

# COVID-19 Assistance for Mental Health, Intellectual / Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services

Trillium Health Resources continues to monitor the spread of the new Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) with guidance provided by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and [North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services \(DHHS\)](#). We are committed to providing education on maintaining the safety and well-being of our communities to our members and the general public using CDC and NC DHHS recommendations. We strongly encourage our members and providers to continue to review the links for accurate and up-to-date information on the COVID-19.

The outbreak of COVID-19 is likely stressful for many people, both those who are in isolation at home and out serving in our communities. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming, and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Please use the information below to help address any concerns that may arise in the next few months.

Health Departments and other agencies can contact Trillium's 24-Hour Access to Care Line at 1-877-685-2415 to inquire about available services and [local providers](#).

## MENTAL HEALTH AND COPING DURING COVID-19

People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include:

- ◆ **People who have preexisting mental health conditions, including problems with substance use.**
- ◆ **Children who may not understand the full context.**
- ◆ **People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like doctors and other health care providers, or first responders.**

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. The emotional impact of an emergency can depend on a person's characteristics and experiences, social and economic circumstances, and the availability of local resources. People can become more distressed if they see repeated upsetting images and reports about the outbreak in the media.

Additional information and resources on mental health care can be found at the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) website or by calling their Disaster Distress

Hotline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746.

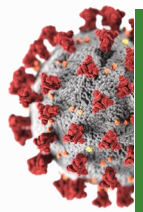
Reactions during an infectious disease outbreak can include:

- ◆ **Fear and worry about your own health status and exposure to COVID-19**
- ◆ **Changes in sleep or eating patterns**
- ◆ **Difficulty sleeping or concentrating**
- ◆ **Worsening of chronic health problems**
- ◆ **Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs**

People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment plans during an emergency and monitor for any new symptoms. Coping with these feelings and getting help when you need it will help you, your family, and your community recover from a disaster. Connect with family, friends, and others in your community. Take care of yourself and each other, and know when and how to seek help.

Many recovery and support communities are offering online meetings during this time, including AA and NA.

- ♦ [AA Online meetings.](#)
- ♦ [NA Online meetings.](#)



## CHILDREN AND STRESS DURING COVID-19



Children react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

Not all children respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for in children:

- ♦ **Excessive crying and irritation**

- ♦ **Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (e.g., toileting accidents or bedwetting)**
- ♦ **Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits**
- ♦ **Irritability and "acting out" behaviors**
- ♦ **Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past**
- ♦ **Unexplained headaches or body pain**
- ♦ **Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs**

There are many things you can do to support your child:

- ♦ **Take time to talk with your child about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and share facts about COVID-19 in a way that your child can understand.**
- ♦ **Reassure your child that they are safe and let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Limit your child's exposure to media coverage of the event.**
- ♦ **Help your child to have a sense of structure. Once it is safe to return to school or child care, help them return to their regular activity.**
- ♦ **Be a role model; take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members and rely on your social support system.**

For more information, please visit the [CDC's website](#) or [resources from the Child Mind Institute](#).

## SHARING INFORMATION FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS WITH INTELLECTUAL/DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Several resources are available to assist with communicating the somewhat complex nature of the Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic. We have shared below some ways to explain this information to anyone with autism or an intellectual/developmental disability.

- ♦ [COVID-19 Information By and For People with Disabilities](#)
- ♦ [Autism Society Coronavirus](#)
- ♦ [Staying Structured and Engaged in this Challenging Time](#)

**The My Learning Campus, a free website operated by Trillium, shares online trainings and tip sheets related to stress and coping:**

[www.MyLearningCampus.org](http://www.MyLearningCampus.org)

