



Considerations for Reopening Series for Early Childhood Programs

PART 3: TRANSITIONING TO THE NEW NORMAL

RESOURCE TOOLKIT

This toolkit was created as part of the QUALITYstarsNY *Considerations for Reopening* webinar series to support early childhood programs during the COVID-19 pandemic. It provides a collection of resources and sample materials developed by QUALITYstarsNY and various government agencies and organizations.

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PART 3: TRANSITIONING TO THE NEW NORMAL

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Reopening Considerations for Child Care Programs

Part 3: Transitioning to the New Normal

QUALITYstarsNY Quality Improvement Specialists



June 15, 2020



- New York State's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for all types of regulated early childhood programs
- Designed to assess and enhance the quality of early childhood for New York's children and families
- Early childhood programs participating in QUALITYstarsNY receive individualized support, resources, and services to help improve their quality
- Learn more about QUALITYstarsNY and how to apply to participate at qualitystarsny.org



Considerations for Reopening Webinar Series

Visit our series webpage at qualitystarsny.org/reopening to access:

- Webinar recordings from the other series sessions
- Downloadable Resource Toolkits for each session
- Our schedule of upcoming live webinars for the series in English and Spanish

Objectives

Participants will:

- Determine at least three strategies to support transitioning staff, families and children back into care.
- Examine the social and emotional effects of stress and loss on adults and children.
- Develop at least one action step to prepare for reopening.

Agenda

- Relationships as the cornerstone
- Supporting Transitions with:
 - Staff
 - Families (current and new)
 - Children (current and new)
 - Children leaving the program



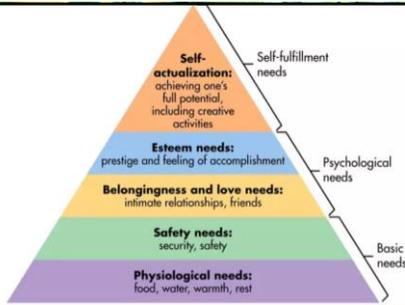
“You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.”

C. S. Lewis

Relationships: The Corner Stone of Safe & Healthy Child Care

Use your COVID-19 lens to consider how are we building relationships between current and new families with:

- Directors
- Teachers
- Children



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
<https://www.childcareexchange.com/article/building-on-maslow-to-meet-director-and-staff-needs/5021108/>

The Stress Response
www.consultdranderson.com/stress-adrenal-hormones/



POSITIVE Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

TOLERABLE Serious, temporary stress responses, buffered by supportive relationships.

TOXIC Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships.

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/>

Ambiguous Loss: Defined

- Unclear loss with no resolution or closure—uncertainty
- Not a single defining point, like death
- Makes grieving more complicated
- Vagueness of feelings: confused, helpless, disoriented, overwhelmed or discombobulated

Building Resilience

- Attachment and relationships
- Self-control
- Self-regulation
- Initiative



The Pyramid Model
 challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/emergency/index.html

Break Out Activity

In your break out rooms, please discuss:

- What will relationships/interactions look like now?
- What are some practices you can do to support these relationships with staff, families and children?
- How can you provide support for these practices?

Staff

Commitment to Staff Wellness

- Connect with local CCR&R, DSS, Food Pantries and 311 to see what services they can offer your staff.
- Do you provide an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)?



Staff Wellness Now and Always

- Advocate on their behalf.
- Have a weekly one-on-one meeting with each teacher to address needs and concerns.
- Be present and listen.
- Floater staff available to assist rooms as needed.



Preparing for Opening

- Staggered starting dates for children?
- What will program hours be?
- Can you set up virtual or social distance open houses?
- Do you need policies on contact with children?



Preparing Staff for Opening:

Need time:

- For organizing and rearranging classrooms
- Connecting with children and families
- Connecting with colleagues



Sharing Information with Partnering Agencies

- Amend RFP's and enforce new guidelines
- Meet with partnering agencies (community based organizations and school districts, special education collaborators)
- Create focus groups with agencies

Our "New" Classroom

- Length and number of children in large group time
- Utilize small groupings throughout the day
- Modify the daily schedule
- Modify the physical space in the classrooms



Resources to Support Families with Opening

- Social stories
- Visual schedule
- Transition to a full day
- Tip sheets on hand washing
- Send pictures of what the classroom looks like now



Families

Welcome “Back” Information Package

- Welcome Letter
- Getting to Know Your Child
- Parent Handbook Addendum
- Updated Policies
- Parent/Community Resources



Family Engagement and Education

- Create a space for teachers and families to connect
- Use newsletters, emails... for parent education and information
- Use virtual meeting platforms for education and family meeting opportunities

Transitioning Families Out of the Program

- Support them in finding new care or connecting with schools as needed
- Have a social distancing parade by classroom at the site





Children

Social and Emotional Development Considerations for Infants

What you might see:

- Inconsolable crying
- Difficulty taking a bottle
- Withdrawal



Supportive Caregiving Practices

- ✓ Prompt responses to children's needs
- ✓ Consistent routines
- ✓ Consistent Caregivers
- ✓ Primary caregiving
- ✓ Reciprocity
- ✓ Consider infant's temperament style

Social and Emotional Development Considerations for Toddlers

What you might see:

- Needing a lot of provider's undivided attention (connection seeking)
- Hitting, biting, yelling, screaming
- Lack of engagement
- Controlling behaviors
- Regression in skills



Supportive Caregiving Practices

- ✓ Use of visual schedules that are reviewed throughout the day.
- ✓ Use social stories to support social/emotional skill development.
- ✓ Provide non-nappers with appropriate activities and support off their cots.
- ✓ Allow for children to sleep when they are tired.
- ✓ Offer children empathy; ALL feelings are valid.

