

**DC School Behavioral Health Community of Practice (CoP)  
CoP Chats from March 19 and March 25, 2020  
Resources and Strategies Generated by DC CoP Members**

**Assisting our DC CoP Partners During This Crisis  
Updated March 28, 2020**

During this unprecedented time, we are committed to supporting our DC CoP partners and community members in a variety of ways. Over the coming weeks, we will be hosting webinars and informal on-line chats, distributing e-resources, and more. In this first communication, we have compiled the resources and strategies for supporting students and families that were shared by community-based organization (CBO) clinicians, managers, supervisors, and school behavioral health coordinators on the March 19, 2020, and March 25, 2020 CoP chats. This will be followed with two additional summaries from CoP chats scheduled in April.

This document is organized into five sections in a questions and answer format: general resources, supporting yourself, supporting families, supporting students, and supporting school staff. We will add new resources as they become available and new sections as they become needed.

While we hope these resources are useful, we urge you to first check with your school or LEA leaders to learn of coordinated plans for navigating virtual/distance learning and continued behavioral health service delivery.

In addition, the DC Government actively maintains [a webpage of official local information on the coronavirus](https://coronavirus.dc.gov) response that includes food resources, health guidance, resources for businesses and individuals, the operating status of government agencies, and more:  
<https://coronavirus.dc.gov>.

We want to ensure that this is a helpful resource to the DC CoP community. Please send us your feedback and suggestions on how we can improve the information we are sharing with you. In addition, send us any questions you may have or resources and strategies that you find helpful or unhelpful. Please email your feedback to [DCCOP@crpcorp.com](mailto:DCCOP@crpcorp.com).

## General Resources

### Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) resources on coronavirus (COVID-19):

DBH has established a 24/7 Mental Health Hotline at 1-888-793-4357 for individuals who are experiencing stress and anxiety related to coronavirus.

### How students will receive school-based behavioral health services during the COVID-19 crisis:

School-based behavioral health services provided by DBH and CBO clinicians will continue through telehealth.

If a student was already working with a clinician prior to school closure, s/he will be able to continue to receive therapy services through online platforms that combine video and audio. DBH and CBO clinicians will contact their clients and families regularly by phone to conduct wellness check-ins and to schedule teletherapy sessions with their clients. Each CBO will determine the telehealth platform to be used by their clinicians. DBH will begin utilizing Theraplatform soon. Sessions are available by phone now.

If a student has not yet been assessed for school-based behavioral health services, a student (or the parent of a student) enrolled in a school with a DBH or CBO behavioral health clinician can contact the Mental Health Hotline at 1-888-793-4357 to be connected with the appropriate clinician. A clinician will contact the student by phone to initiate services.

## Supporting Yourself

### 1. What are some coping strategies being used to promote self-care?

It's important that you take mental health breaks as often as you can to protect your health and well-being. You are working with community members who may be feeling anxious and uncertain and this can be overwhelming for you too. Here are some resources to promote caregiver self-care:

- Coping Strategies: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/coping-with-coronavirus-anxiety-2020031219183>
- How to Care for Yourself <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/2020/03/how-to-care-for-yourself-while-practicing-physical-distancing/>

## Supporting Families

### 1. What are ways to reach out to families?

Chat participants are reaching out by regular mail, email, phone calls, text messages, and/or video calls. Some are using Zoom if the client has access to a laptop with internet

service or a smartphone. In most cases, mailing addresses are accurate and may be the best way to contact students and families if they are not responding to email.

One chat participant suggested creating a professional Instagram account to post live videos. They suggested using a social media policy and recommended [this site](#) as an example. Another participant used TikTok to develop creative short-form content around school culture and classwork and another used the school social work webpage as a way to reach students and families. Your school may be using Twitter or Instagram to connect with families; reach out and ask your school leader to post content.

Please remember that public-facing video communication apps should not be used for telemental health or telehealth.

## **2. How can teachers and parents partner to incorporate social-emotional learning (SEL) at home?**

Some schools sent home packets with activities parents and children can do together to promote social emotional learning (SEL). Another school coordinated with the Special Education team to send home SEL packets. Participants also have used Instagram to share activities and updates with parents.

One DC CoP member has been sending one to two emails a week about supporting social-emotional development at home and have included videos, worksheets, and resources. Each email focuses on a different topic such as anxiety or depression.

