



Family Engagement Newsletter

How the COVID-19 Pandemic Can Impact Mental Health

By Wendy Overturf

Though the physical effects of COVID-19 have generally not been as severe for most children when compared to adults, the mental health impacts of the pandemic are just as severe. That is according to a panel of experts who recently participated in a U.S. News & World Report webinar on "[Managing Children's Mental Health: A Pediatric Hospital Imperative.](#)" A [study](#) by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) from March 2020 to October 2020 found that the proportion of emergency department visits related to mental health increased 24 percent for children aged 5-11 and spiked 31 percent among adolescents aged 12-17, compared to the same period the previous year.

The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) has stated that the "crisis has hit children on multiple fronts. Many have experienced social isolation during the lockdowns, family stress, a breakdown of routines, and anxiety about the virus. School closures, remote teaching, and learning interruptions have set many back at school. Some parents have had job and income losses, creating financial instability." All of these can increase parental stress as well. Stress can take many forms. Parents should be alert to these symptoms in their children as well as in themselves.

- Mood swings and intense feelings, including fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones, sadness, anger, guilt, and disorientation
- Denial, detachment, or avoidance
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Irritability, strained relationships and conflicts with family, friends, and co-workers
- Changes in your normal sleep or eating patterns
- Soreness, nausea, head, or stomachache
- Elevated breathing, heartbeats, and blood pressure
- Sensitivity to unusual sounds, smells, and changes in your environment
- A worsening of preexisting chronic or mental health conditions
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs



Schools and school personnel also have a responsibility in meeting children’s mental health needs. On April 9, 2021, the U.S. Department of Education released the [COVID-19 Handbook, Volume 2: Roadmap to Reopening Safely and Meeting All Students' Needs](#) to provide additional strategies for safely reopening all of America's schools. Building off of [Volume 1: Strategies for Safely Reopening Elementary and Secondary Schools](#), which focused on health and safety measures that schools can use to successfully implement the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's \(CDC\) K-12 Operational Strategy](#), Volume 2 of the handbook focuses on research-based strategies. These strategies address the social, emotional, mental health, and academic impacts of the pandemic on students, educators, and staff, such as how to address any potential anxiety or depression some may face because of the COVID-19 pandemic after nearly a year of remote learning.

One of the biggest drivers of child-well being during the COVID-19 pandemic is how parents are functioning, according to a survey of nearly 500 parents with children ages 8-17 that was conducted by the [Nationwide Children’s Hospital](#) in Columbus, Ohio. There are many resources that can assist parents during this time. The [COVID-19: Resilient Wisconsin](#) webpage was developed by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. The site has many strategies and resources that help foster resilience during stressful times.

Additionally, WI FACETS has partnered with [Rogers Behavioral Health](#) to offer the following webinars on Compassion Resilience. Compassion resilience "is the ability to maintain our physical, emotional and mental well-being while responding compassionately to people who are suffering."



Archived webinars on Compassion Resilience:

[Compassion Resilience: Toolkits for Schools, Health Care, Community & Caregivers](#)

Self-Care Snapshot Series: [Recognizing Fatigue](#) [Compassion in Action](#) [Self-Compassion](#) [Our Locus of Control](#)

Complete the series by registering for these upcoming webinars:

[Compassionate Boundaries](#) [Expectations and Affirmations](#) [Wellness Strategies](#) [Connecting to Our Purpose](#)

Statewide Events

Children's Mental Health Awareness Week

Mental health looks different for everyone. Listen to Wisconsin youth as they share their connection to mental health through art and story.

Learn more: [Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health on Facebook](#)

Wisconsin Youth Virtual Art Gallery,
Tuesday, May 4: 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm
Teen Mental Health Virtual Panel,
Thursday, May 6: 6:00 pm – 7:15 pm

Circles of Life

Wisconsin's annual conference for families who have children with disabilities and the providers and other professionals who support them. Virtual event.

Parent registration fee waived.

Date: May 6-7, 2021

Endless Possibilities 2021:

Successful Transitions

Save the Date: August 6, 2021

This conference, coordinated by WI FACETS, and other family support/disability organizations allows parents and professionals affordable access to gain knowledge from experts to enhance their ability to better support students with disabilities.