Social and Emotional Development Considerations for Preschoolers

- Emotional outbursts
- Behaviors that will control the situation
- Lack of focus



Supportive Caregiving Practices

- ✓ Visual aids: schedules, social stories, first-then boards.
- ✓ Provide predictability: consistent routines and caregiver responses.
- ✓ Support non-nappers with appropriate activities off their cots.
- ✓ Visual posting of expectations: classroom or center rules.
- ✓ Review classroom expectations multiple times a day.

Supporting Separation Anxiety

- Consistent person to meet child and family at the door
- Social story that goes through new routine, with copies for home and care
- Visual schedule of drop off process
- Transition object from the classroom at the door
- Family photos



Action Planning

Next Steps - what will you do?

Next Steps

- ✓ Develop a plan for Self-Care
- ✓ Check in on the social and emotional well-being of the staff as a continual process.
- ✓ Check on the care space needs and supports.
- ✓ Create plans for staff and families to connect.
- ✓ Develop returning schedules with families.

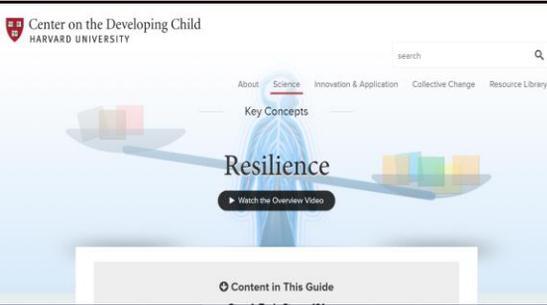
New York State Resources

Office of Children and Family Services
ocfs.ny.gov/main/news/COVID-19

Department of Health
coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home



Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-main.page>



Resource: Center on the Developing Child:
Harvard University
developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/resilience/



National Center for Pyramid Model
Innovations
challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/index.html

More in the Considerations for Reopening Webinar Series

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Thank You

- Learn more about QUALITYstarsNY at qualitystarsny.org.
- Become a QUALITYstarsNY participating program! Visit qualitystarsny.org/apply to get started.



Considerations for Reopening: Part 3 Action Plan

Topic	Items to consider	Who's can support you with this?	Target Completion	Notes
Supporting Transitions with Staff				
Supporting Transitions with Families				
Welcome Back Packet to Families				
Supporting Transitions with Children				

Considerations for Reopening: Part 3 Action Plan

Topic	Items to consider	Who's can support you with this?	Target Completion	Notes
Classroom Modifications				
Updating Classroom Schedules				
Supporting Children that will not return to program				

Other steps to take:

Opening Day—Coming Soon!

As you know, our program is set to open on _____. We would like to give you a few reminders and updates to make our transitions back to the program successful for everyone.

We will be sending out a Welcome Back Package with all of our updated policies, procedures, and new protocols in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our commitment to you:

- Heightened cleaning and disinfecting throughout the day
- Adherence to new COVID illness guidelines for staff and children (including daily screening of staff, visitors, and children before entering the building)
- Updated classroom schedules to allow additional time to acclimate children back to program
- Designated pick up and drop off times to decrease waiting time for families, respect social distancing, and limit the number of people entering the building

How can you support this transition back to the program?

- Have frequent discussions and read stories to your child about returning to school (sample provided)
- Participate in a phone/video meeting with your child's teacher so they can become reacquainted with your child
- Review your child's daily schedule and work with us to familiarize them with the childcare routine (schedule attached)
- Thoroughly review all new policies and procedures and return signed copies to the office
- Maintain open and honest communication with our staff to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the program
- Visit the program during our specified visiting hours, prior to opening day, to assist your child with the transition back to school

Finally, I hope you will join me in expressing gratitude for our staff. Their selflessness, dedication, and compassion is the cornerstone of our wonderful program, and we are extremely grateful to them. This goes well beyond Teacher Appreciation Day; please take every opportunity to support the work they are doing each and every day.

Be well,

Welcome Back!

We have missed you!

We are thrilled to welcome your family back to our program. We are privileged to care for your children and are grateful for the trust you have placed in us to do so. We understand that you and your children may have concerns/fears as you transition back. We have been working diligently to put additional procedures in place to ensure the health and safety of our families, children and staff.

In doing so, we have amended several program policies, referenced in your parent handbook. We have included them in this packet and invite you to review them and contact us with any questions or concerns you may have. We value our relationship with you and your child and will do whatever we can to support you and your family during these unprecedented times.

Because children express their responses to fear, confusion, etc. through behavior, it is perfectly normal to see changes in behavior, emotional episodes, and/or regression with acquired skills. It is to be expected that you and your child may experience difficulty with separation following this prolonged closure. To make your child's transition back to school as successful as possible, we would love to hear about his/her likes/dislikes, milestones, behaviors/emotions, etc. since we were last together. We have included forms for you to share these experiences, as well as resource materials to support you in this transition.

Your child will return to our program on (*date*), to the _____ classroom.

His/her teachers will be _____, _____.

