



Tri-Valley

Opportunity Council, Inc.
Community Assistance Programs

Building strong families. Connecting people and resources. Strengthening communities.

April 2020

COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc

1-800-820-7263

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Dear Families and Friends of Tri-Valley Opportunity Council:

What a turbulent world we are living with the COVID-19 virus. Our schools are closed at this time and our children are at home. We are looking at job insecurity for some of us—how can we feed and shelter our families. But we are strong people and when we work together we can accomplish more than we think we can.

In this newsletter I want to give our parents and families suggestions on how to talk to your children about COVID-19. Also to give you some information on special education during this time as the schools are working on distance learning.

What are some easy and fun ideas to do with your children while we are doing our part with social distancing?

Tri-Valley is committed to serving our communities in these times: be it energy assistance, rental concerns, childcare, health insurance, SNAP and working with schools to serve our children the best way possible.

Every facet of our life will be changing but know that our schools are doing what they need to do to provide the education for our children.

Keep up with the changes and help others as needed. We are in this together.

Talking to Kids about the Coronavirus (Child Mind Institute)

Kids worry more when they're kept in the dark. So many of us are wondering how to bring it up in a way that will be reassuring and not make kids more worried than they already may be.

- **Don't be afraid to discuss the corona virus.** Most children have already hear about it or see people wearing face masks, so parents shouldn't avoid talking about it. No talking about something can actually make kids worry more. Look at the conversation as an opportunity to convey the facts and set the emotional tone. Your goal is to help your children feel informed and get fact-based information that is likely more reassuring than whatever they are hearing from their friends or on the news.
- **Be developing appropriate.** Don't volunteer too much information, as this may be overwhelming. Instead, try to answer your child's questions. Do your best to answer honestly and clearly. It's okay if you can't answer everything, being available to your child is what matters.
- **Take cues from your child.** Invite your child to tell you anything they may have heard about the virus, and how they feel. Give them ample opportunity to ask questions. You want to be prepared to answer questions. Your goal is to avoid encouraging frightening fantasies.
- **Deal with your own anxiety.** "When you're feeling most anxious or panicked, that isn't the time to talk to your kids about what's happening with the coronavirus," warns Dr. Dominguez. If you notice that you are feeling anxious, take some time to calm down before trying to have a conversation or answer your child's questions.
- **Be reassuring.** Children are very egocentric, so hearing about the coronavirus on the news may be enough to make them seriously worry that they'll catch it. It's helpful to reassure your child about how rare the coronavirus actually is (the flu is much more common) and that kids actually seem to have milder symptoms.
- **Focus on what you're doing to stay safe.** An important way to reassure kids is to emphasize the safety precautions that you are taking. Kids feel empowered when they know what to do to keep themselves safe. We know that the virus is transmitted mostly by coughing and touching surfaces. So remind kids that they are taking care of themselves by washing their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, when they come from outside, before they eat, and after blowing their noses, coughing, sneezing or using the bathroom. If kids ask about face masks, explain that the experts at the CDC say they aren't necessary for most people.
- **Stick to routine.** We don't like uncertainty, so staying rooted in routines and predictability is going to be helpful right now. Make sure you take care of the basics just like you would during spring break or summer vacation. Structured days with regular mealtimes and bedtime are an essential part of keeping kids happy and healthy.
- **Keep talking.** Tell kids that you will continues to keep them updated as you learn more. You can say, "Even though we don't have the answers to everything right now, Know that once we know more, mom or dad will let you know, too."

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Kids who learn and think differently can have added challenges. For example, it's common for kids with ADHD and other learning and thinking differences to also struggle with anxiety.

Language disorders can make it hard for kids to express their thoughts and understand what people say. Kids with slow processing speed need longer to take in and process what they hear. All of those things make talking about the unfolding crisis harder.

Having the correct information and answers can help. But it's important to talk with kids in an age-appropriate way. Some kids may not open up about feelings or fears. Tell them that's OK, and that you're there to listen and answer questions any time.

ONLINE/DISTANCE LEARNING

8 TIPS TO GET YOUR CHILD READY

(www.understood.org)

1. **Create a learning space for your child.** It is important to set up a quiet, clutter-free area if your child is learning full-time from home. You can convert the kitchen table into a learning station. Turn off the TV and remove items from table when your child is doing school work. When it's time to eat, put away the school supplies and use it again as a kitchen table. Reducing clutter helps kids focus.
2. **Make a schedule and stick to it.** We are creatures of habit. With no school bell to mark kids tardy, they might feel like sleeping in. With no set schedule, kids might never get around to schoolwork. Finding time for learning requires planning. Take a look at your family's schedule and figure out the best times for learning. Once you decide when your child will learn, identify that time as school and stick with it.
3. **Reduce distractions.** Video games, computer games, social media, TV, toys, pets—our homes have a lot of distractions. Make a list of the things that distract your child. Then, find ways to limit them during learning time. Are games or social media a big distraction? Try blocking them on your child's device during learning time.
4. **Use a calendar and color-code it.** It's important to set up systems to help your child stay on top of school deadlines. This will help your child stay organized. Post a calendar and mark it with due dates. You can also use color-coding for tasks. For example, use red pen for reading and a blue pen for math.
5. **Get plenty of exercise.** Exercise helps us think better. When we move and groove, our problem-solving, memory, and attention improve. Physical activity is a natural way to reduce stress and prevent anxiety. Look for family-friendly workouts you can do at home. Identify a time and place in your home for physical activity. The best time to exercise might be right before tackling schoolwork.

