

Caring for Children During a Pandemic

May 11, 2020



“The current pandemic reinforces the resilience of families, that the right support at the right time makes a difference. In the short term, we need to support families through home visiting programs, food distribution, multi-generational programs, trauma-informed practices, and safe, high-quality childcare for those who work in essential jobs and those who will be returning to work soon. The crisis also underscored some long-term needs. High-quality and accessible infant/toddler home-based care is vital. Integrating healthcare into early childhood programs, increased pay for the early care and education workforce, and reimbursements for childcare businesses were known needs prior to the pandemic, and the essential nature of this workforce drives home the point that we need to address these issues with sound public policy.” *Diane Denish, Senior Advisor, New Mexico, Strategies 360 and a NM First board member. In her role as Lieutenant Governor, Ms. Denish was instrumental in creating the NM Children’s Cabinet.*

Building Resilience in Children and Families



As if parenting young children weren’t challenging enough, the COVID crisis has added new stressors. With parents and caregivers working at home and in the community, both paid and unpaid, the need for additional support to families is evident. With over four decades of

research on resilience, we know that protective factors can buffer children from harm and increase the chances they adapt positively to adversities such as this one. Families and communities can [work together](#) to promote these protective factors.

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1. **Consistent, sensitive, responsive caregiving** is the most important factor in protecting a child. We need to be there for our children.
2. **Concrete support in times of need**, meeting the basic needs of children and families—such as food, shelter, clothing, and medical and mental health care—is essential. Search for resources [here](#).
3. **Positive social connections** provide support for both children and adults. Physical distancing shouldn't turn into social isolation. Call, FaceTime, write letters to family and friends.
4. **Knowledge of parenting and child development** can help parents respond more appropriately and effectively to children's needs, especially important in times of crisis.
5. **Supporting parental resilience** by meeting parent and caregiver needs, is an effective strategy for promoting children's well-being during and after a pandemic. Caregivers, take care of yourselves.
6. **Social and emotional competence of children** involves developing their ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions, establish and maintain relationships, and to contribute. Find ways for children to help in the family and in the community.

It Takes a Village! Resources for Parents



We know that it takes a village to raise a child, and even more so in the midst of a pandemic. **Help is available!** Take advantage of these resources.

Knowledge about Child Development.

0-3 year-olds <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/series/your-child-s-development-age-based-tips-from-birth-to-36-months>

Children of all ages

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/facts.html>

Helpful Tips for Parenting Challenges

- Zero to One offers [tips for families](#) with age-appropriate responses to common questions, a guide to self-care, and activities for young children experiencing social distancing.
- ChildMind has suggestions for Talking to Kids About the Coronavirus in [English](#) and [en Español](#)
- Healthy Children offers [Tips to Keep the Calm at Home](#)

Home Learning Activities. New Mexico Kids has a raft of [home learning resources](#) including a free subscription to *Parentivity*, with web-based information, games and activities for all

families of children from pregnancy to age five. Or check out [Gardening with Kids](#) for fun, education, and healthy activities for children and families.

Childcare. New Mexico’s childcare facilities and programs are now permitted to serve all NM families. All childcare facilities are asked to follow reduced group size and health and safety guidelines, and not all are open. To find a childcare center that is open near you, [search this list](#) at New Mexico Kids. The list is updated regularly, but changes happen quickly, so call first.

Home Visitors. If you are pregnant or parenting a young child, you may be able to enjoy the services of a free home visitor. Currently, home visits are via the internet, telephone, or email. But home visitors can still provide you with information and home activities, help you find other resources and answer your questions about parenting. To find a home visiting program near you, call 800-691-9067 or visit <https://pulltogether.org/resources-by-county>

Talk to a Friendly Voice. The New Mexico [Peer to Peer Warmline](#) puts you in touch with someone who has been there and may have experienced some of the same things you’re going through to offer a sympathetic ear and possible advice. Call **1-855-466-7100**, 3:30pm – 11:30pm or text 6pm – 11pm every day.

Grandparents and Relatives Raising Children



If you are a grandparent or other relative raising children, there is a special program to assist you. CYFD’s Kinship Navigation program has resources to advise, support, and advocate for you and your family. Visit the [Kinship Navigation website](#).

When “Home” Isn’t Safe

We know that community crises like COVID-19 puts heightened stress on families. With everyone isolated in their homes, tensions increase, and paths to safety are unpredictable and require additional support. If you or someone you know is feeling unsafe at home, help is available. If physical danger is imminent, call 911. Or call the **National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233, text at 22522, or the NM Crisis and Access Line at 1-855-662-7474**. All operate 24/7 and speak multiple languages. All New Mexican domestic violence shelters are open and providing shelter and services. [Locate a program near you](#).

Child abuse and [neglect rates in NM](#) were already far above the national average. Current reports of child abuse are down, but the fear is that this may be because children are behind closed doors without teachers and other mandatory reporters seeing them every day. Anyone who knows or has reasonable suspicion that a child is being abused or neglected must report the matter immediately to CYFD's child abuse hotline (**1-855-333-SAFE [7233]** or **#SAFE from a cell phone**), or to law enforcement or the appropriate tribal identity.

What can we all do to help? There is [a role](#) that each of us can play in keeping children safe and supported during the pandemic. Those who are concerned about possible domestic violence can access this [information sheet](#) from the NM Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