We invite your child to visit their classroom on (date, from __:__ to__:__) and
(date, from __:__ to__:__)

We ask that you review and sign these forms prior to your child's return. As always, we welcome you to reach out at any time with any questions or concerns. We are committed to working with you to make this transition as seamless as possible.

Be well,

Getting to Know Your Child ~ New Child Intake Form

This form helps us get a better understanding of you and your child and how you work together as a family. We strive to make our space a happy and supportive environment. The information you tell us on this form will help us individually support you and your child, and hopefully help you feel safe and comfortable while in our program. Please share as much information as you can.

Child's Name: _____

Child's Date of Birth: _____

Child's Enrollment Date: _____

Who are some people in your family that your child might speak about during the day (siblings, grandparents, neighbors, friends, cousins)? Please tell us their names and what your child calls them.

Please tell us about how you communicate with your child:

- What language do you and your child speak with each other at home?
- Does your child speak another language with other family members?
- What is your child's dominant language?

Does your child have any special needs you would like to tell us about?

Does your child have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)?

Do you have any concerns regarding your child developmentally or emotionally that you are willing to share so we can partner with you to provide additional support?

Dietary Needs and Preferences

Please tell us about meal time with your child:

- Where do you have meals with your child?
- How does your child eat?
- What is your child's favorite food?
- Does your child have any specific dietary needs, preferences or allergies?

Your Child's Cognitive Development:

Please tell us what your child likes to play with and how your child plays:

- What is your child's favorite toy?
- Favorite book?
- Favorite song?
- Who does your child play with?

Your Child's Physical Development:

Tell us about how your child moves, does your child: roll over, crawl, or walk with independence?

Please describe how your child uses stairs:

Describe how your child gets dressed:

What types of things does your child like to do outside?

Tell us about how your child uses toys such as crayons and puzzles.

Please tell us how we can support your child with toileting:

- Does your child use the bathroom independently?
- What does your child say when they need to use the bathroom?

Please tell us how we can support your child with nap/rest time:

- Where does your child sleep?
- How many hours does your child sleep at night?
- How and when does your child nap?
- What do we need to know so can we support your child during nap time?
- Do you have any special sleep routines that would help us understand your child better?
- Does your child have an attachment item or lovey? Please tell us about it:

Your Child's Social and Emotional Development:

We'd like to know about how your child handles emotions:

- How does your child express sadness/fear?
 - How does your child express anger/frustration?
 - How does your child express happiness/joy?
 - How does your child express worry/fear/nervousness?
 - How does your child express excitement/enthusiasm?
 - How do you support your child with these emotions?
-

- Have you noticed a change in your child's emotions or respond to things based on the COVID-19 Pandemic?
- How have you addressed this with your child?

Since the COVID-19 pandemic we are aware that children and families all process information very differently and each family situation is unique. **Please help us support you and your child by telling us how you:**

- Talk about COVID-19 with your child
- What do you call it?
- What do you tell your child about social distancing?
- What do you call it?
- What do you tell your child about wearing masks?
- How has your child reacted to people wearing masks?
- Did your family experience any loss during this time?
 - If so, was your child close to that person?
 - How did you address it with your child?

What's something you and your child enjoy doing together?

How can we make sure you feel safe and comfortable with your child being in our care?

Is there anything else you would like us to know about you or your child?

Getting Reacquainted with Your Infant

(Teachers are recommended to call parent to review this information prior to child's return date.)

Our staff will work hard to make the adjustment back to the program as smooth as possible. Recognizing that each family and child will react differently with returning to the program, it will help our staff immensely if we could have information regarding your infant's current routine.

Child's Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Who has been primarily caring for your child while away from child care?

Is your child currently taking any medications? If so, list medication and reason.

Does your child have any new allergies?

Please outline your child's current feeding schedule. Please include any bottle feedings/breastfeeding and napping schedule:

Food/Formula	Amount	Time	Nap time

If your child is breastfed, do you think your child will have difficulty being bottle fed?

Does your child use a pacifier? If so, how often throughout the day?

Does your child have an attachment item or lovey? Please tell us about it:

Our staff will be wearing masks during the day, including feeding and diapering. How has your infant responded to people wearing masks? (It may be helpful for you to wear a mask at various times of the day to help your child adjust.)

Developmental Milestones:

Please share any developmental milestones your child has achieved while at home such as rolling over, sitting up, crawling, walking etc.

Do you have any concerns regarding your child developmentally or emotionally that you would like to share so we can partner with you to provide additional support, if necessary?

How can we make sure you feel safe and comfortable with your child being in our care?

Is there anything else you would like us to know about you or your child?

Getting Reacquainted with Your Toddler

(Teachers are recommended to call parent to review this information prior to child's return date.)

Our staff will work hard to make the adjustment back to the program as smooth as possible. Recognizing that each family and child will react differently with returning to the program, it will help our staff immensely if we could have information regarding your toddler's current routine.

Child's Name: _____

Date: _____

Who has been primarily caring for your child while away from child care?

Is your child currently taking any medications? If so, list medication and reason.

Does your child have any allergies?

Please tell us a little bit about your child's feeding routines:

	Breakfast	Lunch	Snack
Time			
Types of food and amount			

Is your child using a bottle or sippy cup during the day?

Please let us know your toddler's current nap routine:

Does your child use a pacifier? If so, how often throughout the day?

Does your child have an attachment item or lovey? Please tell us about it:

Our staff will be wearing masks during the day. How has your infant responded to people wearing masks? (It may be helpful for you to wear a mask at various times of the day to help your child adjust).

