



## Weekly Newsletter #4

This e-newsletter has been created to try and help you and your family navigate this time of uncertainty both personally and academically. We will provide up-to-date resources and local events in this weekly newsletter. It will be sent out every Monday morning to help families and students across the state of Illinois.

April 13, 2020

### Easterseals Joliet

Issue #4: April 13th - April 17th, 2020

Inside this Issue:

- **First Section: Community Resources**
  - **Free Grab and Go Lunches**
  - **Food Pantries**
  - **Resources for Immigrant Families**
  - **Mental Health Resources**
  - **Financial Resources**
  - **Virtual Support Groups**
- **Second Section: Educational Resources**
  - **Low-Cost Internet and Computer Offers**

- International Children's Digital Library
- **Third Section: Weekly Activity Schedules**
  - Behavioral Health and Social Wellness
  - Developmental Therapy
  - Occupational Therapy & Physical Therapy
  - Physical Therapy- Gross Motor Ideas
  - Speech Language Therapy
  - Feeding Therapy
- **Contact Us**

## Community Resources: Food

*Free Grab-and-Go School District Lunches*

### **Minooka School District 111**

Lunches for MCHS free and reduced students will be available for pickup on Tuesday (4/14) and Thursday (4/16):

- 9:00 am to 11:00 am at the front of South Campus at the main entrance 26655 W. Eames Street, Channahon, Illinois 60410 in the front of the building.

*\*Due to the Easter Holiday, pick up dates are different this week. After next week the pickup days will return to the original schedule of Mondays and Wednesdays: from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., each week, through Thursday, April 30th.*

---

*Contact your child's school district as many others are offering a similar service.*

---

### **Food Pantries**

[Northern Illinois Foodbank](#) will be holding 1 mobile food pantry open to the public this week in Will county:

4/16/2020 from 10:00 am to 11:30 am at Smith Family YMCA  
1350 S Briggs Street, Joliet, IL 60433

They will be holding one food pantry in Kankakee county:

4/17/2020 10:00 am-11:30 am at St. Joseph Church  
211 N. Center Ave. Bradley, IL 60915

## Community Resources for Immigrant Families

### Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights:

Their website is dedicated to information for immigrant and undocumented families.

- They offer a COVID 19 resource guide in English and Spanish, as well as legal and mental health resources.

## Mental Health Resources



## Financial Resources

### **Unemployment Benefits:**

**IDES Offices are closed to the public until further notice.**

*If you have any questions about Unemployment Insurance call IDES Customer Service Center at (800) 244-5631*

Visit [IDES website](https://www.ides.illinois.gov) to review Illinois' new policy regarding lay offs and closures due to COVID-19 to see if you qualify.

### **To apply for unemployment benefits:**

Visit [www.ides.illinois.gov](https://www.ides.illinois.gov) or call Tele-Serve at (312) 338-4337 Monday-Friday 5:00 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.

**Due to the high volume of unemployment claims there is now a filing schedule in place:**

Online Filing Schedule:

- Those with last names beginning with letters A-M will be asked to file their claims on Sundays, Tuesdays, or Thursdays.
- Those with last names beginning with letters N-Z will be asked to file their claims on Mondays, Wednesday, Fridays.

- Saturdays will be available for anyone to accommodate those who could not file during their allotted window.

#### Call Center Filing Schedule:

- Those with last names beginning with letters A-M will be asked to call on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 7:30am – 6pm.
- Those with last names beginning with letters N-Z will be asked to call on Mondays and Wednesdays between 7:30am – 6pm.
- Fridays (7:30am – 6pm) will be available for anyone to accommodate those who could not file during their allotted window.

*Online filing and claims applications will be unavailable every night from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. for daily claims processing.*

#### **United Way Worldwide's [COVID-19 Community Response and Recovery Fund](#):**

This fund is intended to help families and people in need access critical information and services like food, shelter, and more.

*You can dial 211 or follow the [link](#) to find your local number to speak with a trained professional about local assistance at any time, 24/7/365 and available in 180 languages.*

#### **Utilities and Housing:**

- All evictions in the state of Illinois are halted.
- Illinois electric, natural gas, water and wastewater utilities will not disconnect any services during the corona virus public health emergency. All late payment fees on utilities are suspended until May 1st.

