

A quarterly publication from Families Together, Inc., the Parent Training and Information and Health Information Center for the State of Kansas

## Helping Children Cope With Changes Resulting From COVID-19



Families across the country are adapting to the evolving changes in daily life caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most schools, places of public gathering, and nonessential businesses are closed, and parents and other caregivers are faced with helping their families adjust to the new normal. This includes trying to keep children occupied, feeling safe, and attempting to keep up with schoolwork as best as possible. None of this is easy, but it helps to stay focused on what is possible in order to reinforce a sense of control and to reassure children that they are okay, and that the situation will get better. The following tips can help.

- Be a role model. Children will react to and follow your reactions. They learn from your example.
- Be aware of how you talk about COVID-19. Your discussion about COVID-19 can increase or decrease your child's fear. If true, remind your child that your family is healthy, and you are going to do everything within your power to keep loved ones safe and well. Carefully listen or have them draw or write out their thoughts and feelings and respond with truth and reassurance.
- Explain social distancing. Children probably don't fully understand why parents/guardians aren't allowing them to be with friends. Tell your child that your family is following the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which include social distancing. Social distancing means staying away from others until the risk of contracting COVID-19 is under control. Showing older children the "flatten the curve" charts will help them grasp the significance of social distancing. Explain that while we don't know how long it will take to "flatten the curve" to reduce the number of those infected, we do know that this is a critical time—we must follow the guidelines of health experts to do our part.
- Demonstrate deep breathing. Deep breathing is a valuable tool for calming the nervous system. Do breathing exercises with your children.
- Focus on the positive. Celebrate having more time to spend as a family. Make it as fun as possible. Do family projects. Organize belongings, create masterpieces. Sing, laugh, and go outside, if possible, to connect with nature and get needed exercise. Allow older children to connect with their friends virtually.
- Establish and maintain a daily routine. Keeping a regular schedule provides a sense of control, predictability, calm, and well-being. It also helps children and other family members respect others' need for quiet or uninterrupted time and when they can connect with friends virtually.
- Identify projects that might help others. This could include: writing letters to the neighbors or others who might be stuck at home alone or to healthcare workers; sending positive messages over social media; or reading a favorite children's book on a social media platform for younger children to hear.
- Offer lots of love and affection.

*Adapted from, Talking to Children About COVID-19 (Coronavirus): A Parent Resource, National Association of School Psychologists and National Association of School Nurses, NASP, 2020.*

# Cómo Ayudar a los Niños a Lidar con los Cambios Provocados por la COVID-19

Las familias en todo el país se están adaptando a los cambios en la vida diaria provocados por la pandemia de la COVID-19. La mayoría de las escuelas, los lugares de reunión pública y los negocios no esenciales están cerrados, y los padres y otros cuidadores se enfrentan al hecho de ayudar a sus familias a adaptarse a la nueva normalidad. Esto incluye intentar mantener a los niños ocupados, que se sientan seguros y traten de no atrasarse con las tareas escolares de la mejor manera posible. Nada de esto es fácil, pero mantenerse concentrado en lo que sí es posible ayuda a reforzar la sensación de control y asegurarles a los niños que ellos están a salvo y que la situación mejorará. Los siguientes consejos pueden resultar de ayuda.