Developmental Milestones:

Have you begun potty training? If so, please share your child's potty time routine:

Do you have any concerns regarding your child developmentally or emotionally that you would like to share so we can partner with you to provide additional support?

Since the COVID-19 pandemic we are aware that children and families all process information very differently and each family situation is unique. Please help us support you and your child by telling us how you:

- Talk about COVID-19 with your child?
- What do you call it?
- What do you tell your child about social distancing?
- What do you tell your child about wearing masks?
- How has your child reacted to people wearing masks?
- Did your family experience any loss during this time?
 - If so, was your child close to that person?
 - How did you address it with your child?

How can we make sure you feel safe and comfortable with your child being in our care?

Is there anything else you would like us to know about you or your child?

SAMPLE

Getting Reacquainted with Your Preschooler

(Teachers are recommended to call parent to review this information prior to child's return date)

Our staff will work hard to make the adjustment back to the program as smooth as possible. Recognizing that each family and child will react differently with returning to the program, it will help our staff immensely if we could have information regarding your preschooler's current routine.

Child's Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Who has been primarily caring for your child while away from child care?

Is your child currently taking any medications? If so, list medication and reason.

Does your child have any new allergies?

Please outline your child's current feeding and napping schedule:

Breakfast:

Lunch:

Snack:

Naps:

Does your child have an attachment item or lovey? Please tell us about it:

Since the COVID-19 pandemic we are aware that children and families all process information very differently and each family situation is unique. Please help us support you and your child by telling us how you:

- Talk about COVID-19 with your child?
- What do you call it?
- What do you tell your child about social distancing?
- What do you tell your child about wearing masks?
- How has your child reacted to people wearing masks?
- Did your family experience any loss during this time?
 - If so, was your child close to that person?
 - How did you address it with your child?

Developmental Milestones:

Is your child fully potty trained?

Has your child experienced any toileting regression?

Do you have any concerns regarding your child developmentally or emotionally that you would like to share so we can partner with you to provide additional support?

What's something you and your child enjoy doing together?

How can we make sure you feel safe and comfortable with your child being in our care?

Is there anything else you would like us to know about you or your child?

SAMPLE

Community Resources

This is a template to customize with local resources in your area.

Housing

HEAP

COVID-19 Information

Food/Health related issues:

- Local Food Bank locator: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank>
- Local School Grab and Go Meal Programs
- WIC
- Breastfeeding assistance (Support groups: La Leche, County DOH, Hospitals)
- Diaper Banks
- Growing up Healthy Hotline NY
https://www.health.ny.gov/community/pregnancy/health_care/prenatal/guh.htm

Mental Health

- Suicide Prevention Life Line: 1-800-273-8255
- Safe Helpline: www.safehelpline.org
- Domestic Violence
- Adelphi University's Institute for Parenting Warmline: 516-515-1948

Special Need

- Info for families with children with disabilities (how to seek help if you want your child evaluated)
- Help Me Grow: helpmegrow.org

Please Don't Go!

Separation Anxiety and Children



It is often hard for a parent or other loved one to leave a young child who cries and clings. The child is experiencing separation anxiety. Children may not understand when loved ones will be back. These situations can be upsetting to the loved ones who have to leave—as well as to the child. Here are some things to remember about separation anxiety.

-  **A little separation anxiety is normal.** The child's behavior can be a positive sign. It shows that he recognizes and has formed important attachments with loved ones. (A child who never shows distress at a parent's leaving or never shows a preference for one caregiver over another may be a greater cause for concern.)
-  **Anxiety tends to follow a predictable pattern.** Fear of less familiar people and places often begins when a child is about 8 months old, although it can begin as early as 5 months of age. Separation anxiety usually peaks between 10 and 18 months and fades by the age of 2 years. This anxiety may become greater at any age or may return in an older child when there is a change in environment or when other changes occur, such as the birth of a new baby in the family.
-  **You can help make partings easier for your child.**
 - Read a children's book about separation.
 - Stay with her until she becomes familiar with a new place or person.
 - Tell her calmly you know she doesn't want you to leave. Reassure her you will be back.
 - Tell her Mommy or Daddy will be back after naptime or at dinnertime, even if she can't tell time. Be sure to keep your word.
 - Let her have her favorite blanket or other "lovey" for comfort. Some children like one of Mom's sweaters or another familiar possession they can keep until you return.
 - Avoid leaving your child when she is hungry, tired, or sick.
 - Never tease or scold her for her upset feelings or sneak away without telling her at all.
 - Don't bribe her not to cry.
-  **Your stress level can contribute to separation anxiety.** Your anxiety about child care arrangements or guilt about leaving may add to your child's distress. Be sure to make arrangements for child care that you feel confident about. And remember, some time spent apart can be good for you both.
-  **Sometimes, it may be more than separation anxiety.** Consider other possible sources of stress in your child's life or consider an alternative child care arrangement for
 - a child who continues to be inconsolable in a new child care or other setting for more than two weeks, or
 - a child who stops eating or sleeping well, refuses to interact with others, and has an ongoing change in behavior.
-  **For related Web resources, see "Please Don't Go! Separation Anxiety and Children" at <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tips.htm>**

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



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Illinois State
Board of Education

Handwashing: Keeping Your Family Healthy

Handwashing is an easy, cheap, and effective way to prevent the spread of germs and keep kids and adults healthy. When your family is healthy, you don't have to worry about missing school, work, or other activities.

