



## School-Based Behavioral Health Services

*Clark Montessori School*  
*North Avondale Montessori School*  
*Parker Woods Montessori School*

Funded, in part, by the

 **Bethesda**  
BETHESDA FOUNDATION INC.

March 16, 2020

Dear Families,

We are aware that this is a stressful and challenging time for all. We have put together this resource with information to help you and your child(ren) cope with the uncertainty and anxiety that many are experiencing.

This guide contains the following:

- A. Guidelines on how to talk to kids about coronavirus/COVID-19
- B. Strategies for coping with stress and anxiety
- C. Resources for crises while schools are closed
- D. Other helpful resources during school closure

If you are in need of additional support, you can reach out to the School Based Behavioral Health team via TriHealth's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). **The EAP phone number is: 513-891-1627.** If you call EAP, please let them know that you are calling for the School Based Behavioral Health team and which school your child attends. **You can also reach me by email at [poladse@cpsboe.k12.oh.us](mailto:poladse@cpsboe.k12.oh.us)**

Take care,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Polad, Psy.D." in a cursive style.

Sehra Polad, Psy.D.

Psychologist, Supervisor

School Based Behavioral Health Program

## Talking to Kids about Coronavirus

The following are tips for having a conversation with your child(ren) about coronavirus and COVID-19:

- **Avoid avoiding:** Although it may seem easier to avoid bringing up coronavirus and COVID-19 with your child, children often worry more when they are not given any information, so have an age-appropriate conversation with them can help to ease their worries.
  - Chances are, they have already heard people talking about it and know that something is going on. You can start a conversation by asking them what they have heard about coronavirus. Your goal should be to clear up misinformation and provide them with facts. Check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC; [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)) and World Health Organization (WHO; [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)) for fact-based information.
- **Keep it age/developmentally-appropriate:** Don't volunteer too much information, and instead follow your child's lead. Use language that they understand; for example, younger children may not know what a virus is, but have probably heard of the cold or the flu, or know what it means to feel sick.
- **Be reassuring and honest:** Don't downplay the situation, but don't offer excessive details. Explain that for most people who get COVID-19, the symptoms are mild, especially for kids. Provide comfort if they express fear, and validate their emotions (acknowledge that it is normal to be scared or anxious right now).
- **Focus on your safety plan:** Let your kids know what steps you are taking to keep them safe, and what they can do to keep themselves safe.
  - Discuss the importance of handwashing and instruct them on the proper method for washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds: [https://www.who.int/gpsc/clean\\_hands\\_protection/en/](https://www.who.int/gpsc/clean_hands_protection/en/)
  - Explain that social distancing keeps people safer, and help them understand the reasons behind school and other closures and why they may not be able to spend time with their friends right now.
  - Let them call or video chat with older relatives who they may be more worried about.
- **Use available resources:** These comics and videos have been designed to explain coronavirus to kids:
  - <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus>
  - <https://www.easterseals.com/michigan/shared-components/document-library/coronavirus-downloadable-book.pdf>

## Managing Stress & Anxiety

It is normal for your child(ren), as well as you, to feel increased anxiety in a time of uncertainty. In addition to worrying about getting sick, things continue to change daily and it can feel very confusing. We are also being inundated with so much information, which can be overwhelming. The following are tips for coping with anxiety:

- **Focus on things that are within your control.** Much about this situation is outside of our control, and it is not helpful for us to focus on the things we cannot change. Instead, turn your attention to things that you can control, such as washing your hands, taking vitamins, and limiting consumption of news.
  - Monitor how much information your child is taking in through social media, television, etc. They are likely to feel increasingly stressed if they are spending a significant amount of time reading about coronavirus.
- **Take care of your physical well-being.** We are still allowed to go outside, as long as we maintain about 6 feet of distance from people outside of our immediate circle. It's okay to play in the yard or go for a walk. Go to parks but avoid playground equipment and other surfaces.
  - Do yoga or practice meditation at home with your kids.
  - Try to eat balanced meals and help your child stick to a sleep schedule, even while they are not in school.
- **Practice mindfulness.** It can be helpful to keep ourselves grounded in the present moment. We can do this through observing our surroundings using all five senses, practicing progressive muscle relaxation, doing deep breathing exercises, or engaging in other mindfulness activities such as mindful eating or doing an art project. Doing these activities as a family can help ease your child's worries about the future.
  - This "Family Mindfulness Schedule" has great examples of ways to practice mindfulness throughout your day: <https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/family-mindfulness-schedule.pdf>
  - These videos talk through how to use progressive muscle relaxation:
    - Younger kids: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDKyRpW-Yuc>
    - Teens: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Xp2UzG7UYY&feature=youtu.be>
- **Stay connected (even if virtually).** Lean on people for social support and reach out for help when you need it. Your kids may not be able to go on playdates, but let them call or video chat with friends and family in other places.
  - Use this time to engage in fun family activities, such as puzzles, board games, or baking. Read books, watch movies, or binge a show together.
- **Model coping for your kids.** It's okay to show your child that you are worried too, and talk them through how you cope with anxiety. Validate their feelings and your own, and guide them through taking deep breaths or engaging in a fun activity to distract yourself.

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### Resources for Crises or Extra Support

If you need additional support while schools are closed, you can use the following resources:

- **MindPeace:** <https://mindpeacecincinnati.com>
  - MindPeace has a “Search for Providers” button on the homepage which allows you to look for community providers in your area who accept your insurance. Many community providers are providing telehealth (video or phone sessions) services during this time.
- **513-281-CARE (2273)**
  - This phone number is staffed 24/7 for emergency services. They provide crisis intervention, information, and referral services.
- **Text “4Hope” to 839863**
  - This is a text hotline run by the Hamilton County Crisis Support Team. They can provide in the moment crisis support via text message.
- **Hamilton County Mobile Crisis Team (MCT): 513-584-5098**
  - MCT is a mobile clinical team trained to respond to mental health emergencies in the community. Mobile Crisis is available Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 12:00 am and Saturday and Sunday from 11:30 am to 7:30 pm.
  - After hour referrals can be made through Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES). Call (513) 584-8577. PES will page the Mobile Crisis Team if necessary.
- **Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Psychiatric Intake Response Center (PIRC): 513-636-4124**
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** Call 800-273-8255 or text “HOME” to 741741
- **If you are concerned about your child’s safety at home, please go directly to the nearest emergency room**



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### Other Resources

#### Food:

- **Habanero Latin American Fare:** 358 Ludlow Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45220
  - Habanero Latin American Fare will offer lunches to CPS students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. The lunches will be ready at 11 a.m. daily.
  - In order to receive a lunch, call Habanero at 513-961-6800 or direct message them on Facebook.
- **Red Rose Jems Pizzeria:** 5915 Hamilton Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45224
  - Children who receive free or reduced lunch can get 1 giant slice of cheese or pepperoni pizza, fruit, and a lemonade from Tuesday-Friday from 4-6 PM
- **Piada:** Multiple Locations
  - Hyde Park: 3780 Paxton Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45209
  - Mason: 9317 Mason Montgomery Rd, Mason, OH 45040
  - Piada is offering a free kids pasta with sauce, cheese and a fountain drink, Monday – Friday (March 16 – April 3), during lunch hours of 10:45am - 1:00pm

#### Internet:

- **Spectrum:** Call 1-844-488-8398 to enroll in free Spectrum broadband internet service with WiFi access during the school closure