



## Weekly Newsletter #5

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 20, 2020](#)

### [Easterseals Joliet](#)

Issue #4: April 20th - April 24th, 2020

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## Easterseals Services

### 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. Please email Morgan at [mtokarski@joliet.easterseals.com](mailto:mtokarski@joliet.easterseals.com) for an invitation to join the group.

Traumatic Brain Injury Support Group:

- Meets the first Wednesday of the month at 6:00 pm via Zoom. Please email Laura at [lgardner@joliet.easterseals.com](mailto:lgardner@joliet.easterseals.com) for an invitation to join the group.

*Easterseals has plans for summer programming underway and will be releasing information about summer therapy groups and individual therapy later this month.*

## Community Resources: Food

*Free Grab-and-Go School District Lunches*

### **Elwood School District 203**

Joliet Township High School has offered to serve Elwood School students during the mandated closure.

Lunches are available this Monday and Thursday at:

- Joliet Central High School outside the main entrance from 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
- Joliet West High School outside door #6 (near the cafeteria) from 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Follow this [link](#) from the Joliet YMCA to see other grab & go lunch programs in the area.

### **Meals4 Kids**

The USDA created a Find Meals for Kids interactive map. Follow this [link](#) to type in your zip code and find local food resources during school closures.

*Available in both English and Spanish.*

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

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### **Food Pantries**

[Northern Illinois Foodbank](#) will be holding 3 mobile food pantries open to the public this week in Will county:

4/21/20 4:30 pm - 6:00 pm at Faith Church  
201 E Church Rd., Beecher, IL 60401

4/21/20 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm at Joliet Community Outpatient Based Clinic  
1201 Eagle St., Joliet IL 60432

4/23/20 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm at St. Mary Immaculate Parish  
15629 S. Rte 59, Plainfield, IL 60544

They will be holding one food pantry in Grundy County:

4/20/20 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm at St. Lawrence Catholic Church  
135 E Rice Rd., South Wilmington, IL 60474

They will be holding one food pantry in Kendall County:

4/23/20 11:00 am - 12:30 pm at Fox Chase Elementary School  
260 Fox Chase Dr. N., Oswego, IL 60543

### **USDA National Hunger Hotline**

The hotline is operated by Hunger Free America, and is for anyone looking for food assistance.

- They can be reached Monday through Friday between 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. at 1-866-3-HUNGRY (1-866-348-6479) or 1-877-8-HAMBRE (1-877-842-6273) (for Spanish).

## 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.

## Educational Resources

### [High Speed Internet](#)

This site provides resources for free internet as well as internet discounts available for low-income families during the pandemic.

### **Virtual Park Tours**

Celebrate Earth Day this Wednesday by virtually touring a National Park. Google Arts & Culture has teamed up with [5 parks](#) throughout the United States. Swim through coral reefs or fly over an active volcano, choose your own virtual adventure!



## 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

This week we are going to be discussing “visual supports” and Autism Spectrum Disorders as outlined in a 4 page printable handout from AutismSpeaks.org:

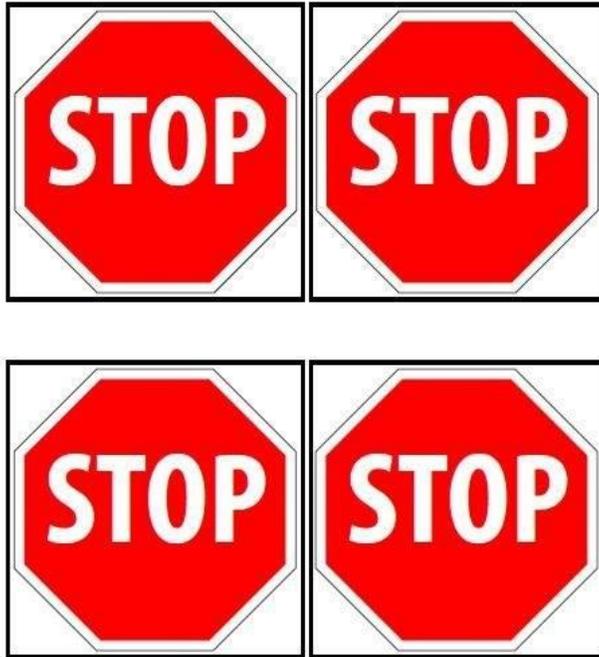
<https://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/Visual%20Supports%20Tool%20Kit.pdf>

We’ll break down the article into daily activities for you to adapt to your own child!

