



TALKING TO AND SUPPORTING CHILDREN REGARDING COVID-19

It is important that children seek out informed trusted adults to address their questions and concerns about the Coronavirus. If the adults surrounding the child are worried and anxious, then this response is often reflected in the child. To guide parents/caregivers during these unprecedented times the below information has been compiled through respected professional resources from the: National Association of School Psychologists, American School Counselor Association, Center for Disease Control and Prevention and, SAMHSA.

Guidelines for how to approach children regarding COVID-19

Adults should keep informed on the Coronavirus and be available to talk about the facts of COVID-19. When your child raises questions about the virus, don't over-load the child with information that could potentially create or fuel anxiety. Think about what your child really needs to know.

Four common questions children may seek answers for are:

1. *What is the Coronavirus?*

Answer: The Coronavirus is a new kind of germ that can make people feel sick, it can feel like the flu. Some people feel a little sick other people may get very sick.

2. *How do you catch the Coronavirus?*

Answer: The virus spreads like the flu or a cold or cough. When a sick person sneezes or coughs the germs in their bodies leave their body and are released into the air or onto surfaces. However, the traveling germs would have to enter into another person's body to make someone else sick. Germs can travel into healthy person's body if the germs enter into their eyes, mouth or nose.

3. *Some people are wearing masks, do I have to wear a mask too?*

Answer: Masks are for sick people to wear so they don't share their germs with other people. Some health workers like doctors and nurses wear masks so they can help the other people who are sick. You do not need to wear a mask unless you are told by your parent or another trusted adult or a medical worker that you need to wear a mask.

4. *Can you die from the Coronavirus?*

Answer: What is important is that you do not worry about the virus. You are in control of what you can do to stay healthy based on what your parent/caregiver tells you are healthy actions to follow. (see below section, things to do to stay healthy)

Communicate to your child based on his/her age

- Elementary children need brief and simple information
 - Remind your child that you, caring adults in their life, and the school are working hard to keep them safe and healthy
 - Provide them with the basic steps on how they can take to stay healthy, such as washing their hands. (see below section, things to do to stay healthy)
- Upper elementary children will typically be more vocal in questioning if they are truly safe and what happens if COVID-19 is discovered in their school/community. They may have difficulties in knowing what to believe. Help them to sort out facts from misinformation and assure them of how community leaders, schools and families are working together to keep them safe and healthy.
- Upper middle school/High school students are able to discuss the Coronavirus in more depth and can be referred to appropriate internet sources/experts on COVID-19 developments. However, parents/caregivers should be available to help youth process information accurately and with

sensitivity to their questions and concerns. While knowing the status of and what is being done to address the COVID-19 outbreak can help to bring a sense of control to youth; for more socially/emotionally vulnerable youth, knowledge on the subject can be overwhelming and create anxiety.

Additional Talking Points

- Not everyone will get the Coronavirus
- Adults and health officials are working hard to monitor and control the virus' spread
- **There are things that they can do to help stay healthy**
 - Avoid public gatherings.
 - It is important for parents/caregivers to know where the child is and that leaving the home needs parent approval, this supports the need for social distancing.
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - Stay home if you are sick.
 - Cover a cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue and throw the tissue in the trash
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water and count to twenty while washing hands. If you don't have soap use hand sanitizer (alcohol base of at least 60%).
 - Keep frequently touched areas and meal preparation areas clean using household cleaning sprays or wipes.
 - Encourage healthy foods for consumption.

Signs of Childhood Stress

- Excessive crying or irritation
- Regressing to earlier developmental patterns of behavior or coping
- Excessive sadness or worry
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping patterns
- Difficulty in paying attention or concentrating
- Avoidance of activities that were once enjoyed
- Unexplained physical pain or worry about their own health
- Worsening of documented health problems
- Using substances to lessen anxiety

Supporting Children in Stress

- Remain calm and reassuring
- Let your child talk about their feelings. This helps the child know that their feelings and concerns matter and someone is available to listen to them.
- Monitor television and social media, as not all information on Coronavirus is correct and too much information on the topic may be over-whelming to a child.
- Maintain a set schedule for your child, this helps to bring predictability to their world and comfort during times of uncertainty, for example:
 - Set expectations and timelines for completion of their school work
 - Schedule meal times
 - Schedule breaks and times for physical movement and fun family activities
 - Schedule time for home chore completion (emphasize that everyone's contribution is important and supports the family)
 - Establish a bedtime routine and time for lights out

Know the Symptoms of Coronavirus

- The CDC believes the symptoms of the Coronavirus appear within a few days of exposure to someone with the disease (symptoms can take up to 14 days to appear).
- Fever

- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- The severity of symptoms varies
- If a family member has above symptoms or questionable symptoms, check with your health provider and follow his/her instructions to prevent the spread of the virus.

