

Social-Emotional Toolkit: Resources for Early Childhood Education and Care Providers

This is a stressful time for children, families, educators, and leadership. Concerns about the spread of COVID-19 are growing. Children may struggle with significant adjustments to their routines (e.g., schools and child care closures, social distancing, stay-at-home), which may interfere with their sense of structure, predictability, and security. The need for physical distancing can make us feel isolated and in need of ways to cope.

The [Illinois Pyramid Model State Leadership Team](#), in collaboration with The Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, has collected resources, with a focus on wellness, resilience, and reflective leadership, to help manage stressors and to promote wellness during these challenging times.

The Pyramid Model is a framework for early childhood educators and caregivers to promote young children's social and emotional development and prevent and address challenging behavior.

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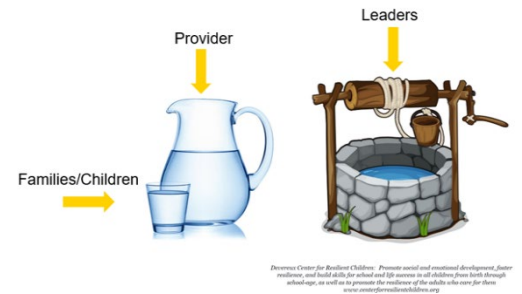
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Wellness and Self-Care

Understanding the impact of adult well-being on children's social-emotional development.

In order to help understand and appreciate why this is so important for the provider to take care of themselves we are using the analogy of a “pitcher” (the provider) needing to continually pour into the “cups” (the children/ families).

When a pitcher is full (i.e. adults themselves are healthy), each of the cups gets filled with what they need (patience, love, humor, etc.) and when the pitcher is empty (i.e. adults are stressed, burned out, experiencing compassion fatigue, etc.), the cups don't get filled (i.e. children aren't able to receive what they need to be socially and emotionally healthy).



Who fills the pitchers? Providers must take responsibility for filling their own pitchers, but this is often hard when resources are low, stress is high, and caregivers and educators are feeling alone. All adults need “a well” who they can turn to for extra support. Administrators, supervisors, managers, mental health consultants, mentors, and coaches can be your “well” to provide resilient leadership that will help keep you resilient, so you can in turn support children.

Taking Care of Yourself

“Self-care is not selfish or indulgent—it’s how we keep ourselves well to ensure we are physically, emotionally, and mentally capable of being there for our young children” Zero to Three.

The following resources provide strategies for caring for yourself during trying times. These resources can be used for families/caregivers as well!

- [Supporting Yourself During A Pandemic](#)
- [Taking Care of Yourself](#)
- [The Importance of Self-Care](#)

Mindfulness & Relaxation

Practicing mindfulness and relaxation exercises can reduce stress and improve well-being. The following resources provide strategies for practicing mindfulness and relaxation exercises.

- [Relaxation Exercises](#) | The Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

Mental Health Consultants (MHC) & Other Supports

The MHC role will look a little different across the different ECE systems; but in general, the consultant's role is to engage in relationships with providers (educators, family support, early interventionist, home visitors) that support and enhance children's social and emotional development, health, and well-being by providing MHC.

MHC's are providing services during the pandemic. Examples of provisions are Community Support Group Zoom, crisis consultation support to teachers and administrators, conducting professional development, and supporting providers with consultation and resource support via phone, email, text, and Zoom.

See below to see how you can access support from a mental health consultant.

Child Care	Mental Health Consultants can be accessed at Caregiver Connections or if you are in Cook County go to Illinois Action for Children
ISBE	Mental Health Consultants are an allowable expense, as approved through the ISBE grant process.
Head Start and Early Head Start	Every Head Start and Early Head Start program hires or contracts with mental health specialists to provide support for staff, children and families. Contact your local program to receive support.
Home Visiting	The Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership provides Mental Health Consultants to a variety of home visiting programs throughout Illinois.
Early Intervention	Social-Emotional Consultants are part of the local Child and Family Connections Support Services

Other Supports	Illinois residents experiencing stress and mental health issues related to COVID-19 can text "TALK" or "HABLAR" to 5-5-2-0-2-0. Within 24 hours, you will receive a call from a counselor employed by a local community mental health center to provide support.
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Connecting with Families/Caregivers

No matter if you're supporting a child in home visiting, child care, state-funded preschool, or early intervention the connections to families are important. It can feel challenging navigating interaction with families/caregivers in a virtual space while trying to be responsive and supportive. Below are resources to support virtual connections with families.

- [Connecting with Families Tip Sheet](#)
- [Providing Distance Family Support: What Do I Say? How Can I Help? A Conversation with NCPMI Faculty](#)

Child & Families/Caregivers Resources

As you are connecting with caregivers/families they may let you know that they are concerned about how their child is coping with the challenges that might be occurring during this stressful time. Or they may let you know that they are concerned about the challenging behaviors they are experiencing with their child

Below are resources you can share with families. These tools can be used in a classroom setting as well.

- [Teaching Emotions: Activity Ideas to Share with Families](#)
- [COVID-19 Resources for Families with Young Children](#) GOECD webpage that features links to important resources to support families during the pandemic. On this page is an [Emotional Well-being Toolkit: Resources for Children, Families, & Caregivers](#) to help manage stressors and promote wellness during these challenging times
- [Helping Children During the Pandemic](#)
- [Helping Children Understand Emotions When Wearing Masks](#)
- [Help Us Have a Good Day! Positive Strategies for Families in English](#)
- [¡Ayúdanos a tener un buen día! Estrategias positivas para](#)

- Social Story: [I Can Be Safe and Healthy by Washing My Hands!](#)
- Social Story: [¡Puedo estar seguro y saludable lavándome las manos!](#)
- Social Story: [My Social Distancing Story](#)
- Social Story: [Why Can't I Go to School?](#)
- Social Story: [¿Porque no puedo ir a la escuela?](#)
- Social Story: [We Can Be Problem Solvers!](#)
- Social Story: [Wearing Masks](#)

Training & Resources

The Illinois Pyramid Model State Leadership Team professional development workgroup developed “*Building Positive Social-Emotional Skills for ALL Children: Introducing the Pyramid Model Framework*” as an overview training on the PM.

You can register for this training at the [Gateways I Learning site](#).

For information and access to additional social-emotional trainings visit:

- Child Care: [Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral](#)
- Head Start and Early Head Start: [IL Head Start Association](#)
- State Funded Preschool: [Early Childhood Professional Learning](#) and [Illinois STARNET](#)
- Early Intervention: [Early Intervention Training Program](#)
- Home Visiting: The [Ounce of Prevention Fund](#) and [igrowillinois](#) for other professional development resources for home visitors.

Additional COVID-19 Resources

- [Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development](#)
- [NCPMI COVID-19 and Pandemic Resources](#)
- [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\)](#)
- [ZERO TO THREE COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [The Division for Early Childhood \(DEC\)](#)
- [Child Trends](#)
- [Harvard –Developing Child](#)
- [The Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center](#)
- [The National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness](#)

- [National Association for Family Child Care](#)