

# CHILD WELLNESS 10-POINT CHECKLIST FOR THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK



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*COVID-19 is challenging for everyone. We are especially worried about our seniors, who are at an increased risk from this novel coronavirus, but let's also make sure to protect our children at this time of isolation, upheaval, and confusion. While we are so decentralized, it has become each adult's responsibility to keep an eye on all children to ensure their well-being. If you see something, say something for the sake of the child.*

*The following is a 10-point checklist for each child's well-being. Please be attentive to each of these matters for each of the children you encounter or know. Government has a role, but so do each of us.*

## 1 FOOD

Disruptions in school, after-school activities, and routines can mean that some children aren't getting enough food. Many school districts are distributing breakfast and lunch. As school closings continue, and the economy suffers from businesses having to shut down, there will be more in need. The federal and state governments need to streamline adding children to the breakfast and lunch programs, and increase the availability of food stamps to families in need. At the same time, children everywhere need healthy options to thrive. Do you know of a child who is not getting enough to eat or who is not getting the right nutrition?

Dial 1-800-5- HUNGRY (486479) or go to [www.fns.usda.gov/snap/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/).



## 2 SLEEP

Children thrive in an ordered universe, and they need adequate sleep every night. Continue to put children to bed at their normal time, and set up each day with plenty of structure around meals, school, recreation, and sleep. Do you know of a child who is not getting the rest they need?



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## 3 EXERCISE

One of the best ways to fight the stress of this new and difficult time is to exercise. Inside the house or outside, children need ways to be physically active. Whether it is walking, playing ball, or dancing, the more exercise, the better. That will then regulate appetite and encourage sleep. Do you know of a child who is not getting enough (or any) physical activity?



## 4 ONLINE SAFETY

This is a time when children will be getting many needs met online; education, chatting with friends, watching videos, etc. During this pandemic, it is more important than ever that their online activity is monitored to keep them safe from online predators. This situation could be a field day for child predators.

Caregivers need to be aware of where children and youth are navigating online, and who they are communicating with. Limiting the amount of time they “surf” the internet is necessary (see the three needs above). Do you know of a child who is engaging in unmonitored online activity?



## 5 DISEASE PREVENTION

Just like adults, kids need to follow the advice of the experts: stay away from those who have already been exposed, engage in persistent hand-washing (sing “happy birthday” twice each time to time it right), social distancing, and frequently cleaning surfaces with Lysol or Clorox. If a child has COVID-19 symptoms including fever and/or dry cough, their doctor should be contacted for instruction. Barring life-threatening symptoms, officials are saying to avoid the emergency room, where there are more germs including this one for them to be exposed to. Do you know of a child who is unreasonably at risk of getting COVID-19 or who is not getting treatment as needed? Call your doctor or local hospital.



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6

## CONTINUATION OF SERVICES

This is up to the federal, state, and local governments. Whatever federal, state, or local services the child is currently receiving, they need to continue. This is an important factor for all children, and this is very important for special needs or disabled children. If a child or youth is receiving therapy but cannot get to an appointment, there are virtual / phone sessions that can take place. The more “eyes” on the child, the better. Do you know of a child whose services have been disrupted? Call your state’s Child Helpline.



7

## EDUCATION

School districts and educators need to double their efforts to make sure that children continue to learn. School districts should make sure children have assignments, resources and homework to stay current to their grade level. If there are on-going efforts to drop off school meals, there can be efforts to drop off books and course paperwork. Do you know of a child who is being educationally neglected at this time? Call your local school board.



8

## KEEP LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN

Open communication is essential to the well-being of your child. Parents, caregivers, and other loved ones need to ask children how they are doing regularly, and they need to listen to what children are saying. Have you asked a child recently how this new experience is affecting them? Did you listen?



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9

## REMEMBER THAT CHILDREN ARE EXTREMELY VULNERABLE

As a general rule, pandemic or no pandemic, no child should be alone or in a closed space with an adult other than their parent. That is when kids are most at risk and incapable of protecting themselves. Many adults still have to work and childcare is challenging. If an appropriate family member is not available, and the employer or government has not provided adequate childcare, allowing a child to be with an adult that is not a licensed daycare provider is dangerous. Are you paying attention to all of the possibilities that could put your child at risk?



10

## CAREGIVERS NEED TO FOCUS ON THEIR SELF-CARE

Caregivers need to focus on their self-care. Kids can't take care of themselves; they need their caregivers to be there for them.

Caregivers need a daily self-care plan: good nutrition, sleep, and exercise. If a parent and a child are on a plane and the oxygen masks come down, the parent must put on their mask first, so they can then help the child. Same here.

There is also the reality that caregivers may be a risk for a child at home. Substance abuse, domestic violence, and mental health issues with caregivers can easily jeopardize the safety and well-being of the child. Do you know of a child who is at risk because their caregivers are not taking care of themselves? Call the state's Division of Child Services.

