CONNECTED CAREGIVING

SUPPORTING CHILD CARE PROVIDERS AND FAMILIES DURING MICHIGAN'S REOPENING

What to expect from children

While returning to normal routines, children may regress in communication, potty training, sleeping and ability to cope with challenges and feelings. Expect to see more anxiety, defiance, dysregulation, even aggression. This can be frustrating for caregivers and will require a high level of patience and consistency to teach and reinforce preferred behaviors. Be mindful that some children have lost loved ones.

How to support children

Be flexible in the daily schedule and curriculum, but create consistency and routine.

- Teach mindfulness
- Encourage comfort items from home
- Be creative in social distancing
  - Increase free play and small groups
  - Spend more time outside
- Share social stories and read books about grief
- Dance, sing, have art time and be creative.
- Offer healthy snacks practice good hand washing

Find mindfulness resources on page 2.

Make time for play!

Play is important to learning. Play can:

- Relieve stress
- Reduce challenging behaviors
- Promote calmness and creativity
- Build relationships between children and adults
- Help heal emotional hurt or distress

Encourage families to play at home too!

It starts with you!

Taking care of our children starts with YOU! You cannot give what you do not have. Helping your children learn about their feelings and how to manage them in healthy ways starts with you being able to do it first.

Schedule time every day to check in with yourself and reflect on what you need in this moment, hour, day.

Ask yourself:

- Where can I add self-care into my life?
- Have I eaten something nutritious in the past three hours?
- Am I hydrated?
- Have I paused and taken five deep breaths?
- Have I said something gentle and loving to myself in the last hour?
- Have I spent time in nature in the last three days?
- Have I engaged in an activity to energize me?

What to expect from parents and families

Families may present with decreased trust, increased anxiety and fear about separating from their child, in addition to health and safety concerns. Some families may be experiencing loss and grief of loved ones or may be eager to have a break from their children.

How to support parents and families

Patience, empathy and a focus on relationship are your greatest tools! When parents' struggles seem to be beyond what you can support through empathy and listening, offer community resources to those who need more intensive supports. These might include mental health or substance use services, community support groups, developmental resources, and more. Mental health resources are available at Michigan.gov/StayWell.

What to expect from childcare providers

All of this can be incredibly overwhelming for the caregivers, teachers, staff, and directors who are working each day. Many providers and staff have had direct experiences of loss and grief in their personal life. Increased feelings of stress, anxiety and frustration are normal. Many continue to be fearful and anxious about unanswered questions in both work and personal lives.

How to support childcare providers

Directors and leaders can intentionally create time and space for their teachers and staff to debrief, regulate themselves, and practice coping skills to remain calm when caring for children.

- Offer break rooms for staff to utilize to recharge their batteries before, during, and after work.
- Staff may need additional breaks throughout the day for opportunities to take care of themselves and be emotionally available to the children.
- Sharing kind words of gratitude and acknowledgment of individual caregivers can make all the difference in someone's day. Simple acts of recognition and appreciation help people feel seen, validated and valued.
- Share ways your facility is protecting the staff's safety and well-being.

Tools and Training

Early Childhood Investment Corporation
517-371-9000

Zero to Thrive

MiRegistry
833-386-9238

Community Resources

Local Resource Centers
877-614-7328

Community Mental Health Service Providers

Mindfulness Resources

- GoNoodle
- Cosmic Kids
- Sesame Street Communities
- Headspace
- Crim Fitness Foundation

Mindfulness Activities

- Coloring
- Sensory Play
- Journaling
- Simple Activities

STAY WELL
Michigan.gov/StayWell