## Virtual Support Groups

### **Easterseals Virtual Programs**

#### Parent's Raising Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders Support Group:

- Meets every Wednesday of the month at 6:00 pm via Zoom (this is a change just during the shelter in place order - usually meets just the second Wednesday of the month). Please email Laura at [lgardner@joliet.easterseals.com](mailto:lgardner@joliet.easterseals.com) for an invitation to join the group.

Support Group for Teens/Young Adults: This virtual support group is for older teens and young adults ages 16-25 with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This 30 minute virtual meeting is an opportunity for individuals to connect while social distancing, and talk about whatever is on their mind with a facilitator available for guidance.

- Meets every Thursday of the month from 5:00-5:30 pm via Zoom, first meeting will be this week on 4/16. Please email Morgan at [mtokarski@joliet.easterseals.com](mailto:mtokarski@joliet.easterseals.com) for an invitation to join the group.

## Educational Resources

### [Everyoneon](#)

Provides local low-cost internet service and computers.

- Enter your zip code [here](#) to find internet and computer offers near you.

### [International Children's Digital Library](#)

A digital library with free access to children's books from around the world offered in many different languages!

## Weekly Activity Schedules

This next section includes a daily activity for Monday through Friday of this week. These schedules have been created by our talented and experienced team of therapists and social workers at Easterseals Joliet!

## Behavioral Health & Social Wellness Activities

There are 5 main areas of focus in teaching children about [social wellness](#).

Those five areas are: Intellectual, Emotional, Physical, Spiritual and Social. The main thing to remember is that children learn from adults. Teaching children about wellness is as much about teaching as it is about doing.

### **Monday-** Intellectual Wellness

Intellectual Wellness encourages learning and curiosity. This idea helps to foster an environment for lifelong learning in children and it improves critical thinking skills. One way to encourage this is to limit screen time. Read books with your kids and have them use their critical thinking skills to predict what may happen next in the story. This activity sharpens children's focus and attention and fosters creativity. Try coming up with your own predictions as well and see if they agree with you or have them explain their own thoughts.

### **Tuesday-** Emotional Wellness

Stress takes a heavy toll on children. This is especially true during this unpredictable time. Children may be having a hard time adjusting to their new routines and schedules. One activity that helps to manage stress is going for a walk. Engage in conversation, playing I-spy, and using the walk as a way to connect

with them during this time can help to strengthen your relationship, and help with their physical wellness in addition.

### **Wednesday-** Physical Wellness

The physical aspect of wellness can have a great impact on almost all other aspects of wellness. Children are up to 6 times more likely to become physically active if at least one person is modelling that behavior. Use this time at home to create an obstacle course. You can make this course in your home, or outside in your yard, weather permitting. Get creative in finding materials to include in the course (old cardboard boxes, tree stumps, ottomans, lamps, pet beds, etc.) After going through it a few times, get creative in how to navigate the course, going through in a different order, or walking backwards. Have fun with it!

### **Thursday-** Spiritual Wellness

While spiritual wellness may sound a bit too deep for young children, helping a child find and understand their interests can help them to better understand themselves even if it does not necessarily match the interests of other children their age. Have your kids describe what they want to be when they grow up, or what they want to accomplish. Have them display what they want creatively, by drawing on a piece of paper, making a Lego character, making a PlayDoh character, playing dress up with costumes, whatever you can think of!

### **Friday-** Social Wellness

Social wellness is all about creating positive relationships with others. It is important for kids to know that while they are at home, not able to see all of their friends and family, there are people that live in assisted living homes, nursing homes, hospice and hospitals with visitor restrictions because it is easier for them to get sick. Talking with them about how they may be lonely and that they can do something to make them feel better! Write letters to those affected and drop them off at local locations. Or, write letters and leave them at neighbor's doors or mailboxes. Reaching out to others and thinking of their feelings throughout this time can be a helpful way to feel connected while still remaining socially distant.

## **Developmental Therapy**

### **Have a Ball...**

**Playing with balls** helps motor skills and hand-eye coordination.

The skills children learn by playing with balls will also be important once they graduate to collaborative and competitive play.