### Monday

***What are visual supports?*** A visual support uses a picture or some other visual representation to foster communication in those who may have a delay in spoken language. The STOP sign is a helpful visual to put on doors, a light switch, electronics, etc...

***To do:*** Print these stop signs (or see if someone you know can print them for you):



## Tuesday

**Why are visual supports important?** Children with Autism have challenges with social interactions as well as with spoken language therefore; visuals can help children understand what to expect which, in turn, can reduce anxiety. A simple way to create visuals are by cutting out images from the packaging of food items. When it's time for a snack, given your child 2 options to pick.

**To do:** Go into your pantry and pull out 3-4 food items your child likes. If you have sales flyers, you could find pictures of produce there. Or you can go to the Do2Learn website and print out the food images below at: [https://do2learn.com/picturecards/printcards/homeschool\\_food.htm](https://do2learn.com/picturecards/printcards/homeschool_food.htm)

Cut out the images and secure them on cardboard if necessary. Put the images in an envelope on your refrigerator or pantry so they are quickly available to use.



1 - Click to enlarge.

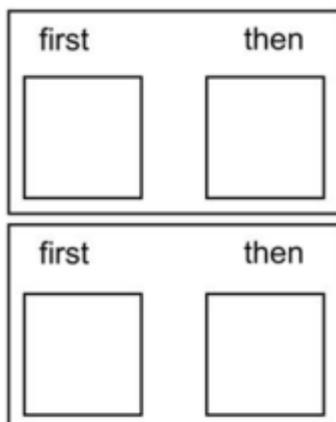


## Wednesday

### First-Then Board

**What is it?** A “First-Then” “board” or “chart” is a visual display of what the child needs to do first (often a non preferred activity) prior to gaining access to their preferred item. A “First-Then” board may be a nice way to start including simple visual schedules to your day.

**To do:** Here's an example to print (found free from Google images so you can enlarge, if needed).



### Thursday

#### First-Then Board

**How do I teach It?** Decide on a task you want your child to complete (eat breakfast, get dressed, etc.) and find a picture or image of this task to tape/velcro on the “first” box. Then decide what your child can have immediately after they complete this task, find a picture, and tape it to the “then” box. You would say to your child for example, “First, eat, then outside” while pointing to each image.

**To do:** Check out the FREE printable picture cards at 2DoLearn website at <https://do2learn.com/picturecards/overview.htm>

### Friday

#### Visually Setting Parameters

**What is it?** Setting parameters sets clear boundaries. For example, if you want to limit the number of times your child can have a certain food item per day, you could find an image to represent this food item and then cross out each time your child has this food item so he/she can see that it will be “all done” once all items are crossed out. (See image below of ice cream cones.)

**To do:** Find or make copies of a preferred food item and cut/paste onto a sturdy piece of paper or file folder. If you can, laminate this for durability.



## Developmental Therapy

Functional play is play with toys or objects according to their intended function such as throwing a ball or pushing a car across the floor. Play is how children make sense of the world. Kids love playing with cars and it is a great tool for developing cognitive and social skills.

### **Monday: Sensory Car Play.**

Drive the cars through textures like sand/kinetic sand. It is great for scooping and dumping. Add different accessories like spoons, measuring cups and shovels to make roads, ramps etc for make believe play. Other favorite things to add to a sensory bin include rice, noodles and beans.

Cars can enter the car wash with a big bin of soap and water.

### **Tuesday: Make believe cars.**

Line up chairs in a row or line up laundry baskets or boxes. Use your imagination on where you will go. Kids can pretend they are boarding an airplane and pack their favorite things to bring with. Mom or dad can come by and serve their favorite snacks on their trip!

### **Wednesday: Race cars.**

Map out a surface on the floor or use a large piece of paper or cardboard taped to the floor. Add some fun by building a block tower for the cars to crash into!

Prop a cooking sheet on a stack of books to create more excitement.

### **Thursday: Make art!**

Tape a small marker to the back of a small car and watch the designs you can make! You can also paint the cars and take them to the car wash (mentioned above) after.

### **Friday: Red light, green light!**

This is a great gross motor activity. You can call out the colors or hold up something that color (like a piece of construction paper).

Everyone starts behind a designated line.