Helpful Links for More Information on COVID-19

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>

<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Talking-With-Children-Tips-for-Caregivers-Parents-and-Teachers-During-Infectious-Disease-Outbreaks/SMA14-4886>

<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Coping-with-Stress-During-Infectious-Disease-Outbreaks/sma14-4885>

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/hand-sanitizer-factsheet.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/hand-sanitizer-factsheet.pdf>

www.nasn.org.

www.nasponline.org

School Counseling Support

During this period of school closings, LPCSC remains committed to assist students with the social/emotional challenges they may encounter. As a result, school counseling staff may be reached on all e-learning days from 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. and from 12:45 p.m.- 2:45 p.m. through their school email address. Other weekdays school counseling staff will check their school emails once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Below are the school email addresses of counseling department staff by school.

High School Counseling Department:

Counselor: Kate Steinhubel

Graduation Class: 2023 - Alphabet: A-K

Graduation Class: 2021 - Alphabet: G-M

ksteinhubel@lpcsc.k12.in.us

Counselor: Caryn Schmidt

Graduation Class: 2023 - Alphabet: L-Z

Graduation Class: 2021 - Alphabet: N-Z

cschmidt@lpcsc.k12.in.us

Counselor: Sheryl Suppinger

Graduation Class: 2022 - Alphabet: A-L

Graduation Class: 2020 - Alphabet: G-M

ssuppinger@lpcsc.k12.in.us

Counselor: Jen Wilson

Graduation Class: 2022 - Alphabet: M-Z

Graduation Class: 2020 - Alphabet: N-Z

jenwilson@lpcsc.k12.in.us

Counselor: Heather Brant

Graduation Class: 2021 - Alphabet: A-F

Graduation Class: 2020 - Alphabet: A-F

hbrant@lpcsc.k12.in.us

LaPorte Middle School:

Counselor: Erika Phillips

Grade: 8

ephillips@lpcsc.k12.in.us

Counselor: Deb Kleist

Grade: 7

dkleist@lpcsc.k12.in.us

Kesling Intermediate School:

Counselor: Chris Anderson

Grade: 6

canderson@lpcsc.k12.in.us

Counselor: Sarah Pessmeg

Grade: 5

spessmeg@lpcsc.k12.in.us

Elementary Schools:

Crichfield Elementary: Suzy Lenig

slenig@lpcsc.k12.in.us

Hailmann Elementary: Nate Mrozinski

nmrozinski@lpcsc.k12.in.us

Handley Elementary: Sarah Pistorio

spistoria@lpcsc.k12.in.us

Indian Trail: Jill Fox

jfox@lpcsc.k12.in.us

Kingsbury Elementary: Stephanie Kaiser

skaiser@lpcsc.k12.in.us

Kingsford Hts. Elementary: Jody Martin

jmartin@lpcsc.k12.in.us

Lincoln Elementary: Carolyn Carpenter

ccarpenter@lpcsc.k12.in.us

Riley Elementary: Robyn McShane

rmcshane@lpcsc.k12.in.us

In the case that a crisis occurs when school counseling staff are not available, please see below crisis hotline contact numbers:

- **Indiana's Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 1-800-800-5556.** It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. You may report abuse and **neglect** anonymously.
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800) 273-TALK or text 741741.** If you're in emotional distress or suicidal crisis-or concerned about someone who might be, do not wait and call.
- **Boys Town National Hotline (800) 448-3000**
- Crisis and support line for children, youth and their parents. **Crisis Hotline (800) 273-8255 or text 741741.** For anyone dealing with a crisis including anxiety, depression, economic concerns, family conflict, grief, etc.
- **Love is Respect (800) 331-9474.** Support for yourself or others in an abusive relationship. If you are unable to speak safely, go to thehotline.org or text LOVEIS to 22522.
- **Trevor Crisis Hotline (866) 488-7386.** Emotional support for LGBTQ+ students

You may find additional community resources to help you

- LPCSC School District website
- LPCSC Facebook page
- LPCSC Family Resource Services Facebook page
- Slicer Support Services Facebook page