### **Monday: Ball hunt!**

You will likely still have the Easter baskets out. Kids love searching for items... instead of Easter eggs, use the balls that you have around the house. Hide the balls in different locations. This is a great gross motor activity. You can encourage kids to crawl, roll, walk, run and jump while they are looking for the balls. This activity is beneficial for working on gross motor skills, following directions and attending to an adult directed task.

### **Tuesday: Create your own ball pit.**

Household items you can use include: tent, cardboard box, laundry basket or under the bed storage crate and any balls you have around your home.

Children can talk about the ball including the size, color and texture of the ball.

Younger babies can roll the ball while sitting. They can work on holding a small ball in each hand and transferring the ball from one hand to the other. Container play can be incorporated by putting small balls (keep in mind choking hazards) in containers and removing them.

Line up the balls from smallest to biggest or match by color!

### **Wednesday: Family ball time.**

Playing catch with family members is a great indoor or outdoor activity. Toddlers can roll, throw, kick and bounce a ball. This is a great activity to incorporate learning directions. For example, "Bring me the ball!" or "Give it to mommy!" Work on social interactions and turn taking by rolling the ball back and forth.

Turn a large box on its side, and challenge the child to roll/kick a ball into the box depending on their skill level.

### **Thursday: Bowling!**

Collect clean cups or plastic bottles around the house. Have the children help stack the cups/bottles and take turns rolling the balls to knock them down!

### **Friday: Think outside the box!**

Take a large muffin tin, and have the child put the balls in each of the inserts. You can add letters, numbers or colors to the balls and muffin tin so you can work on these recognition skills and matching at the same time.

Take an old tray or box, add a piece of paper to the bottom. Top with paint. Add a ball to the box and move the tray back and forth to roll the ball and create your very own masterpiece!

## **Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy**

### **Kitchen Week**

Have some fun exploring the kitchen and doing some cooking this week!

#### **Monday**

Occupational Therapy (OT)- Today, help wash dishes, squeeze sponges, and ring out towels to make those fingers stronger.

Physical Therapy (PT)- Move magnets on the fridge up and down. Squat down low to pick them up off the group or move them low on the fridge. Reach up high and stand on your tiptoes to move the magnets high on the fridge.

## **Tuesday**

OT- Now, get ready to explore how to bake and cook. Get some tongs, spoons, and a whisk ready. You are going to be the chef for the day! Help mom and dad/or your legal guardian to stir and mix ingredients together.

PT- Step up and down on a step stool to reach items in the pantry, silverware drawer, sink, cabinets, or fridge. If safe and able, jump down from the step stool (with no objects in your hands).

## **Wednesday**

OT- Today you're the kitchen-cleaning helper! Help load the dishwasher, if you have one, and help with putting clean dishes away. Use two hands to put dishes and silverware away in cabinets and drawers. Have an adult help you to be safe and know where things go.

PT- Walk while balancing items on a spoon (cotton ball, grape, cherry tomato, crumpled up paper, etc.). To make this activity harder, navigate around obstacles in the kitchen, step up and down a step, or play red light green light while balancing the item on the spoon.

## **Thursday**

OT- Explore pots, pans, and other kitchen tools. You can look at yourself and see your reflection if you have shiny silver pots and pans! If an adult says it's OK, Continue to have more fun and make some music with your kitchen items- maybe have a sing-a-long with any other kids and adults in your house!

PT- Walk in the kitchen or around the house while carrying pots and pans. You can also put pots, pans, or containers on the floor to make an obstacle course. Examples of movements could be to jump over the lid, walk around the pot, tap the pot lightly with your foot, jump over the spatula, run and weave around items on the floor.

## **Friday**

OT- Today, with supervision, work on holding utensils. You can work on cutting food, or getting food onto your fork or spoon. Imitating this with Play-Doh is a great way to start before transitioning to real food. BAM! That is a recipe for fine motor success!

PT- Kitchen timer play! You can also use a phone timer if that works better. Set a timer when making meals. Have a five minute dance party, or hold yoga poses for 10-20 seconds. You can even do both if you would like.

Bonus: practice counting out loud to sneak some academics into play.

## **Physical Therapy- Gross Motor Movement**

**Monday-** "ice skating"—have your child wear socks on tile or wood floors and use cleaner or dust spray to make the floor slippery (socks and wax paper on waxy side). You can "skate" in socks. For older kids you can have them make a routine or use a broom and ball to play hockey. Have fun with it!!