- Sea un ejemplo a seguir. Los niños reaccionarán y copiarán sus reacciones. Ellos aprenden de su ejemplo.
- Tenga precaución al hablar sobre la COVID-19. Lo que usted diga sobre la COVID-19 puede aumentar o reducir el miedo de sus hijos. Recuérdeles que su familia está sana y que usted va a hacer todo lo posible para mantener a sus seres queridos sanos y salvos. Escuche los pensamientos y sentimientos de sus hijos con atención, o pídeles que dibujen o escriban sobre ellos, y respóndales con la verdad y con seguridad.
- Explíqueles en qué consiste el distanciamiento social. Es probable que los niños no comprendan del todo por qué los padres o tutores no les permiten estar con sus amigos. Dígales a sus hijos que su familia está siguiendo las pautas establecidas por los Centros para el Control y la Prevención de Enfermedades (CDC), que incluyen el distanciamiento social. El distanciamiento social significa que debemos mantenernos alejados de las demás personas hasta que el riesgo de contraer la COVID-19 esté bajo control. Mostrarles a los niños más grandes los gráficos que muestran cómo se “aplana la curva” les ayudará a comprender la importancia del distanciamiento social. Explíqueles que, a pesar de que no sabemos cuánto tiempo tardará en “aplanarse la curva” para reducir la cantidad de personas contagiadas, sabemos que estamos atravesando un momento crítico y que debemos seguir las pautas de los expertos en salud para cumplir con nuestra parte.
- Haga una demostración sobre la respiración profunda. La respiración profunda es una herramienta valiosa para calmar el sistema nervioso. Practique ejercicios de respiración con sus hijos.
- Concéntrese en lo positivo. Celebre el tener más tiempo para disfrutar en familia. Intente hacerlo lo más divertido posible. Hagan proyectos familiares. Organicen sus pertenencias, creen obras de arte, canten, rían y salgan, de ser posible, para conectarse con la naturaleza y hacer ejercicio. Deje que los niños más grandes se comuniquen con sus amigos de modo virtual.
- Establezca y mantenga una rutina diaria. Mantener un horario regular da una sensación de control, previsibilidad, calma y bienestar. Además, les ayuda a los niños y otros miembros de la familia a respetar la necesidad de los demás de tener tranquilidad o tiempo sin interrupciones y para comunicarse con amigos de modo virtual.
- Identifique proyectos que podrían ayudar a otras personas. Esto podría incluir escribir cartas a los vecinos u otras personas que puedan haberse quedado solos en casa o a los trabajadores de atención médica, enviar mensajes positivos a través de las redes sociales o leerles a sus hijos pequeños uno de sus libros preferidos en una plataforma de redes sociales.
- Brinde mucho amor y afecto.



## Our Promise to Kansas Families



During these uncertain times brought about by COVID-19, Families Together, Inc. will keep safety and health a priority for our staff and community. We will continue to provide training, information, and support to those we serve. Our centers remain open; however, no in-person activities will be conducted until further notice.

If you need to reach us:

Call: 785-233-4777 or 316-945-7747 between 8:30 am and 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Leave a message and someone from our staff will get back to you. You can also email any questions or requests to: [contactus@famiestogetherinc.org](mailto:contactus@famiestogetherinc.org).

Durante estos tiempos inciertos provocados por COVID-19, Familia Unidas, Inc. mantendrá la seguridad y la salud como una prioridad para nuestro personal y la comunidad. Continuaremos brindando capacitación, información y apoyo a aquellos a quienes servimos. Nuestros centros permanecen abiertos; sin embargo, no se realizarán actividades en persona hasta nuevo aviso.

Si necesita comunicarse con nosotros: Llame al: (620) 276-2380 entre las 8:30 am y las 4:00 pm, de lunes a viernes. O correo electrónico: [espanol@famiestogetherinc.org](mailto:espanol@famiestogetherinc.org).

***For more resources, visit [www.famiestogetherinc.org](http://www.famiestogetherinc.org)***

## Workshops

Our workshops, trainings and conferences are offered to parents, education advocates, general educators, special educators, para-professionals, administrators, service providers, and other individuals who care for and about children/youth who have disabilities. For more information, visit [famiestogetherinc.org/events/](http://famiestogetherinc.org/events/).

We are currently working on what our workshops and trainings will look like in the coming months. We remain committed to serving our families and volunteers, and helping them stay informed. Any updates will be posted on our website. As always, call or email us with any questions you may have.

