

NEED TO KNOW



Chronicles In COVID-19



Highlights

Our new normal that isn't so normal...

How do we help children cope with changes from COVID-19?

- Stay calm, listen to children and offer reassurance. Children will react to and learn from adult examples.
- Be aware of how we talk about COVID-19. Our words can increase or decrease a child's fear.
- Explain and teach children mitigation measures such as social distancing, hand washing and using hand-sanitizer appropriately, wearing cloth face masks covering both the mouth and nose, staying home when sick, avoid touching the face, and covering their mouth and nose with a tissue or elbow when coughing or sneezing.
- Help children learn deep breathing as a calming tool and then practice it with them regularly.
- Establish and maintain daily routines. Regular schedules allow children a sense of control, predictability, and calm.
- Help children identify activities and projects that might help others, such as writing letters to neighbors, and others who might be home alone, or healthcare workers.
- Closely monitor television viewing and social media for both adults and children. Too much of both will increase anxiety and fear.
- Provide developmentally and age appropriate, accurate information on COVID-19 to dispel rumors and inaccurate information.
- Let children's questions guide you. Answer truthfully but don't offer too much or unnecessary details. Don't be afraid to tell a child you don't know the answer but will find out.

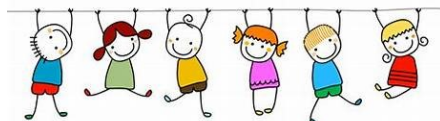
Adapted from:

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/helping-children-cope-with-changes-resulting-from-covid-19>

Planning for Back to School:

- Prepare to check for symptoms each morning, including a fever. Anyone identified as a "close contact" or with symptoms should not go to school.
- Contact your child's school if he/she becomes sick.
- Make sure your child(ren) is up to date on vaccines and consider getting flu vaccine this year. OCSD will be providing in-school flu vaccine clinics this year. Watch for more information.
- Review virus mitigation measures with your child(ren); handwashing and hand sanitizing, social distancing, cloth face coverings, avoid sharing objects, etc...
- Develop daily routines for before and after school, such as things to pack for school (hand sanitizer, face mask) and washing hands and face mask after school.

- Make sure your information is current at school, including phone number, email and emergency contacts and persons authorized to pick up child(ren). Consider if your list includes high risk individual(s). If so, consider alternate individuals.
- Consider and plan for the possibility of 14-day quarantine.
- Begin preparing your child(ren) for wearing a mask on the bus (required) and in the classroom (strongly encouraged).
- Plan to follow up with your school to review IEP or 504 plan and other services such as mental health services, speech services, etc....



- Identify local COVID-19 testing sites in the event you or your child develops symptoms. (see [Okaloosa.floridahealth.gov](https://www.okaloosa.floridahealth.gov))
- Develop a plan as a family to protect household members who are at increased risk.
- Talk to children about how school will be different when they return. (desks apart, masks, barriers in classrooms, teachers and peers physical distancing etc...)
- Anticipate behavior changes in children, such as crying or irritation, worry or sadness, and difficulty concentrating which may be signs of stress or anxiety.
- Model for children by practicing self-care.

Adapted from CDC's Back to School Planning:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/parent-checklist.html#planning-in-person-classes>

The Department of Health in Okaloosa County
[okaloosa.floridahealth.gov](https://www.okaloosa.floridahealth.gov) (for testing information)

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