as a result. Pregnant women should do the same things as the general public to avoid infection. You can help stop the spread of COVID-19 by taking these actions:
 - Cover your cough (using your elbow is a good technique)
 - Avoid people who are sick
 - Clean your hands often using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer

DURING DELIVERY

- It is not currently known if a pregnant woman with COVID-19 can pass the virus that causes COVID-19 to her fetus or baby during pregnancy or delivery. No infants born to mothers with COVID-19 have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. In these cases, which are a small number, the virus was not found in samples of amniotic fluid or breastmilk.

INFANTS

- We do not know at this time if there is any risk to infants of pregnant women who have COVID-19. There have been a small number of reported problems with pregnancy or delivery (e.g. preterm birth) in babies born to mothers who tested positive for COVID-19 during their pregnancy. However, it is not clear that these outcomes were related to maternal infection.

BREASTFEEDING

- Breast milk is the best source of nutrition for most infants. However, much is unknown about COVID-19. Whether and how to start or continue breastfeeding should be decided by the mother in with her healthcare providers. A mother with confirmed COVID-19 or who is a symptomatic after birth needs to take all possible precautions to avoid spreading the virus to her infant, including washing her hands before touching the infant and wearing a face mask, if possible, while feeding at the breast.
- If expressing breast milk with a manual or electric breast pump, the mother needs to wash her hands before touching any pump or bottle parts and follow recommendations for proper pump cleaning after each use. If possible, consider having someone who is well feed the expressed breast milk to the infant.

Source: Centers for Disease Control



Resources

FREE EDUCATIONAL APPS, GAMES & WEBSITES

You don't always have to pay for great educational games, apps, and websites: These resources are either completely free or full of quality free content for kids to explore. <https://www.commonensemedia.org/lists/free-educational-apps-games-and-websites>

[Online mental health therapy is now available with clinicians throughout Vermont.](#)

MENTAL HEALTH

Addison County

Counseling Service of Addison County
802-388-6751

Bennington County

Turning Point Club of Bennington County
802-442-9700

United Counseling Service of Bennington County, Inc.
802-442-5491 802-362-3950

Caledonia County

Northeast Kingdom Human Services, Inc.
802-748-3181 800-649-0118

Kingdom Recovery Center
802-751-8520

Chittenden County

Centerpoint Adolescent Treatment Services
802-488-7711

Children's Integrated Services (CIS)
VNA Family & Children Services
802-860-4426

Children, Youth & Family Services
802-488-6000

UVM Medical Center
Mental Health Services
802-847-0000

First Call for Children & Families in Crisis
802-488-7777

Lund Family Center
Residential Treatment Programs
802-864-7467

Milton Family Community
802-893-1457

Northeastern Family Institute
802-658-0216

Pine Street Counseling Center
802-488-6100

Spectrum Youth & Family Services
802-864-7423

Franklin/Grand Isle Counties

Centerpoint Adolescent Treatment Services
802-488-7711

Children's Integrate Services (CIS) at The Family Center of Northwestern Vermont
802-524-6554

Northwestern Counseling & Support Services (NCSS)
802-524-6554
800-834-7793
802-524-6554

Lamoille County

Behavioral Health and Wellness Center
802-888-8320

Lamoille County Mental Health Services
802-888-5026

Orange County

Brookhaven Treatment and Learning Center
802-685-4458

Clara Martin Center Randolph
802-728-4466

Clara Martin Center Bradford
802-222-4477

Orleans County

Northeast Kingdom Human Services, Inc.
802-334-6744 (24 hour number)

Rutland County

Rutland Mental Health Services
802-775-2381 Main Office
802-773-4225 Children in Crisis
802-775-1000 Adults in Crisis
877-430-2273 Toll Free

Resources

MENTAL HEALTH *Continued*

Washington County

Children, Youth & Family Services

802-479-0012

802-229-0591 (Hotline)

Children's Integrated Services (CIS)

Family Center of Washington

802-262-3292

Howard Center for Human Services

802-488-6000

802-488-7777 Crisis Number

Our House Child Sexual Abuse

Advocacy & Treatment

802-476-8825

Turning Point Center

of Central Vermont

802-479-7373

Windham County

Brattleboro Retreat

802-257-7785

Diane Leardi, LICSW

802-254-7345

HealthCare & Rehabilitation

Services (HCRS)

802-254-6028 Brattleboro

802-436-3947 Bellows Falls

Nancy Kale, LICSW

802-257-5002

Gordon Faison

802-380-0695

Families First in Southern Vermont

802-464-9633

Windsor County

Children's Integrated Services (CIS)

The Family Place Parent Child Center

802-649-3268

Health Care & Rehabilitation

Services (HCRS)

802-886-4500

HCRS Windsor Office 802-674-2539

HCRS Hartford Office 802-295-3031

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Addison County

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention

802-786-5811

Turning Point Center of Addison County

802-388-4249

Bennington County

AI-Anon/Alateen

866-972-5266

Alcoholics Anonymous

802-447-1285

Champlain Valley N

arcotics Anonymous

866-580-8718

Caledonia County

Northeast Kingdom

Human Services, Inc.

