

## Talking With Children: TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS AND PARENTS REGARDING CORONAVIRUS COVID-19

Tucson Unified School District's Counseling Department has prepared the following information for our families in the hopes that it will help you navigate these uncertain times. Please know we are here to support you and all of Tucson Unified's children.

Youth react to anxiety and stress differently than adults. Some may react right away; others may show signs that they are having a difficult time much later. Overhearing adult conversations about events happening in their communities, watching or reading the news can make them feel scared, confused, or anxious, in much the same way as adults. This is true even if they live far from where the outbreak is taking place and are at little or no risk of getting sick.

### ***Possible Reactions***

Many of the reactions noted below are normal when children and youth are handling stress. If any of these behaviors lasts for more than 2 to 4 weeks, or if they suddenly appear later on, then children may need more help coping. *Community resources are listed at the end of this document.*

**PRESCHOOL CHILDREN, 0–5 YEARS OLD** Very young children may express anxiety and stress by going back to thumb sucking or wetting the bed at night. They may fear sickness, strangers, darkness, or monsters. It is fairly common for preschool children to become clingy with a parent, caregiver, or teacher or to want to stay in a place where they feel safe. They may express their understanding of the outbreak repeatedly in their play or tell exaggerated stories about it. Some children's eating and sleeping habits may change. They also may have aches and pains that cannot be explained. Other symptoms to watch for are aggressive or withdrawn behavior, hyperactivity, speech difficulties, and disobedience.

**EARLY CHILDHOOD TO ADOLESCENCE, 6–19 YEARS OLD** Children and youth in this age range may have some of the same reactions to anxiety and stress linked to infectious disease outbreaks as younger children. Often younger children within this age range want much more attention from parents or caregivers. They may stop doing their schoolwork or chores at home. Some youth may feel helpless and guilty because they are in a part of the world currently unaffected by the outbreak, or where the public health system protects people against outbreaks in ways it cannot in other parts of the world.

### ***How Parents and Caregivers Can Support Children in Managing Their Responses***

With the right support from the adults around them, children and youth can manage their stress in response to infectious disease outbreaks and take steps to keep themselves emotionally and physically healthy. The most important ways to help are to make sure children feel connected, cared about, and loved.

- **Pay attention and be a good listener.** Parents and other caregivers can help children express their emotions through conversation, writing, drawing, playing, and singing. Most children want to talk about things that make them anxious and cause them stress—so let them. Accept their

feelings and tell them it is okay to feel sad, upset, or stressed. Crying is often a way to relieve stress and grief.

- **Allow them to ask questions.** Ask your teens what they know about the outbreak. What are they hearing in school or seeing on TV? Try to watch news coverage on TV or the Internet with them. Also, limit access so they have time away from reminders about the outbreak.
- **Encourage positive activities.** Adults can help youth see the good that can come out of an outbreak. Heroic actions, families and friends who travel to assist with the response to the outbreak, and people who take steps to prevent the spread of all types of illness, such as hand washing, are examples. Children may better cope with an outbreak by helping others. They can write caring letters to those who have been sick or lost family members to illness; they can organize a drive to collect needed medical supplies to send to affected areas.
- **Model self-care, set routines, eat healthy meals, get enough sleep, exercise, and take deep breaths to handle stress.** Adults can show youth how to take care of themselves. If you are in good physical and emotional health, you are more likely to be readily available to support the children.

*Below are resources to assist in talking with children about COVID-19:*

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention resources for [talking to children](#) about COVID-19,
- National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) [parent resource](#) for talking with children about COVID-19 that school leaders can share with staff and parents when needed
  - NASP [parent resource in Spanish](#)
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network [parent/caregiver guide to helping families cope with COVID-19](#)
- World Health Organization's [helping children cope with stress](#)

## Community Wide Resources

### **Crisis Response Center (CRC)** (24 hour crisis services)

Phone : **520-622-6000** or 800-796-6762

Address : 2802 E. District Street (UPH Campus @ Ajo/Country Club)

### **Department of Child Safety (DCS) Hotline** (reporting child abuse/neglect)

Phone : **1-888-767-2445**

### **Directory of Human Resources and Self-help groups in Arizona**

[www.211arizona.org/pima](http://www.211arizona.org/pima), or

dial **2-1-1**

### **Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS)**

[www.azdhs.gov](http://www.azdhs.gov)

#### **Pima County Juvenile Court Center (PCJCC)**

Main Number.....	724-2000
Education Programs Coordinator, Nandi Muhammad.....	724-9293
AHCCCS/PCAP Liaison, Melissa Starr-Stith.....	724-2227

#### **If you have AHCCCS, and require Behavioral Health (BH), counseling services**

Cenpatico Member Services.....	866-495-6738
Arizona Children's Association (AZCA).....	622-7611
Casa De Los Ninos (CDLN).....	881-1292
Intermountain.....	407-5200
La Frontera.....	838-3804
Marana Health Care.....	682-1091
Pathways.....	748-7108

#### **If you do not have AHCCCS or private insurance, and require BH services:**

Catholic Social Service.....	623-0344
CODAC.....	327-4505
COPE.....	881-0337
El Rio.....	670-3909
Jewish Family and Children's Srvc's.....	795-0300
Marana Health Care.....	682-1091
Our Family.....	323-1708 X204
Sonora Behavioral Health (immediate BH services, Northwest Hospital).....	469-8700
St. Elizabeth Health Center.....	628-7871
Tucson Indian Center.....	884-7131
United Community Health Center.....	407-5400

#### **Substance Abuse**

Al-Anon, Al-ATeen.....	323-2229
In-Balance.....	722-9631
Sin Puertas.....	624-5806
The Mark.....	326-6182

#### **Parenting Classes**

Parent Connection.....	321-1500
Parenting Wisely.....	205-4783
Pima County Parenting Coalition.....	624-9290
Strengthening Families (Pima Prevention Partnership).....	326-2528 X146

### **Support Groups**

Emerge (Domestic Violence) 881-7201  
KARE Family Center(relatives caring for children) 323-4476  
Las Familias(victims of sexual abuse) 327-7122 x221  
MIKID(Mentally Ill Kids in Distress) 882-0142  
National Human Trafficking Resource Center 1-888-373-7888  
Pima County Victim Witness (victims of crime) 470-5525  
Southern AZ Center Against Sexual Assault 327-7273  
Southern Az. Aids Foundation(SAAF/Wingspan, serving LGBTQ community) 624-0348  
Tu Nidito(families dealing with death/serious illness) 322-9155

### **Health and Wellness Resources**

Chicanos Por La Causa 882-0018  
Child and Family Resources 881-8940  
Community Food Bank 628-1268  
El Rio Health Center 670-3909  
Pima County Health Department 294-2026  
Planned Parenthood 408-7526  
Salvation Army 622-5411  
St. Elizabeth of Hungary 628-7821  
St. Vincent DePaul Society 628-7837  
Tucson Urban League 791-9522  
Youth on Their Own 293-1136