



Trauma Informed Strategies for Working With Youth and Families During the COVID-19 Pandemic

MAY 2020



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Trauma informed strategies that may be useful when centers/programs are closed

The Value of Outreach

Personalized outreach by phone call, text or email to families that have participated in the organization's programs is a way to:

- check in with the family to see if they have any safety concerns or resource needs
- remind the family of their connection to the organization
- reassure the family that their reaction to COVID-19 is a normal response to stress and to offer resources to reduce the family's stress
- assess concerns about participation in future programs

Tips for Outreach



Plan – Determine the goals and scope for your outreach effort. Are you simply calling families to make contact? Or are you calling to make contact, help families make connections to needed supports, and give the family an update on your agency/program's status? If you are calling to help families make connections to needed supports, have a list of reliable resources readily available so you can provide contact information in response to identified needs.

Document your efforts – Devise a simple tool to use to collect information gathered during the outreach calls. Include quantitative data such as the number of calls attempted on a given date, numbers of parents you spoke to, and the number of referrals you gave to families when they expressed a need. You also can track the types of needs, if desired. Document specific needs mentioned by families and the plan for connecting families to resources if they need more help than you were able to provide. Note any special circumstances that indicate more frequent outreach may be needed.

Anticipate communication barriers that may arise and have a plan to address them – Outreach should be conducted in the preferred language of the parent or caregiver. If a staff member fluent in the preferred language is not available to conduct outreach, consider making use of interpreters. It is important that the parent or caregiver feels she/he can speak freely without having any concerns about English language proficiency. Have a plan for how you will respond if the call goes to voicemail. Is there a call-back number you can leave as part of a message?

Be consistent - It is important to be consistent and reliable in reaching out to families, e.g., if you say you will call a family once a week, call the family once a week. If you say you will call back with the number for a resource someone asked for, return the call in a timely manner (e.g., within 2-3 days.) If you are still looking for the information after 2 days, call back to share that update.

Use a Strengths-Based Approach - Focus on strengths, abilities, and potential rather than problems, deficits and pathologies; recognize the strengths and expertise of participants; value the capacity, skills, knowledge, connections and potential in individuals and communities. Consider and acknowledge all of the connections that might be valuable to the family (extended family, faith community, local cultural/ethnic groups) and include use of these informal supports in any discussion about navigating the challenges of this time.

For example, if a parent or caregiver says she is worried about having enough food to feed her family, the helping professional could respond by asking what sources of support (CBO food pantries, churches) she has relied upon in the past. If the parent mentions that she has visited a local food pantry in the past, the helping professional could ask about her experience with the food pantry and if the parent has considered accessing the food pantry at this time.

Use Motivational Interviewing strategies - Ask open-ended versus yes/no questions, when possible; affirm client strengths and coping strategies as they come up in conversation; demonstrate reflective listening by repeating, rephrasing, paraphrasing, and reflecting questions and feelings shared; and summarizing what you are hearing to check your own understanding and to build confidence in others that they are being listened to and heard.

Sample Script for Initial Outreach



Part I, Introduction

“Hello, this is James Randolph, (position title at program/site name). Is this Mrs. Jones?”

“Mrs. Jones, staff at (organization/site name) are reaching out to all of the families with youth connected to our (site name/program) to see how families are doing, to see if we can assist with anything and to talk about what the summer/fall may look like for (organization name’s programs). Do you have a few minutes to talk?”

Part II, Assess Safety/Well-Being. Sample questions may include:

- How has your family been managing during the quarantine?
- Do you have any concerns about your family? (Note: This does not have to be asked directly as concerns can be inferred from information shared by the parent/caregiver.) *(refer to resources)*
- What concerns do you have about having sufficient food or money (for rent, utilities, prescriptions, etc.) to meet your family’s needs? (Note: This info may also be inferred from information the parent/caregiver shares.) *(refer to resources)*
- Are there local non-profit organizations, community groups, or faith communities that are or could be a source of support for you at this time? *If so, encourage the parent to reach out to their point of contact to communicate current needs.*
- What has been the hardest part of the quarantine for your family and for you personally?
- How do you think COVID-19 and the quarantine have impacted your kids?
- How are you taking care of your mental health and physical safety at this time? *(refer to resources, as applicable)*
- How is distance learning going for your daughter/son? What is working well? What challenges have you run into? *(refer to resources, as applicable)*

Part III, Talk About the Future

Share proposed plans for summer programs and ask if the parent has any questions or concerns.

