

Summary

Panelists:

- **Shawna Rader Kelly**, EdS, School Psychologist and Educational Consultant, Bozeman Public Schools, MT
- **Libby Kuffner Nealis**, MSSW, Policy Consultant and Parent, MD
- **Chandrai Jackson-Saunders**, MEd, CAGS, School Psychologist, Washington, DC Public Schools
- **Helen Westmoreland**, EdM, Director of Family Engagement, National Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

Moderator: Kelly Vaillancourt Strobach, PhD, NASP Director of Policy and Advocacy

Below is a summary of the key points addressed in this webinar.

Parents are struggling to balance work and home life in the face of school closures.

- Parents need support in how to talk to their children about the pandemic.
- Parents are being encouraged to have age- and fact-based conversations with their children.
- Parents are struggling with the real challenges involved in the nuts and bolts of remote learning.
- Parents are encouraged to do their best and make the most of what is currently available.
- Parents need support in how to best respond to the overall social–emotional support and well-being needs of their children.

Parents of a child with a disability need more communication about what the school is able to offer and the plans for meeting the IEP.

- The first priority in most districts has been rolling out technology to students for remote learning and ensuring basic needs are met, such as meals and healthcare for children.
- Parents of students with disabilities need more information and personal contacts about how their children’s IEP goals will be met and supported. School psychologists can be specific about what services are possible and what needs to be modified or adapted.
- Depending on the needs of the child, there may be behavior challenges going on. Parents need support in responding to these behaviors.
- School psychologists have the opportunity to be the liaison between the school and the parent of the student with a disability. Establishing open communication and helping to solve problems in this situation needs to be a top priority.

School psychologists need to adapt their services to meet the needs of children and families, especially students with disabilities.

- Be flexible and responsive by providing direct services to students in a virtual format. Keep check-ins with students going as we know their needs best and can monitor their progress.
- Be a resource to families, teachers, and school leaders via consultation and collaboration. Maintain documentation of services.
- Adapt services and provide more support to parents (e.g., connect parents to resources in the community).
- Be proactive and reach out to families to see what support is needed to meet their child’s educational and social–emotional needs. Don’t just react and wait for permission to offer services. Make contact even if you aren’t sure what the full scope of services is.

- Communicate and reach out to parents by letting them know they are not alone in this.
- Help parents connect to mental health resources that are available through the school and in the community.
- Make sure parents are aware of warning signs of anxiety or depression (e.g., provide written guidance) and understand what to do if they have concerns for their child's mental health and well-being.

Parent–Teacher Associations (PTAs) are actively involved in supporting students and schools during the pandemic.

- PTAs are involved in promoting family engagement and, in some places, are developing equity maps that look at who is in touch with this family and how their needs are being supported.
- Many PTAs are offering their communities supplies and resources. For example, they may be involved in meal delivery programs, distributed bags of chalk, or other school supplies that students need at home.
- Review [PTA.org/COVID19](https://www.pta.org/COVID19) for resources that can be used with families.
- School psychologists can support their local PTAs in this work. If your school does not have a PTA, you can go to [PTA.org](https://www.pta.org) for information on how to start one.

School psychologists can help lead efforts to connect schools and families during the pandemic.

- This is an opportunity to distinguish ourselves and demonstrate our value as leaders. School psychologists need to reach out and engage parents individually and on a large scale like with PTAs.
- School psychologists need to let parents know we are still advocating on behalf of their children.
- Communication is critical, and reaching out to families to let them know you are available is paramount.
- Help families adjust expectations in the immediate and plan for the long term.
- Help families respond to the uncertainty. Offer concrete and specific activities to do with students. Offer consultation and supports to help parents respond to student academic and mental health needs.
- Provide services that help families and schools remain engaged with one another.

Key Messages

- Stay student-focused! What you do to help parents, helps kids.
- School psychologists need to reach out to parents to discuss student needs.
- Be a resource and connect parents to resources, services, and supports.
- Listen and communicate.
- Promote a life balance for parents and students: school/work time, family time, care for self, and virtual social time with others.
- Encourage parents! They are doing the best they can in unprecedented circumstances.
- Be a consultant.
- Advocate for kids and their families.
- Lead, serve, and inspire!

NASP Resources

NASP COVID-19 Resource Center

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/covid-19-resource-center>

Anxiety: Helping Handout for School and Home

<https://www.nasponline.org/x55101.xml>

Care for Caregivers: Tips for Families and Educators

<https://www.nasponline.org/x55067.xml>

Countering COVID-19 Stigma and Racism: Tips for Parents and Caregivers

<https://www.nasponline.org/x55066.xml>

- Depression: Helping Handout for Home
<https://www.nasponline.org/x55105.xml>
- Engagement and Motivation: Helping Handout for Home
<https://www.nasponline.org/x55100.xml>
- Grief: Helping Handout for Home
<https://www.nasponline.org/x55106.xml>
- Sleep Problems: Helping Handouts for Home
<https://www.nasponline.org/x55108.xml>
- Suicidal Thinking and Threats: Helping Handout for Home
<https://www.nasponline.org/x55107.xml>
- Talking With Children about COVID-19: A Parent Resource
<https://www.nasponline.org/x55033.xml>
- Using Praise and Rewards Wisely—Helping Handout for School and Home
<https://www.nasponline.org/x55109.xml>

External Resources

- National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) COVID-19 Resources
<https://www.pta.org/home/family-resources/coronavirus-information>
- Action for Healthy Kids Resources for Families During COVID-19
<https://www.actionforhealthykids.org/resources-for-schools-and-families-during-covid-19-coronavirus/>
- CDC Manage Anxiety & Stress
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
- CDC K–12 Schools and Childcare programs FAQs for Administrators, Teachers, Parents
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools-faq.html>
- Child Mind Institute Supporting Families Website
<https://childmind.org/coping-during-covid-19-resources-for-parents/#resources>
- NCLD A Parent’s Guide to Virtual Learning
<https://www.nclld.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/A-Parents-Guide-to-Virtual-Learning-4-Actions-To-Improve-your-Childs-Experience-with-Online-Learning.pdf>
- NCTSN Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope With COVID-19
https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/outbreak_factsheet_1.pdf
- SAMHSA Coping With Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreak
<https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma14-4885.pdf>