Keynote: Creating a Roadmap for Inclusive IEPs and Transition

Keynote speaker: [Dan Habib](#), is an award-winning filmmaker at the University of New Hampshire's Institute on Disability.

Virtual Transition Parents in Partnership (TPIP)

These trainings will take place virtually via Zoom beginning this fall.

TPIP will prepare families for the transition process for their youth (ages 14 -21) with disabilities in the areas of employment, education, living and health.

Youth in Partnership with Parents for Empowerment (YiPPE)

YiPPE is an opportunity for youth with disabilities and their parents to learn about the transition process in a unique way while building real life skills in the areas of employment, education, living and health. Information on what parents need to know for transitioning their child from school to postsecondary options and an opportunity to connect with other families. Fall events in Green Bay and Milwaukee.

Click on this [link](#) to view training options, dates, and registration information for both of these no cost events.



At Home Learning Strategies

Early Literacy Activity Calendar: May 2021

The May calendar is filled with crafts, math and science activities, book suggestions, and songs to celebrate National Space Day, Clean Up Your Room Day, National Tap Dance Day, and much more. Each day includes a fun activity that will help your child build pre-reading skills. Activities are color-coded by skill.



Children's Activity Calendar: May 2021

This May calendar includes educational activities, craft projects, and book suggestions that celebrate the start of spring. Discover new stories, learn about other people, try photography, and much more.



May is National Pet Month

National Pet Month is a celebration of the benefits that pets bring to people's lives - and vice versa. It is observed annually in the United States in May. Practice counting and writing numbers with this [Counting Cats and Dogs Math Puzzle Worksheet](#).

Cinco de Mayo- May 5, 2021

Cinco de Mayo is a celebration of Mexican heritage, culture, and pride. [PBS Learning Media](#) offers a very short history of Cinco de Mayo. Check out this [Cinco de Mayo Read Aloud for Kids](#). Discover how and why we celebrate Cinco de Mayo from Mexico to the USA... with classic costumes, mariachi music, parades, and food.



Mother's Day-May 9, 2021

If you are looking for an easy [Mother's Day craft](#) that will be cherished for many years – this is definitely one to add to your list. It is mess free with only glue sticks and paper required. This would make a great keepsake for a mom, grandparent, or any other significant woman in your child's life.

National Chocolate Chip Day-May 15, 2021

Have you ever wondered how a single ingredient would change a recipe?

Check out the [history of chocolate chips](#). If it were not for one curious baker, it would be hard to imagine where we would be without the invention of chocolate chips. Chocolate Chip Day is not just about cookies, it is about all the things you can include chocolate chips in! Pancakes, muffins, pudding, ice cream, granola bars, pies, these are just a few of the wonderful creations you can add them to. Celebrate National Chocolate Chip Day by making one of these [recipes](#) with your child. Following recipes together is a great family activity and also helps children with reading and measuring skills. Also check out this read aloud, [The Last Chocolate Chip Cookie by Jamie Rix](#).



Memorial Day-May 31, 2021



Help your child learn the history and meaning of this day by viewing this video on "[What Is Memorial Day Video for Kids & Preschoolers.](#)" Memorial Day is a great opportunity to help your child practice writing. [These Memorial Writing Prompts](#) include prompts for all age groups. They will help your child think about Memorial Day, and why we honor, reflect, remember and celebrate it.

MOLLY OF DENALI™

Informational text and Alaska Native culture form the basis of the groundbreaking MOLLY OF DENALI™ series and its educational resources. The MOLLY OF DENALI™ collection offers videos, digital games, and activities. Set in a rural Alaskan village, and featuring the adventures of Molly, her family, and friends, MOLLY OF DENALI™ models the many ways that children can access and create informational text in their daily lives. At the same time, the stories are infused with Alaska Native values, history, traditions, language, as well as contemporary life.



*Is this newsletter a useful resource for you in your home and/or in your work?
Please complete this brief [survey](#) and let us know. Thank you!*



Online Resources



[Center for Parent Information and Resources \(CPIR\)](#)

The website has links to organizations that can assist in a crisis, quick fact sheets, information about insurance, and school-based interventions. The website also has links to organizations that support specific disorders.

[Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction \(DPI\)](#)

This website has a multitude of links to resources useful for schools working to improve mental health among students. Find eligibility criteria for [Services for Children with an Emotional Behavioral Disability](#).

[Wisconsin School Mental Health Framework](#)

The Wisconsin School Mental Health Framework provides key elements to implement comprehensive school mental health systems in districts and schools across our state. While the specific model used may vary between communities, the foundational elements must be in place to foster and sustain these critical school mental health systems. This framework is designed to integrate mental health and wellness supports into a multilevel system of supports (MLSS).

[Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools Center](#)

The Wisconsin Safe & Healthy Schools Training & Technical Assistance Center builds the capacity of Wisconsin public school districts to implement programs in prevention and intervention of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse, mental health, and promote school safety to reduce barriers to learning.

[National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)

The National Alliance on Mental Illness's (NAMI) support and public education efforts are focused on educating America about mental illness, offering resources to those in need, and insisting that mental illness become a high national priority. NAMI offers an array of peer education and training programs, initiatives, and services for individuals, family members, health care providers and the general public.

[Wisconsin Family Ties](#)

Wisconsin Family Ties provides support, education, training and advocacy regarding children experiencing social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health problems. They have staff who are located regionally throughout the state. Their Facebook page has many links to articles related to mental health needs.

[Suicide Prevention](#)

This web page on the DPI website provides information and resources for youth suicide prevention to school staff, administrators, school boards, parents, and other members of the school community.

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities. The website has an abundance of resources related to mental health concerns.

[National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health \(NFFCMH\)](#)

The website has a wealth of resources for parents on specific mental health diagnoses, as well as other topics related to children's health and family involvement in systems that impact children.

[NAMI Wisconsin](#)

The mission of NAMI is to improve the quality of life of those affected by mental illness and to promote recovery. The website has many resources related to mental health as well as links to educational programs and support groups.



[11 Things Special Needs Parents Need to Survive and Thrive](#)

When you are the parent of a child with special needs, every aspect of parenting is magnified. Playdates become complex projects requiring diplomacy, support, and vast quantities of time and patience. Trips to the doctor are frequent, expensive, difficult, and fraught with worry. Ordinary shopping excursions are strewn with potential disasters and pitfalls.

With so much more to think about, worry about, plan for, and manage, special needs parents really do have... special needs.

Here is a partial list that may sound familiar to moms and dads who are coping with the ups and downs of life with a child who, for whatever reason, is considered to be "special."

More Time ~ Energy Reserves ~ Money for Critical Expenses ~ Adult Friendships ~ A Sitter for Date Night ~ Reassurance ~ An Emotional Outlet ~ Exercise and Nutrition ~ Compassionate Family and Friends ~ Resources and Guidance

How You Can Help

If you are the friend, sibling, mom, or dad of a parent of a child with special needs you may be wondering "What can I do to help?" The good news is, there are many ways you can make a difference without changing your life or overwhelming yourself and your family.

Here are some suggestions: Avoid Pity ~ Be Supportive and Positive ~ Get a Clue ~ Give Siblings a Special Treat ~ Listen ~ Offer to Babysit ~ Pick up the Tab ~ Set an example of Inclusion ~ Take a Walk

Read the full [article](#).
Source: [verywell](#) family

WI FACETS



Event title links to information & registration for WI FACETS FREE workshops & webinars:

To register by phone: 877-374-0511
All webinars 12:00—1:00 PM
(unless otherwise noted)

[WSEMS: Mediation](#)

Presenter: Nissan Bar-Lev, CESA 7 and Courtney Salzer, WI FACETS
Date: May 3, 2021

[Getting and Keeping Your First Job](#)

Presenter: Matthew Zellmer, WI FACETS
Date: May 4, 2021

[Post-Secondary Transition Plan \(PTP\)](#)

Presenter: LaNae Jabas, TIG
Date: May 5, 2021

[Compassion Resilience – Self Care Snapshot: Compassionate Boundaries](#)

Presenter: Emily Jonesberg, Rogers InHealth
Date: May 10, 2021 12pm-12:30pm

[IEP 10: Parent Rights in the IEP Process](#)