**Tuesday-** Tossing cards or a paper ball into a pot or bucket—you can use crumpled paper balls, socks rolled into a ball, or a Nerf ball, or deck of cards. Create a hoop with a bucket, pot or bowl. Create a

throwing line and stand behind it and try to get the item into the bucket. You can make teams and see which team gets the most in the bucket, you can work together to see if you can get 10 in, you can move the line closer or farther away, you can change the way you toss (from standing, from sitting, over your shoulder, on your knees, lying on your belly, etc.)

**Wednesday-** Relay races. Use anything in your home that can take multiple turns to complete, like a puzzle with 6 pieces. Place the pieces on one end of the area and place the board on the other area. "Race" to grab a piece and place it in the puzzle then race to get another one. You can set up races to move differently (crawl, walk backwards, hop, skip, jump) and you can step up races to work together to finish or to race against each other.

**Thursday-** Scavenger hunt. This can be completed inside, outside, and using different ideas. You can do a color hunt (Find something red. Find something blue), you can find shapes (Find a circle. Find a square) or you can be specific (find a leaf. Find a pillow, etc).

**Friday -** Hopscotch— can create outside on sidewalk with chalk or indoors with foam puzzle pieces, or paper plates, or masking/painter's tape on the floor. Click on the picture below to see an example. Use a rock, bean bag, or sock ball as your tossing ball. Toss the ball to square 1 then jump to the square that has the ball in it and if the squares are next to each other land with one foot in each square (2, 3), then hop and land on one foot in square 4, one foot in each square (5, 6), hop and land with one foot in square 7, one foot in each square (8, 9) and then jump and land with both feet in 10. Turn around and move back down the board stopping at 2, 3 and bend down to pick up ball, hop in 1 and then out of the board. Continue by tossing ball into square 2.



## Speech Language Therapy Ideas

**Monday, April 13th**

Receptive Language or “Understanding”

Talk to your child about the events from this past weekend. A story does not always have to be from a

book, it can also be a story you retell about an event. Try to use words such as first, second, or last. Ask your child questions about the weekend.

#### Expressive Language or “Talking”

Have your child tell you about what they did over the weekend. If your child is not talking enough to do this, try getting some objects related to your weekend activities and see if your child can name them. If they are older, have them write out the story. Try to help your child use transition words such as first, second, or last.

#### Articulation or “Speech Sounds/Intelligibility”

Think of 10 words related to the weekend that have your speech sound. Try using them in sentences if your child is older.

### **Tuesday, April 14th**

#### Receptive Language or “Understanding”

Find something that you can hide items in. Try slime (there are recipes you can google), PlayDoh, rice, flour, Easter basket grass, cotton balls, or beans in a container. Find objects that your child does not typically know the name of and hide them. As they find them, you can model the name of the item. If your child has a good vocabulary, describe the items as your child finds them. For older children, try giving them one, two, three, or more items and have them go get them to work on remembering more than one item at a time.

#### Expressive Language or “Talking”

Have your child name the items as they find them. If they have a good vocabulary, have them describe the item they find. For older children, have them describe an item and see if you can find what they describe.

#### Articulation or “Speech Sounds/Intelligibility”

Try hiding items that contain your child’s speech sound and practice saying each word 10 times or in a sentence.

### **Wednesday, April 15th**

#### Receptive Language or “Understanding”

Go outside and play! Give your child directions to follow. Depending on your child’s ability, give them a one-step direction (Go down the slide.), two-step direction (Go down the slide and run to the house.), or a three-step direction (Go down the slide, run to the house, then do a jumping jack.).

#### Expressive Language or “Talking”

Have your child talk about what they are doing such as running, jumping, swinging, sliding, etc. Have them use an -ing ending if they can. Have them try to use these words in a sentence such as “I am running.” Have your child give you directions on what you should do. If your child is older, play a game of basketball, catch, etc. and have a conversation. Conversations are a great way to work on expressive language, building on ideas your child introduces and asking questions.

#### Articulation or “Speech Sounds/Intelligibility”

Choose an activity such as going down the slide. Each time they do this, have them say a word with their speech sound 10 times or in a sentence.

