



How to Support Children and Youth During Prolonged Time at Home and Away from School: A FAQ for Parents and Caregivers

Updated 3/20/2020

The staff at Seneca Family of Agencies want to take a moment to share some helpful resources for parents, caregivers and families living through the current restrictions in place throughout Los Angeles. Parents and caregivers are responsible for an extraordinarily difficult balancing act: navigating uncertain times while keeping children who are home from school healthy, engaged, and learning. We understand the stress and anxiety many are experiencing, and want to offer some creative ideas and suggestions for parents and caregivers to support themselves and their families. We also want to underscore that attending to your own mental health is very important during this time: resources for mental health services in Los Angeles County available during this crisis can be found at the [Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health](#).

Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Resources

LAUSD is committed to keeping the community updated and providing as much information as possible related to student and family health and wellbeing. The district has created **Family Resource Guides** in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), which includes information on Grab & Go Food Centers where students can pick up meals, at-home learning resources for families, and other important information.

- LAUSD is offering meal services during the school closures through sixty Grab & Go Food Centers. Food Centers are open 7 a.m. to 10 a.m., and each child can take home two meals per day. You can view the locations for Food Centers in the Family Resource Guides linked above.
- Other parent and family resources are available at LAUSD's [Family Resources page](#).
- If you have immigration concerns related to staying safe during COVID-19, contact [CHIRLA](#) (Center for Humane Immigrant Rights LA) at (213) 353-1333 or toll-free at 1-888-624-4752 (English/Spanish).
- Remember that your child's teacher is still working, and can be contacted for tips on at home learning during extended time at home.

How to Talk with Your Child About COVID-19

Without information, kids worry more. Below are resources that you might find helpful that talk about sharing information with your kids about COVID-19.

- See these multi-lingual COVID-19 FAQs from LA County in [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Vietnamese](#), [Simplified Chinese](#), [Traditional Chinese](#), [Korea](#), [Tagalog](#), [Arabic](#), [Farsi](#), [Cambodian](#), [Russian](#), and [Japanese](#).
- Prepare before talking to your kids about COVID-19: [Talking to Your Kids About the Coronavirus](#) (Child Mind Institute; English and Spanish) and [Talking to Children about COVID-19](#) (NASP/NASN; English and Spanish).
- Use age-appropriate language: [Talking With Children: Tips for Caregivers, Parents and Teachers During Infectious Disease Outbreaks](#) (SAMHSA; English only)
- Media can help, too:
 - Show your children a comic: [Just for Kids: A Comic Exploring the New Coronavirus](#) (NPR; available at [this link](#) in Chinese, Spanish, Braille, Finnish, Bahasa Indonesia, and Italian)
 - Watch a video together: [Answering Kids' Questions about Coronavirus](#) (Children's Hospital Colorado).

Managing Adult and Child Worry or Anxiety about COVID-19

During this period of social distancing, feelings of concern or worry are completely normal. Below are resources that you might find helpful when managing stress during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Practice de-stress techniques that will benefit you and your kids: [How You and Your Kids Can De-Stress During Coronavirus](#) (PBS)
- Take proactive measures to address stress, such as limiting access to news about COVID-19 for yourself and for your child: [Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19](#) (Center for Disease Control)
- Consult a trusted guide for more specific concerns: [COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) Information and Resources](#) or keep this list of tips on the fridge: [Parenting During COVID-19](#) (Psychology Today)
- Seek additional support via text using the [Crisis Text Line](#)
- If you are sheltering in place with someone who abuses you, remember that there is help through the National Domestic Abuse Hotline: [Staying Safe During COVID-19](#) (or: call 1-800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522 for English or Spanish)
- Read about more ways to stay calm or calm down: [50 Calm-Down Ideas to Try with Kids of All Ages](#) (GoZen!) and parenting young children while practicing self care: [Young Children at Home during the COVID-19 Outbreak: The Importance of Self-Care](#) (Zero to Three)
- Taking care of others can be a great way to stay connected and relieve stress. Some ideas include making art for older adults in your life, writing letters to neighbors or teachers, and learning about helpers in history. (Some examples are Harriet Tubman, Florence Nightingale, Winona Laduke, and Kam Wah Chung.)