Presenter: Jan Serak, Serak Consulting
Date: May 11, 2021, 12pm-12:30pm

[Project Search](#)

Presenters: Theresa Brugger and Danielle Peterson, Goodwill
Date: May 12, 2021

[Writing the IEP – Part 1 \(Spanish\)](#)

Date: May 13, 2021
Training in Spanish - To register, contact Nelsinia Ramos, nramos@wifacets.org

[Self-Directed College & Career Ready IEP Guide](#)

Presenter: Jen Hilgendorf, CESA 1
Date: May 19, 2021

[Supporting Literacy at Home During the Summer](#)

Presenter: Jan Serak, Serak Consulting
Date: May 20, 2021

[IEP 11: Useful Resources in the IEP Process](#)

Presenter: Jan Serak, Serak Consulting
Date: May 25, 2021, 12pm-12:30pm

[Writing the IEP – Part 2 \(Spanish\)](#)

Date: May 27, 2021
Training in Spanish - To register, contact Nelsinia Ramos, nramos@wifacets.org

Learning
Opportunities



Reminders from Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI)

Considerations for Students Who Will Be Graduating with a Regular High School Diploma or Reached the Age of 21 During the 2020-21 School Year

As local educational agencies are conducting individualized education program (IEP) team meetings for those students who will be graduating with a regular high school diploma or reaching the age of 21 during the 2020-21 school year, attention must be given as to whether compensatory or recovery services are required due to the effects of the pandemic. In considering the need for compensatory or recovery services, the IEP team should examine the student's progress towards achieving their annual IEP goals for the 2020-21 school year. IEP teams should pay particular attention to matters associated with the student's transition to postsecondary education or training, employment, and independent living. Compensatory or recovery services should be designed to address any lack of expected progress due to the effects of the pandemic. These decisions must be individualized.

Additional Services

As directed in [Information Update Bulletin 20.01](#) (May 2020), all individualized education program (IEP) teams should have now completed a review to determine whether the student requires additional services as the result of the closure of schools to in-person instruction between March 18, 2020, and June 30, 2020. In implementing additional services, LEAs (typically the school district) must ensure such services are individualized, provided in a manner compatible with the student's disability-related needs, and consistent with the student's IEP. When these services will be provided must also be determined in consultation with the parents. If, for example, the student will not be available to receive services during the summer, the local educational agency must ensure that these services are provided at a different time.

Research to Read



Mental health considerations for children & adolescents in COVID-19 Pandemic

Imran, N., Zeshan, M., & Pervaiz, Z. (2020). Mental health considerations for children & adolescents in COVID-19 Pandemic. *Pakistan journal of medical sciences*, 36(COVID19-S4), S67–S72. <https://doi.org/10.12669/pjms.36.COVID19-S4.2759>

Article Link

Children are not indifferent to the significant psychological impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. They experience fears, uncertainties, substantial changes to their routines, physical and social isolation alongside high level of parental stress. Understanding their emotions and responses is essential to properly address their needs during this pandemic. In this article, the authors highlight children's vulnerability, provide an overview of common symptoms of distress in different age groups, and summarize the interventions and resources available to promote child mental health and wellbeing during these challenging times. They advocate that prioritizing mental health including child and adolescent mental health is an essential component of any universal, community led response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

This monthly update is provided by the Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training & Support (WI FACETS) to share statewide information regarding parent leadership and family involvement. *If you would like to receive this monthly update or if you would like to have your name removed from the distribution list, contact: Wendy Overturf at woverturf@wifacets.org.*



Contributions to the Newsletter

Upcoming newsletter topics: June: ADD/ADHD

July: Speech & Language

August: Other Health Impairment

To submit contributions of articles, events, or resources, you may use the attached word document. Send submissions to woverturf@wifacets.org. If you are unable to access the form, you may send the information in an email.

Material appropriate for the monthly newsletter include web links to sources of family involvement/parent leadership resources, advertisements for statewide trainings for parents, youth or parent/educator audiences, information about statewide parent agencies, recent research pertaining to family engagement, and family engagement success articles.

***The WI FACETS Family Engagement E-Newsletter
can be found online at:***

<https://servingongroups.org/resources>



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