Covid-19
Parent & Caregiver Guide
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 DV: 1-800-228-7395
and Sexual Violence SV: 1-800-489-7273

Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services 1-800-639-6071

Substance Abuse and Mental 24 hr hotline: 1-800-985-5990
Health Services Administration 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
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 to 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,
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
**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.commonsensemedia.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
MEMENTAL 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 Narcotics Anonymous
866-580-8718

Caledonia County
Northeast Kingdom
Human Services, Inc.
802-748-3181
800-649-0118
Vermont Al-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
### SUBSTANCE ABUSE Continued

#### Franklin/Grand Isle Counties
- AlAnon Alateen/Adult Children
  - 866-972-5266
- Alcoholics Anonymous
  - 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

#### 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
- Narcoics 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

#### 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

Food and Other Needs
Vermont: 211

Parenting
www.pcvt.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.