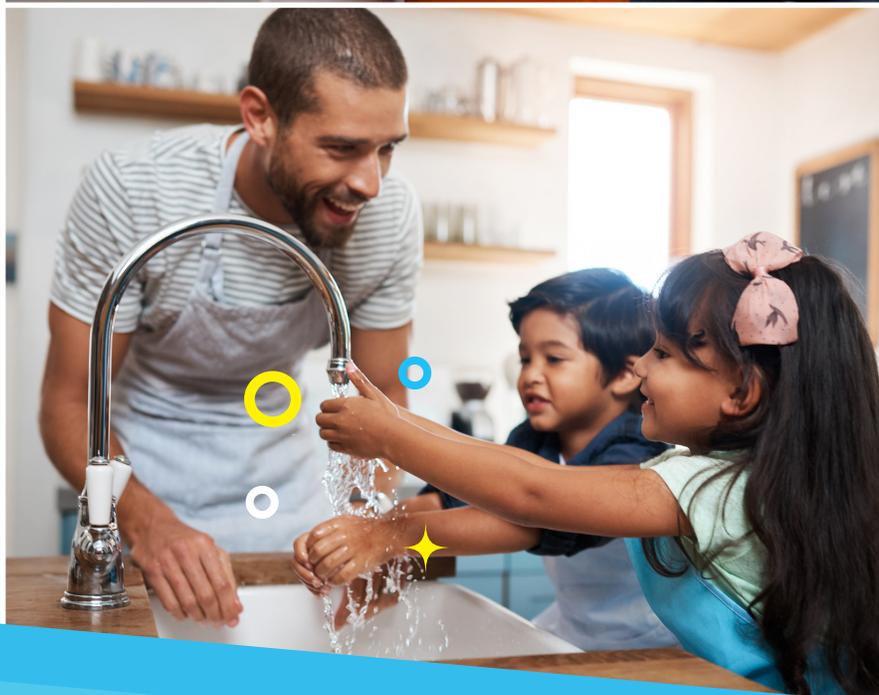
Help your child develop handwashing skills

Parents and caretakers play an important role in teaching children to wash their hands. Handwashing can become a lifelong healthy habit if you start teaching it at an early age. Teach kids the [five easy steps for handwashing](#)—wet, lather, scrub, rinse, and dry—and the key times to wash hands, such as after using the bathroom or before eating. You can find ways to make it fun, like making up your own handwashing song or turning it into a game.



Lead by example

Young children learn by imitating the behaviors of adults in their lives. When you make handwashing part of your routine, you're setting an example for your children to follow.



LIFE IS BETTER WITH

**CLEAN
HANDS**



www.cdc.gov/handwashing



This material was developed by CDC. The Life is Better with Clean Hands Campaign is made possible by a partnership between the CDC Foundation, GOJO, and Staples. HHS/CDC does not endorse commercial products, services, or companies.

CS310275-A

Handwashing can prevent

1 in 3
cases of diarrhea



1 in 5
respiratory infections,
such as a cold or the flu



Give frequent reminders

Building handwashing skills takes time. At first, your child will need regular reminders of how and when to wash hands. It is especially important to remind children to wash their hands after using the bathroom, before eating, after touching pets, after playing outside, and after coughing, sneezing, or blowing their nose. But once handwashing becomes a habit and a regular part of your child's day, they will practice it throughout their lives.

What if soap and water aren't available?

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that has at least 60% alcohol.

Did you know?

Baby wipes may make your hands look clean, but they're not designed to remove germs from your hands. CDC recommends washing hands with soap and water when possible.



Remember to make handwashing a healthy habit at home, school, and at play!



Hooray! My School is Open!



ChallengingBehavior.org

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It's time to go back to school.

I have been staying
safe at home with
my family to keep
everyone healthy.



My school is ready for me, my friends, and teachers. Everyone has been working hard to make everything clean and safe for us.





I am excited to see my teachers and friends! I have missed them.



Grown ups are going back to work
just like I am going back to school.



I am safe
at school
and my family
is safe at work.

I feel happy
that we are safe
and healthy.



I will miss my family when I am at school, but I know I will see them again when it's time to go home.