## Contact Us

### Garden City Center

[gardencity@famiestogetherinc.org](mailto:gardencity@famiestogetherinc.org)

620-276-6364

1-888-820-6364

### Topeka Center

[topeka@famiestogetherinc.org](mailto:topeka@famiestogetherinc.org)

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1-800-264-6343

### Wichita Center

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316-945-7747

1-888-815-6364

Nosotros hablamos español 1-800-499-9443

***[FamiliesTogetherInc.org](http://FamiliesTogetherInc.org)***

# Some Questions Education Advocates May Have During School Closures

*(adapted from [KANSAS STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GUIDANCE Compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Kansas Special Education for Exceptional Children Act during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#))*

**Question: Some kids in foster care change placements. How does school closure due to COVID-19 affect the school's obligation to provide IEP services to students who transfer within the state and from out of state?**

**Answer:** Students with IEPs who transfer to a new school within Kansas or from out-of-state and enroll in the new school within the same school year must be provided with a free appropriate public education (FAPE) including services comparable to those described in the child's IEP from the previous school district until the new school district adopts the child's IEP from the previous school district, or develops a new IEP, or (in the case of an out-of-state student) conducts an evaluation (34 C.F.R. § 300.323(e), (f)). Schools should be careful to not introduce unreasonable logistical barriers on enrollment and keep in mind their obligation to provide FAPE to a student who has transferred into the school district.

**Question: One of my students has an annual review coming up. Does the IEP team still have to meet since schools are closed? Do I have to attend in-person?**

**Answer:** 34 C.F.R. § 300.324(b)(1)(i) requires each school district to ensure that the IEP team reviews the child's IEP not less than annually to determine whether the annual goals for the child are being achieved and to revise the IEP as appropriate to address any lack of expected progress toward the IEP goals and in the general education curriculum. There is no exception to this annual requirement. To accomplish this, teams may conduct meetings virtually via telephone or videoconference. Any required IEP team members that are unable to attend may be excused by written consent of the parent or written agreement between the parent and the school pursuant to the procedures outlined in 34 C.F.R. § 300.321(e).

**Question: I was appointed to a student to request or sign consent for an evaluation to determine eligibility. Does the school still have to meet the 60 school-day timeline for initial special education evaluations due to school closure or student illness/absence because of COVID-19?**

**Answer:** K.A.R. 91-40-8(f) requires a school to complete an initial evaluation within 60 school days of the date the school receives written parental consent for evaluation of the child. There are three exceptions to this timeline: a. the school can obtain written parental consent to an extension of time (K.A.R. 91-40-8(f)); or b. the parent repeatedly fails or refuses to produce the child for the evaluation (K.A.R. 91-40-8(g)(1)); or c. the child enrolls in a different school before the evaluation is completed and the parent and new school agree to a specific date by which the evaluation will be completed (K.A.R. 91-40-8(g)(2)).

Note that this timeline is 60 school days. School day is defined as "any day, including a partial day, that all children, including children with and without disabilities, are in attendance at school for instructional purposes" (K.A.R. 91-40-1(eee)). Thus, if a school is closed due to COVID-19 and not providing any services to the general student population, those days of closure are not counted in the 60-school-day timeline. However, once a school is implementing its Continuous Learning Plan, KSDE considers those days to meet the K.A.R. 91-40-1(eee) definition of school day; thus those days do count in the 60-school-day timeline. If the school believes that it will not be able to meet the 60-school-day timeline for an individual student, the school should ask the parent for written consent to an extension of time (K.A.R. 91-40-8(f)). This request for consent to extend the time to complete an evaluation must be obtained on an individualized basis. It must not become a standard practice nor may standard language be inserted into every prior written notice provided to the parent when first asking for consent to evaluate. The consent must include a specific extension of time that can be calculated and is clear to all parties.

