As we all navigate our way through this evolving time of COVID-19, we wanted to share information designed to help support you as parents/guardians and your family. Your children are at the heart of everything we do and we know that by helping to support you, we are in turn supporting your children. Every family at Keys is a valued part of the community.

We know that having your children at home during the school day may create additional challenges. We also recognize that this is a stressful time for everyone and managing your own stress and emotional wellbeing as parents is important. We hope that the information listed below will be a benefit to you as you make adjustments to your daily lives and help you to find your “New Normal.”

**Managing Information and Communications with Others**

It is easy to become overwhelmed by the nonstop media coverage, the day to day statistics, and the latest information. While knowledge can be helpful in managing stress and anxiety, it can also increase fears and feelings of uncertainty. Here are some things to keep in mind as you navigate taking in information throughout your day. (Source: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, “Parent/Caregiver Guide to Healing Families Cope with the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)”

- Keep updated about what is happening with the outbreak and additional recommendations by getting information from credible media outlets, local public health authorities, and updates from public health websites (e.g., CDC).
- Although you need to stay informed, minimize exposure to media outlets or social media that might promote fear or panic. Be particularly aware of (and limit) how much media coverage or social media time your children are exposed to about the outbreak.
- Seek support and continued connections from friends and family by talking to them on the telephone, texting, or communicating through email or social media.
- E-mail and texting may be the best ways to stay in contact with others during an outbreak, as the Internet may have the most sensational media coverage and may be spreading rumors. Check in regularly with your children about what they have viewed on the Internet and clarify any misinformation.

When talking with you children about information related to COVID-19, remember to:

- Focus on supporting children by encouraging questions and helping them understand the current situation
- Talk about their feelings and validate them
- Clarify misinformation or misunderstandings about how the virus is spread and that not every illness is COVID-19
- Provide comfort and a bit of extra patience
- Check in with your children on a regular basis or when the situation changes
- Provide reassurance that researchers and doctors are working to learn everything they can about the virus to keep people safe
- Remind them of what they can do to help stay safe like hand washing and help them understand that they are doing their part by staying home and have school remotely
• Be a good role model by showing empathy to those that are effected both directly and indirectly by the virus

**Coping with Stress**

*Parents/Guardians*

It is important for you as a parent or guardian to take time for yourself to acknowledge that we are in a time of some uncertainty which can create additional stress and anxiety. Changes to schedules and usual activities, decreased contact with others, and curtailed activities that may typically relieve or manage stress such as going to the gym, attending worship services, or spending time in the company of close friends and family, can leave people feeling unsettled. Fears and anxiety, sadness and boredom, and irritability and frustration, are normal reactions to stressful events. Research has shown that some of the following are helpful in combating such feelings. (Source: APA.org, “Keeping your distance to stay safe”)

- Limiting viewing of news information to reputable sources and balance it with relaxing or less stressful activities
- Keep up routines and schedules to create a sense of normalcy and purpose to each day
- Stay connected to those important in your life such as family and friends via live connections such as phone calls, video connections, text messages. Social media can also be a way to stay connected to family and close friends.
- Keep up with healthy habits such as eating healthy, exercising and getting enough sleep.
- Find ways to manage your anxiety that are within reach such as adopting mindfulness practices.
- If you feel like you are struggling to manage your feelings, consider talking to your healthcare provider or contact to a trained counselor at SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 or by texting TalkWithUS 66746.

**Children**

Your children may respond differently to an outbreak depending on their age. Below are some reactions according to age group and the best ways you can respond:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>Reactions</th>
<th>How to help</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>Fear of being alone, bad dreams</td>
<td>Patience and tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speech difficulties</td>
<td>Provide reassurance (verbal and physical)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Loss of bladder/bowel control, constipation, bed-wetting</td>
<td>Encourage expression through play, reenactment, story-telling</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Change in appetite</td>
<td>Allow short-term changes in sleep arrangements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Increased temper tantrums, whining, or clinging behaviors</td>
<td>Plan calming, comforting activities before bedtime</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Maintain regular family routines</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Avoid media exposure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOL-AGE (ages 6-12)</td>
<td>Irritability, whining, aggressive behavior</td>
<td>Patience, tolerance, and reassurance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clinging, nightmares</td>
<td>Play sessions and staying in touch with friends through telephone and Internet</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sleep/appetite disturbance</td>
<td>Regular exercise and stretching</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches)</td>
<td>Engage in educational activities (workbooks, educational games)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Withdrawal from peers, loss of interest</td>
<td>Participate in structured household chores</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Competition for parents’ attention</td>
<td>Set gentle but firm limits</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Forgetfulness about chores and new information learned at school</td>
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Discuss the current outbreak and encourage questions. Include what is being done in the family and community
Encourage expression through play and conversation
Help family create ideas for enhancing health promotion behaviors and maintaining family routines
Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school
Address any stigma or discrimination occurring and clarify misinformation

| ADOLESCENT (ages 13-18) | Physical symptoms (headaches, rashes, etc.)
Sleep/appetite disturbance
Agitation or decrease in energy, apathy
Ignoring health promotion behaviors
Isolating from peers and loved ones
Concerns about stigma and injustices
Avoiding/cutting school | Patience, tolerance, and reassurance
Encourage continuation of routines
Encourage discussion of outbreak experience with peers, family (but do not force)
Stay in touch with friends through telephone, Internet, video games
Participate in family routines, including chores, supporting younger siblings, and planning strategies to enhance health promotion behaviors
Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school
Discuss and address stigma, prejudice and potential injustices occurring during outbreak |


**Managing Work and Family**
Many parents/guardians will be asked to work from home while children are also home from school. When thinking through what arrangements will work best for your family, here are some things to keep in mind that might help ease the transition and provide space and time for everyone to get things done.

- Set up a family meeting early in the week to talk about the structure of the week, establish house rules about what will be done when, and explain how this time at home will be different from typical school breaks or summertime
- Keep to a regular schedule for daily activities such as waking up, bedtime, meals, schoolwork, and free time to establish consistency
- Depending your living space, design zones or areas in the home for various activities like studying, work, play and relaxation activities, quiet space
- Anticipate each day when you will have meetings or other activities that will require your attention so that you can plan for children to be occupied when you need them to be
- Explore options to stagger or flex your work day so that you are more available during the daytime hours when children will be more active and require more attention
- Prep snacks and lunches in the morning or the night before so that children will need limited assistance during midday meals
- Set aside free time breaks during the day when they get your full attention
• Consider involving children in household chores that will serve as an activity and provide a sense of shared responsibility and community at home
• Map out with a spouse or partner who will be on point with the children when to balance out the additional responsibilities that will present with having children at home during the work week
• Plan for family time when school and work are set aside
• Expect bumps in the road as you establish new patterns and routines and be willing to adjust plans as needed