Another participant is promoting Wellness Wednesday's and sending supportive ideas, comments, and resources via the communication app ClassDoJo. ClassDoJo allows users to attach flyers and videos, and users can reach out to a specific class, grade level, or the entire school.

Another school is using the Remind app to send SEL resources to each grade level.

One participant suggested Dan Siegel's [Healthy Mind Platter](#) framework for parents to incorporate SEL at home. These are a set of seven daily essential mental activities to optimize brain matter and create well-being.

## **3. What are resources we can provide parents on helping children with special needs?**

A participant recommended the website [Autism Helper](#) and another suggested [Common Sense Education](#) for educators' students who learn from different modalities.

## **4. How can parents find support to alleviate stress or anxiety?**

The Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) offers a Toll-Free Access Helpline at 1-888-7WE-HELP (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

A participant suggested that sharing clear ideas of what you can do and letting parents know that you are available can be helpful. Some anxiety is from “not knowing” and some parents are overwhelmed by distance learning, isolation, and health concerns.

The toolkit “[Virus Anxiety a Project by Shine](#)” may help parents manage their stress and anxiety and offers a way for them to engage with their children. The [Take a Deep Breath Blog](#) by the [Calm app](#) offers anxiety and stress management resources for parents and their children. [Trauma-Informed Parenting during our “Staycation”](#) provides tips for keeping families safe and connected during this social distancing period.

Some CBOs have been creating and facilitating family support groups online.

**5. Where can clinicians find self-care tips and strategies to share with parents?**

[Child Mind Institute](#) and the [National Association of School Psychologists](#) both have a number of resources for families on how to support their children - and themselves. [Action for Healthy Kids](#) provides ideas for healthy activities to do at home.

**6. How can we get in touch with families if parents have not yet responded to us?**

Several chat participants asked teachers to see if they could help them connect with parents or to act as an intermediary. Others are connecting with parents directly on the school’s chosen learning platform. One person suggested: “*Meet the parents where they are, tap into what their needs may be and engage them specifically on that need, express care and concern for them specifically to bridge a connection to them and meet the needs of the students.*”

One participant suggested being present at [meal distribution locations](#) to engage with parents and distribute information.

Some families have limited access to technology and may exclusively use smartphones to access the Internet. Some schools polled families to gauge their access to phone and Internet connection. One school provided remote hotspots to families who did not have access.

**7. How are you addressing families of students who are not supportive of therapeutic services?**

A participant suggested [Family Therapy techniques](#), which has strategies for engaging students of families who may be unfamiliar with therapeutic services for the student. Involving teachers in a collaborative conversation about the student also may be helpful.

**8. How can we support the growing needs of families in connecting to local and national resources?**

Families should start at the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Resources](#) web page maintained by the DC government. Also, [Children’s Law Center](#) is continuing to provide families and children with support and legal guidance.

**9. Where do we direct families for free internet resources?**

[Comcast Internet Essentials](#) is offering two months of free Internet service for families (\$10/month afterward), and current subscribers receive increased speeds at no charge. Clinicians and school staff can visit the page and submit the initial request on behalf of parents who do not have Internet access. Parents must have a valid phone number for their application to be processed. All documentation required from the child's school has been waived.

**10. What resources are available in the community for meal assistance?**

- The DC Government is providing [free meals](#) every weekday at schools throughout the city.
- Curbside grocery delivery is available from the [Capital Area Food Bank](#).
- [Auntbertha.com](#) (a repository for social services) is able to deliver meals (generally for seniors, but also now available for home-bound families).
- [DC Food Project](#) has collected a vast list of community centers, restaurants, and other meal access sites within the DMV area.

More resources can be found at <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/>.

**11. Where can families turn for rental assistance?**

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) helps income-eligible DC residents facing housing emergencies. More resources can be found at <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/>.

**12. How do we link families to unemployment benefits?**

Please visit the website [DC Government Unemployment Compensation](#) for further information on how to apply for unemployment benefits.

**13. How can we support undocumented families?**

[COVID-19 Resources for Undocumented Communities](#) is a crowdsourced pool of information that has gathered and organized national resources available to undocumented communities. Navigate this resource with caution as this list grows publicly and may not be fully vetted.