Take a Deep Breath

Smell the flower



Blow the pinwheel

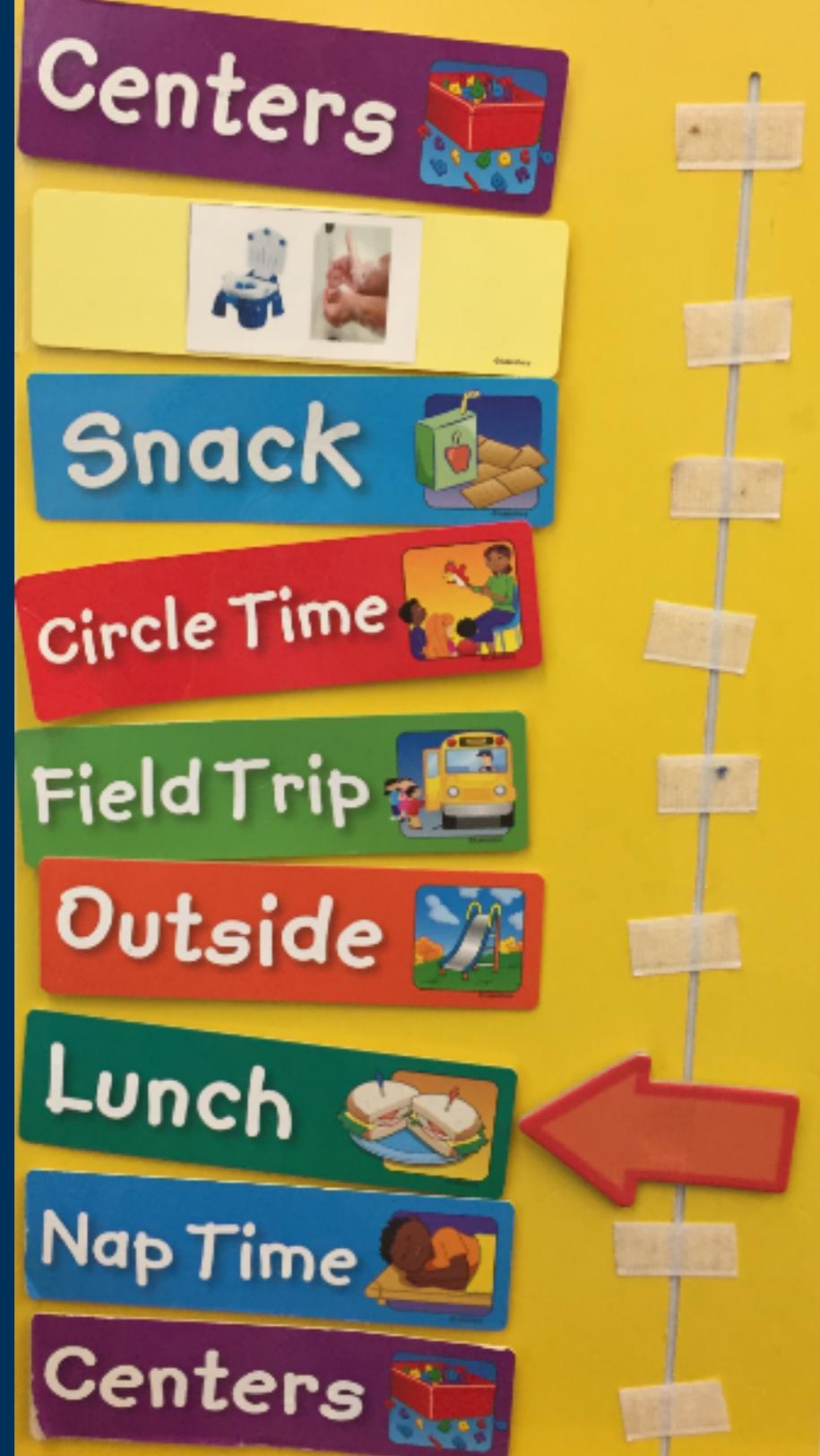


If I feel sad or scared I can help myself
feel relaxed by taking a deep breath.

I can smell the flower
and blow the pinwheel.

When I get to school,
I can check our
class schedule to
know what we're
going to do.

Everyday my teacher
has exciting activities
planned for us.





We always have fun playing in centers,
going outside, and reading stories.



I love going to school! My family and I are so happy I can go to school again.

 RESOURCE

What Comes Next: Back to Child Care Following Shelter-in-Place

Apr 28, 2020

By Rebecca Parlakian

If you imagine this change may be harder for your child after months of “just you,” you are probably right.



Your young child has just had months of time with you at home. Most likely, there have been no other caregivers outside of your own family, due to shelter-in-place guidelines. But now—as communities begin to re-open—you may be facing a major transition for your family: Heading back to child care. If you imagine this change may be harder for your child after months of “just you,” you are probably right.

Here are some tips for managing the preschool transition post-COVID:

Remember that this is not just a regular transition back to school. Your family went through a tough time. You managed a lot of stressors—balancing work and family demands, financial concerns, worries about illness. Even very young children sense when there is stress in the household. Your child has managed this period of confusing changes and now they are encountering yet another big transition—going back to child care. Stress adds up and our resilience can be run down over time. Your sensitivity and patience are key ingredients for helping your child make a successful move back to their care setting.

Your worries are important. As communities re-open, you may have concerns about the safety of your child’s child care program. Many parents are feeling this way. Talk to your child’s teacher and the program director to learn what procedures they are using to keep children safe and healthy.

Use pretend play to explore the routines of preschool or child care with your toddler. Take turns being the parent, child, and teacher. Act out common daily routines, like saying good-bye to mommy and/or daddy, taking off your coat, singing songs, reading stories, having Circle Time, and playing outside.

Read books about child care. If you’re able to access a public library (or online stories), choose a few titles about going to preschool or child care.

Talk about the story and how the characters are feeling. Ask how your child is feeling (excited, scared, worried, happy?). Check out titles like *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn, *I Love You All Day Long* by Francesca Rusackas, *Bye-Bye Time* by Elizabeth Verdick, or *Llama Llama Misses Mama* by Anna Dewdney.

Listen to your child's worries. It's tempting to quickly reassure your child and move on, but when you listen and respond to children's worries, they feel safe and supported. Explain that starting something new can bring up worries and questions and that lots of people feel that way. It can also be helpful to share a time when you started something new and how you felt.

Suggest coping strategies. When you allow your child to share her worries, you can help her think through how to deal with them. For example, if she is worried about missing you, the two of you can make a book of family photos to keep in her cubby and look at when she is lonely.