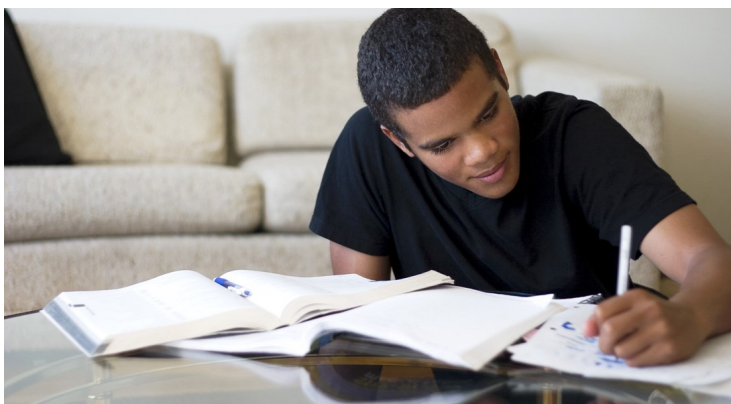


**You Can Make a Difference!**



## Dyslexia Initiatives in Kansas

Dyslexia is defined as a language based learning disability. It is a neurological based condition that affects 15-20% of the population. Research has shown that most people with dyslexia have difficulty identifying the separate speech sounds within a word and/or learning how letters represent those sounds. Dyslexia is not a lack of intelligence or desire to learn; with appropriate teaching methods, individuals with dyslexia can learn successfully. In November, 2019, the Kansas State Board of Education unanimously approved recommendations on dyslexia. They have developed the following timeline for these recommendations to be implemented throughout the state.



The guidelines, including recommendations for student screening, can be found in their entirety at the [Kansas State Department of Education website](#).

- November 2019 - Kansas State Board of Education approves dyslexia recommendations
- January 2020 – Kansas State Board of Education approves screening components
- March 2020 – KSDE and Kansas Educational Service Centers collaborate on training
- April/May 2020 – Training which covers the professional learning available from KSDE and Kansas Educational Service Centers
- August 2020 – Schools will begin to provide professional development on dyslexia
- August 2020 – Schools will begin to implement evidence-based reading practices (structured literacy)

## Staff Spotlight

### How long have you been with Families Together?

I have been on staff for fifteen months.

### What programs do you work on?

I work primarily as a part of the IEP Mentor Program. I am also involved with Parent Engagement, iTransition, and Family Employment Awareness Trainings (FEAT), working with transition age youth.

### When you're not serving families, what do you like to do?

When I'm not serving families, I'm spending time with my family. I have 8 kids, ranging from 10 years old to 27 years old, and 1 granddaughter that is 5 years old. I enjoy supporting them in school and church activities.

### What do you like most about working at Families Together?

My favorite part about working at Families Together is connecting with the families. I enjoy spending time with them and providing them with resources that will make a positive impact on their lives.



**Beth Orth**

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- 1 **Helping Children Cope With Changes Resulting From COVID-19**
- 2 **Cómo Ayudar a los Niños a Lidar con los Cambios Provocados por la COVID-19**
- 3 **Workshop and Contact Information**
- 4 **Questions Education Advocates May Have**
- 5 **Staff Spotlight: Meet Our Team Dyslexia Initiatives in Kansas**



## Welcome to the Families Together, Inc. Spring Newsletter

Families Together, Inc. provides assistance and guidance to help parents and youth become partners in decision-making. Our non-profit is the Parent Training Information Center as well as the Family-to-Family Health Information Center for Kansas.

### What's Inside?

In this edition of our newsletter, we explore some of the new state guidelines regarding continuous education. We look at dyslexia initiatives, helping children cope with current situations and how Families Together, Inc. can help you and your students.

### Want to stay up-to-date?

Consider subscribing to our newsletter electronically! Not only will you receive the quarterly newsletter, you will also receive our biweekly Monday Memo which is full of relevant articles and resources.

You'll also help us save trees and reduce printing costs! Let us know you're interested by emailing [topeka@famiestogetherinc.org](mailto:topeka@famiestogetherinc.org).