## **Supporting Students**

**14. What are resources for addressing the topic of COVID-19 with students?**

The open source list at [Share My Lesson](#) has a number of guided lesson plans, resources, and best practices from educators and school support staff on how to address the topic of COVID-19 with students.

**15. What are some ideas for conducting virtual group sessions with students?**

One clinician is creating a “lunch bunch” focused on social emotional skill-building. Students self-identify to participate in six activities that promote deep thought and self-reflection. Another clinician suggested creating journal groups using text/app messaging or group chats/discussion boards. The [Whatsapp](#) app can be used to create online journal groups.

#### **16. How can students engage in social emotional learning during distance learning?**

This list of [YouTube channels and online videos](#) is dedicated to improving the social emotional learning of students. [EverFi](#), an online learning platform that promotes kindness and life skills in students, is currently available free of charge. Clinicians can [help families apply a trauma-sensitive lens](#) when parenting their children during this difficult time.

ASCD and Wonder Grove Kids are providing a 3 month free trial for their Habits of Mind and social skills animated lessons: [wondergrovelearn.net/freetrial](http://wondergrovelearn.net/freetrial)

#### **17. How can clinicians support students who have participated in art-, play-, or movement-based therapies?**

The website and mobile app [Cosmic Kids](#) provides movement-based and yoga videos for children. The [Creative Play Therapist](#) website and the online guide, [Creative Intervention for Online Therapy with Children](#), offer play and other creative therapies that can be delivered virtually.

#### **18. How can schools, clinicians, and families support the social, emotional and behavioral health of students with special needs while they are home?**

One clinician, in collaboration with the special education team, created packets with SEL activities to send home and email to families. Common Sense Education provides a list of [apps or tools](#) for educators to use with students who learn from different modalities. While some of these tools weren't designed specifically for children with special needs or learning differences, they've been recommended by educators and experts who work with these populations. The [Autism Helper](#) website provides eight weeks of curriculum, schedules and training to support academics and behavior in children with autism.

#### **19. What are some strategies for facilitating access to technology that students need in order to participate in distance learning or teletherapy?**

One suggestion is to provide computer tablets (e.g., iPads) to students via curbside pickup or home drop-off. Another DC CoP member noted that many students only have access to phones, so phone calls may be the best way to connect with students.

Creating hard copy packets and using Microsoft Teams for video conferencing has worked for some chat participants. They made packets prior to remote learning and then emailed the information.

## Supporting School Staff

### **20. How are schools and staff staying connected online as they transition to remote learning?**

Some schools and clinicians have utilized online platforms such as [Microsoft Teams](#) and [Google Classroom](#) to host staff/team meetings and to facilitate staff/student discussions. School and CBO staff should check in with their supervisors and education leaders to learn what technology will be used to support student learning and staff connectivity.

Some schools are conducting brief daily check-ins with their school mental health team to ensure that all members are working in coordination as new information emerges or decisions are made. [Zoom](#) is an online platform that some schools and mental health teams have used to stay in touch via video conference call. School administrators may be using Twitter, or other social media, to communicate with staff or families so staff should inquire about how best to access information.

### **21. What additional opportunities are there for staff professional development?**

The Council for Exceptional Children, a professional association of educators dedicated to advancing the success of children and youth with exceptionalities, is offering free membership to special education professionals until May 31, 2020. More information can be found at <https://www.cec.sped.org/LoginJoin>

[Kognito](#), a health simulation company, has partnered with DC to help prepare educators, staff, students, physicians, and caregivers to: (1) recognize when someone is exhibiting signs of psychological distress or underlying trauma, and (2) manage a conversation with the goal of connecting them with the appropriate support. More information about these free online training opportunities can be found here: <https://supportdcyouth.kognito.com>. Kognito has also gathered [resources](#) to help with the development of plans that serve the social, emotional, and educational needs of our school community.

### **22. What resources are available to assist with distance learning?**

For DCPS, a distance learning portal has been created as a mobile-friendly website where educators, students, and families can find learning resources for every grade level and subject area. More information can be found at [bit.ly/DCPS\\_ICP](http://bit.ly/DCPS_ICP). For DC public charter schools, resources on distance learning can be found at <https://dcpcsb.egnyte.com/fl/v59ygV6P1T#folder-link/>.