



Office of Children and Family Services

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

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Commissioner

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Dear Child Care Provider:

Because the COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted all of us in some way or another, we are reaching out to support programs and families in communities across the state. These are challenging times and one thing we know for sure, is that child care providers play an incredibly special role in the lives of the children they care for. While many providers have remained open and are able to see some of their children and families every day, some families are unable to bring their children to child care and many programs have not been able to continue operating as a result of COVID-19. Considering this, OCFS is sharing this information to provide some helpful ideas on how to maintain the strong connections with the children and families you have served so you can continue to provide the ongoing and vital support they need. Let's remember that there will be an end to this pandemic. Although we are not sure when, we do know we are all in this together and that community connections will help us all get through this.

Family engagement is key. Another thing we know for sure is that all children, younger, older, as well as those with special needs, can experience stress from being separated from the people with whom they have close and special bonds. Changes in routine can also be stressful for children. As families are asked to participate in social distancing and home routines change, finding ways to remain connected is especially important. Some options that you may want to consider are sharing your child care daily schedule, participating in daily video chats with families, recording yourself reading a favorite book or message and sharing a link with families, and sending other messages of encouragement such as pictures of favorite toys with messages that you are excited to play with them when they return. Methods such as video chats are especially helpful because they provide an opportunity to interact with the children and families together. This long-distance family engagement is beneficial to parents, children and yourselves as providers who have made caring for others your lifelong work.

It is important to **maintain connections and support families**. Ongoing and regular communication with the families you serve is beneficial; the families you work with likely see you as a source of social support and may be willing to share about the struggles they are facing as they self-isolate due to COVID-19. You also may be able to help parents identify age-appropriate activities and routines that may help to calm children while they are home. This is a place where we believe the child care workforce may be able to provide a very special form of support. At the end of this letter are some resources and links to websites that you may share with your families to help deal with the added stress that may be happening each day in their households. We have also prepared a chart on the next page of this letter so you can record some of the useful resources for families in your own community. As many parents are not working full-time, or at all, they may need help with basic resources such as food and diapers. Changes to health

care routines and office hours may leave them questioning the best way to obtain medical care. Like the skills you have built for working with young children, the things you know about your local community are especially important during times like these. It may also be helpful to remind parents of the importance of staying connected with their child's school. Parents of school-age children may benefit from keeping in contact with their child's school in order to help them stay current with learning plans, access remote learning tools, and get connected to meals or other services. Feel free to add other items to the resource list. You know your communities and the families you serve the best and may have lots of ideas we haven't even considered.

Let's also keep in mind that **child safety** is of utmost importance. Families who are supported have a greater ability to keep their own children safe. Please browse the resources available in your community and connect with families to offer support, whether that be a referral to a needed community service, a link to an on-line parent support group, an idea for an activity the parent can do with a child, or even just someone the parent can talk to. As providers, you play an important role in the safety of children. If you have immediate concerns about the safety of a child, call 911 and make a report to the Child Abuse and Maltreatment hotline. To register a report, mandated reporters should contact the hotline by calling 1-800-635-1522. The general public can also register a report by calling 1-800-342-3720.

The following general resources may be useful to you in your ongoing work to support families. You can use the next page as a place to record information on resources in your community.

Hotlines and Helplines

Child Abuse Reporting Hotline 1-800-342-3720
Domestic Violence Reporting Hotline 1-800-942-6906
Prevent Child Abuse NY Parenting Helpline 1-800-244-5373
Mental Health Assistance 1-844-863-9314
Novel Coronavirus Hotline 1-888-364-3065

Useful Links

[Resources broken down by county](#)
[Mental Health resources](#)
[Supporting families during Covid-19](#)
[Supporting Providers and CCR&Rs during Covid-19](#)
[Resources for Special Education](#)
[Family Engagement](#)
[Financial Support](#)
[Online Learning](#)
[Parent Portal](#)



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RESOURCE LIST

This chart can be used to help you record resources available in your community. Feel free to add other resources that you want to have readily available for you and the families you work with.

Resource Type	Explanation of Resource	Resource in your own community
Food Pantry	A food pantry provides food to families that have a place to live but may not have enough food. See the above resources or search for some in your local community. Try Searching: food pantry (insert town, city, or county)	
Diapers	Many families struggle to afford diapers during a crisis. You may dial 2-1-1 to find diapers in your local community or Try: http://211.org/	
Emotional Supports	Emotional resources may range from making sure you and the families you serve are doing well emotionally to making sure children are academically challenged. Try visiting: https://omh.ny.gov/ or searching: Educational resources	
Parenting Supports	During difficult times parenting can become even more stressful. It may be helpful to gather a list of parenting resources for your families. These resources may contain suggestions for managing behavior, stress, loss, or how to talk with children about crisis. Try visiting: https://www.nysparenting.org/	
Internet and Cable	As a way to support families, internet and cable companies are currently providing free services to homes where children reside. Try visiting: your internet or cable company website	
Other		
Other		