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6. **See which accessibility features helps your child.** Most phones, laptops, and other mobile devices have built-in assistive technology. For example, read aloud or text-to-text speech can help struggling readers, and speech-to-text can help struggling writers. On YouTube you can adjust the settings to slow down the playback speed if your child is having trouble understanding videos. You can also change the settings to show closed captions if it helps your child to read the text while listening to videos. See which features helps your child access digital content and select the ones that fits your child's needs and preferences.
7. **Reach out to your child's teacher.** Learning at home requires family support. To support your child, set up a line of communications with your child's teachers. Use email, text, phone calls, or maybe even video conferencing to connect. Try not to worry that you're interrupting. If you're not sure how to do an assignment, don't just guess—reach out to confirm. You may even want to set up a day and time each week to connect with the teacher. You can use this time to talk about challenges your child is facing. Being proactive is essential if your child is struggling in school.
8. **Look for ways to remove learning barriers.** If your child has learning challenges, it's important for you to review the online and other learning material the school sends to you. Keep in mind that it may not have been designed with your child's needs in mind.

Here are some questions to consider:

- What options are teachers offering to help struggling readers with written material?
- What options does your child have to demonstrate understanding? For example, if your child has trouble writing, ask the teacher if your child can send a video response.
- Is the teacher including supports to help with things like getting organized, identifying the main idea, and taking notes?

Work with your child's teachers to identify and remove any barriers. Remember: if it's a challenge for your child, it's most likely a problem for other kids, too.

Are schools still required to provide special education? Yes. The schools are working on this. They also need to plan for how kids use accommodations or get equal access when learning at home.

If all kids are learning at home, what happens to special instruction or related services in a child's IEP? We don't know all the details yet. In its legal guidance, the U.S. Department of Education says schools must "make every effort to provide special education and related services" to students. But it notes that there could be "exceptional circumstances" that change how services take place.

It's important to work together to make sure everyone stays safe and that kids get the services they need.



MNSURE ANNOUNCES SPECIAL ENROLLMENT PERIOD FOR UNINSURED MINNESOTANS

A 30 day special enrollment for qualified individuals who are currently without insurance in response to the potential growth of COVID-19 cases. This begins March 23rd and runs through April 21. This will allow uninsured individuals 30 days to enroll in health insurance coverage through Mnsure.org.

“We want to make sure every Minnesotan has the security of health coverage to ensure they can get the care they need if they contract this serious illness” said Mnsure CEO Nate Clark.

You must select a plan by April 21st for coverage to start date beginning April 1st.

Please call Nancy Ramon for more information at 1-800-820-7263

Websites for your family

A lot of resources and information is available for children and families on the internet. You need to be very careful about information you find and very cautious about websites, but there are many quality sites out there. Here are a few sites you can look at :

www.pacer.org– resource and information center for families and youth with disabilities, bullying resources

www.nami.org– a mental health advocacy organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families

www.macmh.org-training and resources for children and families promoting positive mental health

www.samhsa.gov– resources and information regarding substance abuse, mental health and services for children and families

www.health.state.mn.us/mcshn– a website for Minnesota children with special health needs and their families

www.fape.org-information about IDEA, special education and disability issues

www.parenttoolkit.com

www.parentsknow.state.mn.us– resources and information for parents

www.how-to-stop-bullying.com– resources and activities on preventing bullying and how to handle bullying

FUN ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS FOR FAMILIES DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

(www.greatkindnesschallenge.org & Kidsforpeaceglobal.org)

Join our Happy Heart Hunt! Let's blanket our world with Love. Make hearts from any object and tape it to a street-facing window to send your love out to the world. Encourage all your friends to do the same. Then, in a few days, take a family walk to search for other hearts on houses.

Host a family game night Create an obstacle course with things from home
Play charades create a family "masterpiece" out of recycled items teach your child a skill or share a talent explore nature—continue to spend time outdoors create a family visionboard write and send a card to a senior citizen who can no longer receive visitors
hold gratitude circles at dinnertime write positive messages on post-it notes and place on mirrors in you house make peace rocks—paint rocks with kind words and place them around town to delight your neighbors offer to run errands for elderly neighbors and
Leave shopping bags on their doorway discover something new about a different culture or country listen to music from different parts of the world create a kind rainbow
call or facetime with your grandparents, friends and relatives make up a poem with a positive message do household chores without being asked do yoga
Have a spontaneous dance party! Crank the tunes and DANCE! Go on a scavenger hunt

GETTING OUTDOORS NOT CANCELLED

MUSIC NOT CANCELLED

FAMILY NOT CANCELLED

READING NOT CANCELLED

SINGING NOT CANCELLED

LAUGHING NOT CANCELLED

HOPE NOT CANCELLED

LET'S EMBRACE WHAT WE HAVE



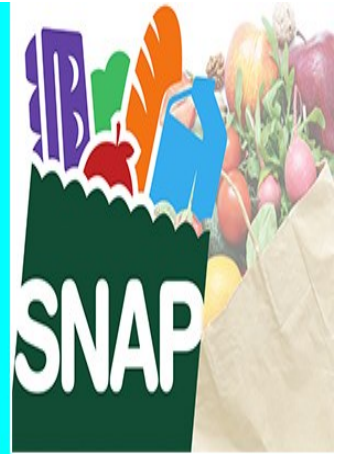
**Supplemental
Nutrition
Assistance
Program**

Losing Income?

Losing Childcare?

Losing Access to Healthy Food?

**APPLY
TODAY!**



SNAP RESOURCES:

Bridge to Benefits: http://mn.bridgetobenefits.org/Food_Support2

Tri-Valley Website: <https://www.tvoc.org>



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Contact your local county office by phone
with questions or to apply for SNAP benefits.