What concerns would you have about your son/daughter participating in programs as I have described them?

Part IV, Closing, Summarizing, Setting Expectations about Future Contact

Thank the parent for taking the time to have the conversation and for sharing any concerns and/or suggestions. Summarize stated concerns, resources shared, supports the family has mentioned, and share any plan for future communication. Let them know how they can get in touch with you.

Youth Who May Need Additional Support

It is important to recognize that some youth may need additional support (more frequent communication, connection to professional supports), including youth with:

- a history of anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation,
- learning and attention disorders
- o parents that may have lost jobs or income
- o loved ones particularly vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus
- o a loved one working as a healthcare worker or in another occupation where they are exposed to the virus or are being asked to respond in an intense way
- o less supervision because of caregivers' work
- o families experiencing homelessness

Guidance for On-going Outreach, Communication and Support for Youth

While communication with youth will look different in a virtual setting than in a center, the basic principles of safety and best practices for e-mentoring and youth programs still apply. Those principles include:

Obtain parental permission prior to communicating virtually with program participants. Outline the plan for the communication. How will it take place? How frequently? Who will be communicating with the participant? How will any concerns be shared with the parent?

Assist parents and youth in utilizing safety features available in virtual communication platforms such as private links and turning off GPS functions.

Ensure any virtual communication between staff and youth under age 13 complies with the Children's Online Privacy and Protection Act (COPPA), which protects personally identifiable information.

Equity Considerations

COVID-19 is a *collective trauma* because it is an unexpected, stress-inducing event experienced by many people at the same time. It is an uncommon trauma in that the professional helpers are facing the same trauma as the people they seek to help. While self-care for practitioners is always recommended, the need for effective self-care strategies is of paramount importance at this time. Trauma of any kind threatens people’s sense of safety, may seem to sever the ties that bind community members to one another, and can diminish feelings of optimism and hope for the future. Trauma such as a pandemic can also serve to exacerbate and make more visible systemic inequities that existed prior to the pandemic and may result in certain groups of people being disproportionately impacted by the pandemic as well as the community response to it.

AREAS THAT MAY BE IMPACTED	EXAMPLES
INCOME	Decrease in income due to loss of employment or reduced hours and/or an inability to access benefits and financial assistance programs
HOUSING	Threat of eviction or utility cut-off due to non-payment
FOOD	Less income available to purchase food, families may have to travel farther to compete with others for limited food resources
CHILD CARE & RECREATION PROGRAMS	Families may not have ready access to reliable, safe, and affordable childcare/recreation programs to ensure supervision of younger kids so parents can work
SCHOOL	Students may not be able to access distance learning due to not having appropriate technology and/or not having Internet access. With schools closed, students and parents do not have ready access to natural supports such as teachers, counselors, coaches, extracurricular activities, etc.
INFORMATION	Parents with limited English proficiency may not have ready access to information in languages other than English
TRANSPORTATION	Public transportation may be unavailable due to closures; families may lack funds to purchase gas or maintain car payments

The inequities may also manifest as a result of an increase in racism and stigmatization of certain groups, differential exposure to coronavirus based on living and working environments, and front-line workers facing tough choices. There may also be inequities in people’s access to supports. Through ongoing communication with program participants, organizations’ staff members have an opportunity to contribute to the core protective systems that we know can support the long-term health and wellbeing of the youth and families we serve. Providing connection to competent and caring adults who can enhance feelings of belonging and community and make connections to concrete support services, is a simple action that can have a high impact in terms of building the resilience of youth and families to come out on the other side of the pandemic without lasting negative impacts.

Professional & Program Resources

Fairfax Trauma Informed Community Network (TICN)

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/prevention/trauma-informed-community-network>

Fairfax Out-of-School Time Network (OSTN)

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/prevention/out-of-school-time-network>

Fairfax County Opportunity Neighborhoods

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/prevention/opportunity-neighborhoods>

For More Information

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https://www.integration.samhsa.gov/MI_Annual_Review_of_Clinical_Psych.pdf.

