

**Massachusetts Advocates for Children
CONNECT, SHARE, & ADVOCATE (COSA):
A MAC Response to the Challenge of COVID-19**

First of all, we hope that everyone reading this is healthy and doing what you can to keep yourself, those close to you, and the rest of us as safe as possible. Since last Monday, like many people, MAC staff have been working at home, doing our best to stay connected and to figure out how we can continue to support children and families in this very difficult situation.

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, we have decided to concentrate our resources on “**Connect, Share, and Advocate: A MAC Response to the Challenge of COVID-19 (COSA).**”

COSA focuses on a problem that speaks to the core of our work of the past 50 years. Across Massachusetts, families are addressing the multiple challenges posed by the closure of schools, workplaces, and community programs. These challenges are multiplied for families of students with disabilities and for children of color, immigrant children, children who have had traumatic life experiences, and others. When those families also face economic challenges, a perfect storm is brewing.

MAC is here to help. We have the relationships, the knowledge, the resources, and the commitment to help address these problems in this difficult time. Here is how we’ll do it:

1. Based on a network of relationships built over decades, we’ll use direct outreach, our Helpline, our new website at massadvocates.org, and online networking options like Facebook groups and Twitter chats to **CONNECT** isolated families with each other and with advocates, many of whom are also isolated. Connect also means re-establishing connections to our allies and coalition partners, who are, like us, trying to find their balance as the room keeps moving. We will be successful to the extent that we can coordinate efforts with our partners.
2. We will use our knowledge of the field, our research capacity, and our network to learn about efforts to provide remote support to struggling families, and to organize that information and **SHARE** information about community resources that may be helpful to Massachusetts families. Our Helpline and new website will be crucial elements of an information clearinghouse that will be available to all.
3. And, as always, we will strategize with allies and families about how to best influence the delivery of critical supports to people in their homes and **ADVOCATE** to make sure that these supports reach all families that need them, including those who can’t fully access them in English. This advocacy will include individual case advocacy (in collaboration with the legal services system) and systemic advocacy with DESE, school districts, and others. We are committed to ensuring that all families have access to the technological tools they need to access available services and supports.

Connect, Share and Advocate (COSA) is a way for MAC to use our strengths to make a difference in this difficult time. Thanks to the flexibility already offered by some of our donors, we will be able to concentrate part of our existing resources on this work in the immediate future. We are also contacting other foundations that are making available funds to respond to this short-term emergency (that might not be so short term). If it is within your capacity to help, we welcome, with open arms, your support!