Structuring Time at Home

Educators and child psychologists strongly suggest determining a schedule and sticking to it, to provide structure, normalcy and safety for time together at home. Wake up and eat meals at the same time every day. Here are some resources and ideas from Seneca educators, social workers and parents that you might find helpful when structuring time at home:

- Create and maintain a schedule: [Sample Schedules For Kids Home From School During Coronavirus Outbreak](#) (Huffington Post)
- Clarify what rules apply: house rules or school rules. If there are additional expectations, make those clear as well. (Example: Please don't interrupt me while I'm on the phone, but you can interrupt me while I'm typing emails.)
- Remember that even during Los Angeles's "[Safer at Home](#)" order walking, hiking and running while practicing social distancing are allowed!
- Contact your students' teachers or school to access school-specific online learning programs and educational materials, and remember that teachers are still working during this time.

Virtual Learning

Extended time at home is a great opportunity to support your students' education while encouraging engagement in their specific interests.

- Look into free K-12 Learning Materials from Scholastic: [Scholastic Learn at Home](#) (English and [Spanish](#))
- Play a developmentally appropriate math game: [We Are Teachers- Math Card Games](#)
- Attend a virtual storytime with a public library: [Brooklyn Public Library Calendar](#)
- Explore science: [Mystery Science](#)
- Utilize PBS's large free library of videos and interactive lessons, organized by subject area and grade level: [PBS Learning Media](#)
- Use this document of [shared resources for virtual learning in emergency school closure](#) that was co-authored by educators from around the world, and organizes most of its resources according to age categories.
- Assign an age appropriate writing prompt: [50 Writing Prompts for Elementary School Children](#) (ThoughtCo)
- Get inspired by this homeschool curriculum for 2-7 year olds: [Other Goose](#)
- Consider ways to help middle and high school students stay engaged: [Home-Schooling Tweens and Teens During Coronavirus Closings](#) (New York Times)

Art & Activities

Art projects and activities can break up the day, encourage creativity, and engage different learning styles.

- Complete a drawing tutorial on YouTube through the [Art for Kids Hub](#) or art projects organized by grade level at the [Free Art Projects](#) (Doodle Academy)
- See these [Best Hands-On Activities for Families \(Teacher Approved!\)](#)
- Go on a virtual field trip: check out this [Virtual Field Trip List](#), visit the zoo at [San Diego Zoo for Kids](#) or the aquarium: [Monterey Bay Aquarium Live cams](#)
- Plug into a kid friendly podcast: [Podcasts for Kids](#) (NY Times)

- Or bake easy things: [20 Easy Baking Recipes for Kids to Start With!](#)
- Make playdough: [How to Make Playdough Recipe](#)
- Interview a grandparent or family member via facetime and write what they learned; or, make a family tree; write a letter to a cousin, religious leader, or teacher!
- Find activities for toddlers: [Busy Toddler](#)

Movement

Physical movement is important for kids and adults and can help manage stress, work out extra energy, and promote wellness.

- [GoNoodle](#) offers a wide range of activities that appeal to kids of differing ages, interests, and abilities
- Check out [Just Dance!](#) on YouTube
- Stretch with some yoga at [Cosmic Dance](#)
- Don't underestimate the power of some time outside: see these [Top 5 benefits of children playing outside](#) (Sanford Health). Build in time to take a walk or visit a park during the structure of your day.

Internet Access

A lot of the resources listed here require access to the internet and a computer, laptop, iPad or smartphone at home. A number of providers are offering free or discounted internet ser

- [Getting Internet Access](#): Available Plans - Health Services and School Nursing (CA Dept of Education)
- [FCC agreement \(.pdf\)](#) stating that providers will waive late fees, not cutoff service for lack of payment, and open hot-spots.
- [Comcast](#): offers free WiFi for 2 months to low income families plus all Xfinity hot-spots are free to the public during this time
- [AT&T](#): offers open hot-spots, unlimited data to existing customers, and \$10/month plans to low income families
- [Verizon](#): no special offers, but following the FCC agreement.
- [Sprint](#): follows FCC agreement, provides unlimited data to existing customers, and, starting Tuesday, 3/17/2020, will allow all handsets to enable hot-spots for 60 days at no extra charge.
- [T-Mobile](#): follows FCC agreement, plus unlimited data to existing customers, and, coming soon, will allow all handsets to enable hot-spots for 60 days at no extra charge.

Final Thoughts

Remember that these are extraordinary times and there is no "right" way through this situation. We encourage you to do what feels best for your family, whatever makes sense for your children and their unique selves, and to make space for the things that support your family's mental and emotional health.