Notice nonverbal messages. Most 2- and 3-year-olds are not able to use language to fully explain how they are feeling. Your child may "act out" his worry by clinging, becoming withdrawn or more fussy, or by being more aggressive. Another common reaction is for children to begin using more "baby-like" behaviors. For example, if your child is fully potty trained, he may start have toileting accidents. He may ask that you feed or dress him even though he can do these things by himself.

It's natural to be frustrated by this return-to-baby behavior. But by meeting your child's need for nurturing with love and patience, you'll find they soon return to their "big kid" behavior. Remember that your child is facing—and managing—a big change in their life. They may need more support from you during this transition.

Get back into the routines of bedtimes and waking times. The transition to child care is easier when you are not also dealing with an tired, cranky little

one. In the week before your return to your child's program, begin to use "school night" bedtimes and wake-up times so that everyone can get back into the child care routine.

When your child starts back, ask whether there is a new drop-off routine. Because of new health screening and sanitizing requirements, you may not be able to stay with your child to help them transition during morning drop-off. Talk to your provider about new drop-off procedures and ask if it will be possible to have a teacher stay with your child to help them with the separation.

Consider letting your child bring a special object from home. Does your child have a favorite stuffed animal or blanket that offers comfort? Check with your child care program to confirm your child can bring this object from home. A favorite teddy bear can ease the transition when you say good-bye at drop-off. A family photo in your child's cubby can also be comforting.

Talk with your child's teacher about how you soothe your child. When teachers use similar comfort methods, babies and toddlers feel more safe and "at-home" in the child care setting.

Keep your tone positive and upbeat. Children pick up on the reactions of the trusted adults in their lives. So try not to look worried or sad, and don't linger too long when it's time to go. Say a quick, upbeat good-bye and reassure your child that all will be well.

Think about creating a special good-bye routine. For example, you can give your child a kiss on the palm to "hold" all day long. Or, the two of you can sing a special song together before you leave. Good-bye routines are comforting to children and help them understand and prepare for what will happen next.

This hasn't been an easy few months, but the return to child care is one sign that life is going back to (a new) normal. Supporting your child through this process—staying patient and loving even in the face of challenging behaviors—is a loving way to take that next step, together.

Looking for more information? Visit zerotothree.org/coronavirus for our latest resources and updates for families.



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AFTER A CRISIS: HOW YOUNG CHILDREN HEAL

Young children, toddlers, and preschoolers know when bad things happen, and they remember what they have been through. After a scary event, we often see changes in their behavior. They may cry more, become clingy and not want us to leave, have temper tantrums, hit others, have problems sleeping, become afraid of things that didn't bother them before, and lose skills they previously mastered. Changes like these are a sign that they need help. Here are some ways you can help them.

S SAFETY FIRST—YOUR YOUNG CHILD FEELS SAFE WHEN YOU

- Hold your child or let them stay close to you.
- Tell your child you will take care of them when things are scary or difficult. With children who are learning to talk, use simple words, like saying "Daddy's here."
- Keep them away from frightening TV images and scary conversations.
- Do familiar things, like singing a song you both like or telling a story.
- Let them know what will happen next (to the degree that you know).
- Have a predictable routine, at least for bedtime: a story, a prayer, cuddle time.
- Leave them with familiar people when you have to be away.
- Tell them where you are going and when you will come back.

A ALLOW EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS

- Young children often "behave badly" when they are worried or scared. Children can "act out" as a way of asking for help. Remember! Difficult feelings=Difficult behavior.
- Help your child name how they feel: "scared," "happy," "angry," "sad." Tell them it's OK to feel that way.
- Show your child the right way to behave, like saying "It's OK to be angry but it's not OK to hit me."
- Help your child express anger in ways that won't hurt, using words, play, or drawings.
- Talk about the things that are going well to help you and your child feel good.

F FOLLOW YOUR CHILD'S LEAD

- Different children need different things. Some children need to run around, others need to be held.
- Listen to your child and watch their behavior to figure out what they need.

E ENABLE YOUR CHILD TO TELL THE STORY OF WHAT HAPPENED DURING & AFTER

- Having a story helps your child make sense of what happened and cope better with it.
- Children use play to tell their story. For example, they may make popping sounds to show what they experienced. They may hide in the closest to show what it was like to shelter-in-place.
- Join your child in showing and telling not only what happened, step by step, but also how you both felt.
- As you tell the story, follow your child's lead. When the story is difficult, your young child may need breaks: running around, being held, playing something else. This is OK. They will come back to the story when they are ready.
- It can be hard to watch your children's play or listen to their stories of what happened. Get support if it is too hard for you to listen without becoming upset.

T TIES—RECONNECT WITH SUPPORTIVE PEOPLE, COMMUNITY, CULTURE & RITUALS

- Simple things like a familiar bedtime story, a song, a prayer, or family traditions remind you and your child of your way of life and offer hope.
- If you belong to a group, like a church, try to find ways of reconnecting with them.
- You can help your child best when you take care of yourself. Get support from others when you need it.

Y YOUR CHILD NEEDS YOU

- Reassure your child that you will be together.
- It is common for children to be clingy and worried about being away from you.
- Just being with your child, even when you can't fix things, helps your child.
- If you need to leave your child, let them know for how long and when you are coming back. If possible, leave something that belongs to you, or a picture that your child can have.