Legal Aid Justice Center. (2020, April 17). Emergency Resources – Northern Virginia. Retrieved from:

<https://www.justice4all.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/English.Emergency-Resources-in-Northern-VA.pdf>

Mentor Virginia. Resources for eMentoring. Retrieved from: <https://mentorva.org/covid-19-resources/>

NAACP. (2020, April 3). Coronavirus Equity Considerations. Retrieved from: <https://naacp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus-Equity-Considerations.pdf>.

Northern Virginia Health Foundation (2020, May). The COVID-19 Pandemic in Northern Virginia: A Plan for Marginalized Communities. Retrieved from: https://novahealthfdn.org/wp-content/uploads/covid-19_plan_for_marginalized_communities.pdf.

Stoerkel, Erika. (2020, April 23). What is a Strength Based Approach? Retrieved from:

<https://positivepsychology.com/strengths-based-interventions/>.

Teaching Tolerance. (2020, March 23). A Trauma-Informed Approach to Teaching through Coronavirus.

Retrieved from: <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/a-trauma-informed-approach-to-teaching-through-coronavirus>.

Resources

Basis Needs Information and Referral to Local Community-Based Organizations

Fairfax County Coordinated Services Planning (CSP)703-222-0880
Fairfax County Human Services Resource Guide (HSRG)..... <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hsrg/>

Mental Health

Emergency 911 or go to the nearest hospital ER
CSB Merrifield Center Emergency Services.....703-573-5679
Non-emergency
CSB Entry & Referral703-383-8500
Crisis Link Hotline.....703-527-4077
Crisis Link Text Option..... Text CONNECT to 85511
Lifeline Crisis Chat Option [SuicidePreventionLifeline.org/chat](https://www.suicidpreventionlifeline.org/chat)
Fairfax County Public Schools Mental Wellness Consultations .. request consultation <https://bit.ly/3gtHAEf>
(up to a 30-minute consultation for parents of students and middle/high school students)
MyStrength Application (wellness program) <https://appv2.mystrength.com/go/ffccsb/csbcommunity>
Click on 'Sign Up', and enter access code 'CSBCommunity'

COVID-19 Information for Fairfax County Residents

Fairfax County COVID-19 website (English) <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/Covid19>
Fairfax County COVID-19 website (Spanish) <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/covid19/spanish/>
Fairfax County COVID-19 Language Portal <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/covid19/language-portal>
Subscribe to text updates (English) Text FFXCOVID to 888777
Subscribe to text updates (Spanish) Text FFXCOVIDESP to 888777

Safety Concerns for Self or Others

Fairfax County Child Protective Services (CPS) Hotline703-324-7400
Fairfax County Adult Protective Services (APS) Hotline.....703-324-7450
Fairfax County Domestic and Sexual Violence Services (DSVS) Hotline703-360-7273
National Domestic Violence HotlineText LOVEIS to 22522 or chat at [Rainn.org](https://www.rainn.org)

Financial Assistance

Basic needs (housing-related expenses, food, prescriptions, transportation, etc.)703-222-0880
Benefits855-635-4370
Visit [CommonHelp](https://www.commonhelp.virginia.gov/) to apply for or read more about:..... <https://www.commonhelp.virginia.gov/>
Assistance with Child Care, Heat/Cooling Expenses, Health Care Coverage, Supplemental Nutrition
Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Cash Assistance for Families (TANF)
Fairfax County Self Sufficiency Office703-324-7500
DFSMYCase@FairfaxCounty.gov
Food Resources for Families <https://www.fcps.edu/news/coronavirus-update-food-resources>

Parenting Support

Fairfax County DFS Parent Support Line703-324-7720
BuildingStrongerFamilies@fairfaxcounty.gov

Schools

Fairfax County Ombudsman (helper)571-423-4014

Fairfax County Public Schools Parent Info Language Lines

Amharic.....571-423-4957

Arabic.....571-423-4952

Chinese.....571-423-4953

Farsi.....571-423-4954

Korean.....571-423-4951

Spanish.....571-423-4950

Urdu571-423-4955

Vietnamese571-423-4956

Internet Service Providers (offering special discounts due to COVID-19)

COX Connect2Compete: <https://www.cox.com/residential/internet/connect2compete.html>
.....855-222-3252

ComCast Internet Essentials: <https://internetessentials.com/>855-846-8376

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Please send comments, questions and suggestions to NCS-Prevention@FairfaxCounty.gov.