## **Thursday, April 16th**

### Receptive Language or “Understanding”

Let's focus on language during dressing routines today. Have your child point to body parts such as nose, eyes, hair, feet, arms, hands, ears, mouth, etc. Have your child follow directions to get clothing items such as asking your child to “Go get your shirt.” - “Find your shoes.” If your child is older, try describing an item by giving them three characteristics and have them guess the item. For example, this is an item of clothing, you wear it on your feet, and it has laces.

### Expressive Language or “Talking”

Have your child name clothing items as you hold them up. Sing songs about your routine, it is okay to make them up! Have your child list the steps to getting dressed. If your child is older, see if they can name as many items as they can in categories such as clothing, body parts, vehicles, zoo animals, items that are hot, items that are loud, foods that are sweet, etc.

### Articulation or “Speech Sounds/Intelligibility”

Think of clothing items or body parts that contain your speech sound and practice saying them 10 times or in a sentence.

## **Friday, April 17th**

### Receptive Language or “Understanding”

Go for a walk outside! Talk about what you see. Use verbs such as running, jumping, coloring, biking, etc. to describe what people are doing. Try describing items you see and see if your child can guess items you describe. If you have sidewalk chalk, try giving your child directions on what they should draw.

### Expressive Language or “Talking”

Point to items on your walk and see if your child can name the item. Have your child tell you about what they see. Play “I spy...” Many people have been hanging pictures in windows so see if you can find some and talk about them.

### Articulation or “Speech Sounds/Intelligibility”

Go on a walk and find 10 items that have your speech sound. Try to say them 10 times or in a sentence.

## **This Week's General Feeding Recommendation for Picky Eaters:**

Explore foods through sensory play!

Do you ever feel like mealtime is hard because your child does not like the texture of foods? You are not alone. Many children have very specific preferences with textures and may have aversions to different food textures.

This brings us to the question:

How do I know if my child is having an aversion to food textures?

Here are some considerations to think about:

- Are you noticing changes in their behavior during mealtimes?

- Does your child shut down or become quiet when presented with foods?
- Is your child turning or looking away from the foods?
- Is your child hiding under the table?
- Is your child leaving the table?
- Does your child quickly pull their hand or fingers away from the food when touching it?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, your child may be experiencing some defensiveness and discomfort with the presentation of foods. Sometimes this could be the texture of the foods.

We want to make touching foods fun and inviting. What better way to do this other than through play? Some ideas to consider playing with foods include, playing with foods in tactile bins or painting with foods. It is important to supervise the child when playing with these activities. Never force the child to touch foods or textures. Slowly integrate opportunities for the child to explore foods, first indirectly with a tool before directly touching textures with the child's finger/hand.

### **Recipe Play Idea: Silhouette Painting**

(\*Keep in mind, this may not be appropriate for everyone. This may be a very invasive activity for some children, and some children may not be ready for this level of sensory play).

#### *Set Up*

- Create Jello Paint: Place a half package of jello mix in a bowl with a ½ cup of boiling water (use hot pads, oven mitts, and mix this away from the child to avoid risk of burns). If it is too runny add more jello mix, if it is too thick, add more water.
- Place image (cut out) or masking tape or a cut out piece of paper. This will be painted over.

#### *Time to Paint*

- Use a marshmallow (or preferred food item such as a carrot, celery stick, apple slice, etc.) to paint over the paper.

#### *Final Project*

- Once dry, peel off the tape or the image and see the silhouette!

### **Tactile Bins**

- Rotate bins filled with dried foods.
- Examples of tactile bins can include: Uncooked rice, beans, or noodles. Use measuring cups or scoops to allow the child to play with. Hide puzzle pieces or toys inside of the bins. Encourage the child to dig and find the hidden pieces.

\*\*Make sure to play or paint over a tarp or surface that allows for easy clean up or you don't mind getting messy.

## Contact Us

### **Easter Seals Joliet Region**

212 Barney Drive

Joliet, IL 60435

(815) 725-2194

Contact: Morgan Tokarski, Pediatric Family Navigator

mtokarski@joliet.easterseals.com

Visit us on the web at [www.easterseals.com/joliet/](http://www.easterseals.com/joliet/)