Caregiving amidst COVID-19: How do we support our children during a pandemic?

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As parents, we are often faced with the very difficult challenge of reassuring our children during times of stress, while acknowledging that bad things can and do happen in this world. This is the challenge we are now confronted with during the COVID-19 pandemic. How do we help our children navigate these new and unfamiliar circumstances, while ensuring that we are being honest about the reality of the situation? Based on existing research and clinical work in the overlapping fields of trauma and disaster response, we have some idea of how children are likely to react to the pandemic and what we, as caregivers and parents, can do to support them.

What should we expect from our kids?

Children and adolescents are likely to respond in different ways to the pandemic as a function of their age, developmental stage, and cues from their social environment. Young children in particular are extremely attuned to their parents' reactions, and their own anxiety is often a reflection of what they are seeing in their caregivers. **The following are developmental differences in how children may react to environmental stress associated with the pandemic:**

Preschool-aged children

- Distress upon separation from caregivers (e.g., being afraid to go in certain rooms by themselves, wanting to sleep with parents, not wanting to be left with a babysitter)
- Developmental regressions (e.g., eating, toileting, speech/language difficulties)
- Increased oppositional behavior or temper tantrums
- Increased tearfulness

School-aged children

- New fears or worries that may or may not be related to the virus (e.g., fear of the dark, fear of loud noises)
- Difficulty sleeping, increased nightmares
- Aggression or irritability
- Somatic complaints (headaches, stomach aches)
- Increased clinginess toward caregivers

Adolescents

- Lethargy or apathy
- Social withdrawal (beyond "normal" social distancing)
- Difficulties sleeping; changes in eating habits
- Irritability or increased moodiness
- Hopelessness about the future

How can we help our children to cope?

Caregivers can help their children to cope with the pandemic by remembering the "6 S's":

Safety and security: During uncertain times, the ability to provide a sense of safety and security to our children becomes even more critical, albeit more challenging. It is helpful to make sure our kids are aware of what the adults in their lives are doing to protect them and keep them safe. For example, you might say, "The reason you are not in school right now is because the government wants to make sure to keep you and all of your classmates healthy." Or "Experts and doctors across the country are helping to make good decisions about what we can do to make sure the virus doesn't spread." Giving children choices and helping them to feel empowered to keep themselves safe can also alleviate some of their anxiety. For example, you might say, "Let's talk about all the things you can do to keep yourself and our family healthy, like washing your hands or using hand sanitizer after you play outside."

Simple language: As parents, we tend to either err on the side of providing too much information, which can be overwhelming to our kids, or providing very little information at all, which sends the message that it's not ok to talk about what's happening or it will be too distressing for kids to hear. Meeting children where they are at and making sure you are using language they can understand is especially helpful and allows them to take in as much information as they need. For example, you might say, "I know you've been hearing about the Corona virus, and you may have heard some things that are making you feel worried or upset. What questions do you have for me?" Or "Even though we don't know very much about the virus since it's new, there are still some facts I can share with you. What would you like to know about it?" From there, you can let your child guide the conversation, as they often intuitively know what information they can or cannot handle.

Supervision: As much as it's helpful to provide children with factual, simple information on a "need-to-know" basis, media outlets and the news can be overwhelming and/or frightening to adults and children alike. It is important to monitor the type and quantity of information your child is receiving and try as much as possible to keep it to a minimum. You can also watch the news with them, answer questions they may have, and turn it off if it becomes unhelpful or too detailed/distressing.

Structure: When the world outside feels chaotic and out of control, children benefit from having a familiar routine or structure to their day. It is obviously more difficult to do this when children are not in school, but families can create schedules together so that kids know what to expect on a daily basis. Allowing children to build in time for playing outside or taking a "tv or video break" can also be helpful.

Social support: We know that social support is a very powerful protective factor during times of stress, but with the need for social distancing during a pandemic, exposure to adequate social support can be much more challenging. Helping kids find ways of connecting with friends, whether through phone calls, texting, email, or Facetime, will be especially important right now. In addition, reminding adolescents, who are particularly invested in their friends at this age, that this is a temporary situation can help to alleviate fears or concerns about "losing friendships".

Self-care: As caregivers, we are often consumed with ensuring that our children are healthy, happy, and safe, but that can come at a cost when it involves putting our own health and well-being aside. The best thing we can do for our children is make sure that we are getting the support we need and taking care of ourselves. This can include making time to reach out to our own friends and family, exercising, eating healthy, and getting enough sleep.

The only predictable part of life is change. The ability to adapt to a "new normal" in the face of a pandemic will require accepting the ambiguity of life, knowing that we can only control our own reactions (and not necessarily the environment itself), and doing our best to be present for our children when they need us the most. The coming months can be filled with "teachable moments" for our children, including how to effectively cope with stress and how to focus on the things that really matter such as health, relationships, and doing our part to keep our community safe from harm.

The following links provide more information/resources regarding how to talk with kids about COVID-19:

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/parent-caregiver-guide-to-helping-families-cope-with-the-coronavirus-disease-2019>

<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-talk-your-child-about-coronavirus-covid-19>

[https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource)

<https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>

If you're in crisis, or feeling anxious and isolated, text FUTURE to 741741 to connect with a trained Crisis Counselor through Crisis Text Line. It's free, 24/7, confidential support, all via text.

CRISIS TEXT LINE |

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