802-748-3181

800-649-0118

Vermont AI-Anon/ Alateen

866-972-5266

Alcohol Anonymous

877-334-1213

Chittenden County

Alcohol & Drug Abuse Programs

802-863-7561

Alcoholics Anonymous

802-864-1212 (Hotline)

Burlington Partnership

for Healthy Community

802-652-0997

Centerpoint Adolescent

Treatment Services

802-488-7711

Chittenden Clinic

802-488-6450

802-488-7777

Champlain Valley

Area Narcotics Anonymous

802-862-4516

866-580-8718

Green Mountain Area

Narcotics Anonymous

802-265-6414

Spectrum Stop

802-864-7423

Turning Point Center

of Chittenden County

802-861-3150

Winooski Partnership for Prevention

802-655-4565

Resources

SUBSTANCE ABUSE *Continued*

Franklin/Grand Isle Counties

AlAnon Alateen/Adult Children
866-972-5266

Alcoholics Anonymous Hotline
802-741-7100

Chittenden Clinic
802-488-6450

Howard Center
802-488-6265

Turning Point of Franklin County
802-782-8454

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs
802-524-7918

Franklin County Caring Communities
802-527-5049

Lamoille County

Al-Anon & Alateen
802-972-5266
802-860-8388

Alcoholics Anonymous
800-839-1686

Alcohol & Drug Abuse Programs
802-651-1550

North Central Vermont
Recovery Center
802-851-8120

Orange County

Al- Anon Alateen/Adult Children
866-972-5266
802-860-8388

Orange East Senior Center
802-222-4782

Bugbee Senior Center
802-295-9068

Alcoholics Anonymous
802-229-5100

Second Wind Foundation
802-295-5206

Valley Vista
802-222-5201

Orleans County

Newport Adolescent
& Adult Programs Substance
Abuse Counseling
802-334-5246 (24 hour)

Rutland County

Turning Point Center of Rutland
802-773-6010

Alcoholics Anonymous
802-775-0402

Evergreen Center Out Patient Services
802-747-3588

Narcotics Anonymous
802-773-5575

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs
802-786-5876

Washington County

Al-Anon Alateen/Adult Children
802-860-8388
866-972-5266 Toll free

Alcoholics Anonymous
802-229-5100

Central Vermont New
Directions Coalition/Substance
Abuse Prevention Coalition
802-223-4949

Central Vermont Substance
Abuse Services
802-244-4156
802-229-0591 Emergency

Alcohol & Drug Abuse
Programs Prevention Consultant
802-479-4250

Center Point Adolescent
Treatment Services
802-488-7711

Windsor County

Upper Valley Turning Point
of White River Junction
802-295-5206

Health Care & Rehabilitation
Services (HCRS) Springfield
802-886-4500

Health Care & Rehabilitation
Windsor
802-674-2539

Health Care & Rehabilitation
Hartford Regional Office
802-295-3031

Alcoholics Anonymous
802-885-8281 Springfield
802-295-7611 White River
800-839-1686 Toll Free

The Turning Point Center
of Springfield
802-885-4668

Resources

SUBSTANCE ABUSE *Continued*

Windham County

Al-Anon Adult Children
866-972-5266

Alcoholics Anonymous
AA Answering Service
802-257-5801

Brattleboro Area Prevention
Coalition (BAPC)
802-257-2175

Brattleboro Retreat
802-257-7785

Starting Now
802-258-3705
800-738-7328 x 3705

Alcohol & Drug Abuse Programs
802-257-2885

SAP Counselor BUHS
802-451-3452

Youth Services Substance Abuse
and Runaway Shelters
802-257-0361

Healthcare & Rehabilitation
Services (HCRS)
800-622-4235 Springfield, 24 hours–
emergency
802-436-3947 Bellows Falls

Turning Point Recovery
802-257-5600

Champlain Valley
Narcotics Anonymous
866-580-8718

STATEWIDE RESOURCES

Health Insurance

[www.info.healthconnect.vermont.gov/
Get_Started](http://www.info.healthconnect.vermont.gov/Get_Started)

Food and Other Needs

Vermont: 211

Parenting

www.pcavt.org/vt-parents-home-companion

Vermont Parents Helpline

1-800 CHILDREN, 802-244-5373
or 802-229-5724
pcavt@pcavt.org

On line interactive Circle of Parents Support Groups

On line interactive Nurturing
Parenting Programs

Register on Eventbrite for:

- Online interactive Child Sexual
Abuse Prevention Training
- Online interactive Safe Sleep/Shaken
Baby Syndrome Prevention Training

Vermont Family Network

1-800-800-4005

Vermont Federation for Children's Mental Health

www.vffcmh.org

Unemployment Benefits

www.labor.vermont.gov
800-828-4000

Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-228-7395
Sexual Violence Hotline: 800-489-7273

This Guide was inspired by the Children's Trust Fund, Michigan's Chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America, with much material excerpted from their COVID-19 PARENT /CAREGIVER GUIDE.



Prevent Child Abuse
Vermont™

1-800-CHILDREN | pcavt.org
1-800-244-5373