Green means "go!" The kids move as fast as they can. Yellow means "slow down" and red means "stop!"

You can also do this outside on foot or get out your favorite outside toys (tricycle, push car, etc).

Talk about what sounds cars and trucks make. Imitate sounds and work on turn taking with the cars. Some favorite songs about cars and transportation vehicles include:

"Wheels on the Bus", "Hurry Hurry Drive the Fire Truck" and "Driving in my car."

## Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy

### **Academic Times Week**

Learning is fun! Try some different ideas when learning this week.

### **Monday**

Occupational Therapy (OT): Use smaller or broken crayons when coloring or drawing today! This added challenge helps work on your fine motor skills.

Physical Therapy (PT): Lie on your belly while propped up on your elbows while doing schoolwork, watching a video, watching television, coloring, etc.

### **Tuesday**

OT: Try creating a picture in a different way today! Tape paper to a vertical surface - a washable wall or window- and draw! You could also use window markers (with an adult's permission) to draw on a patio or glass door.

PT: Position yourself in tall kneeling (on your knees with your bottom lifted up off your feet) while doing schoolwork, watching a video, watching television, coloring, etc.

### **Wednesday**

OT: Write the schedule for the day on paper, a chalkboard, or whiteboard. As you go through your day, cross off or erase each activity when it is finished.

PT: Take motor breaks (jump, jumping jacks, stretching, yoga poses) for short bouts throughout your day.

### **Thursday**

OT: Have an adult put some of your learning materials (puzzle pieces, crayons, erasers, blocks) in a sensory bin (bin of uncooked rice, beans, or sand) and go for a dig with your hands to find your things! You could make this more of a challenge by writing the alphabet or numbers out on the back of puzzle pieces, and, once you find them, place them in alphabetical or number order.

PT: Sit on the floor with your legs crossed and reach for materials on either side of you.

### **Friday**

OT: Practice using scissors by cutting out shapes (ask someone to draw you shapes or silly lines to cut on paper) or pictures in magazines. For extra fun, you can make a collage of the shapes or pictures you cut out.

PT: Incorporate stairs (or a step stool) into one activity a day. Place half of your materials at the bottom of the stairs and the other half at the top and collect them while strengthening your legs. This activity should be supervised and based on your child's ability.

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

**Monday-** leap frog—have child start in frog position (deep squat with bottom close to the floor and hands on floor for balance). Place something soft for child to jump over (stuffed animal, couch pillow,

towel folded up). Child can place hands on surface of item to assist with jumping over. You can make a line of items for the child to jump over. You can have races. Make sure they help you clean up!!

**Tuesday-** Laundry basket rides (diaper box)—use your laundry basket as a car, train, plane or truck. Have the child safely climb in and out of the basket. Once in the basket you can “take them for a ride” by pushing/pulling the basket along the floor. Have your child take turns by giving their favorite stuffed animal a ride or siblings can push each other (if safe). You can put items in the basket and ask your child to deliver the items where they need to go (a shirt to his room, a roll of toilet paper to the bath room).

**Wednesday-** jump into a pile of pillows and blankets. Collect a pile of pillows and fluffy blankets having your child carry or pulling them to the pile. Gather up the pile and enjoy (safely) crashing into the pile! Remake the pile and crash again! You can also find items for you to hide in the pile and your child has to remove the blankets and pillows to find the item. As always, make sure they help clean up!!

**Thursday-** Tummy time fun—use a cotton ball or crumpled up piece of Kleenex or 1 square of toilet paper. Have child lay on their belly and use their breath to blow the item. You can blow the item back and forth or you can make a start and finish and have the child blow the item while moving on their belly.

**Friday -** Solo cup mini golf—Use a plastic cup laid on its side as your target. Using a small ball or crumpled piece of paper (small enough to fit into cup) and a broom, plastic bat, yard stick, or empty paper towel roll as club play mini golf. Get creative with your hole placement and hazards on the course!

## Speech Language Therapy Ideas

**Monday, April 20th**

### Language

Pick a story to hear a celebrity read aloud from the following website: [storylineonline.net](http://storylineonline.net)

They have a recommended grade level for each book listed. There is also a “Teachers’ Guide” document that goes with each story that explores how you can link the story to school standards.

For Spanish, try finding a book on one of the following websites:

<https://www.goodreads.com/>

<https://www.spanishplayground.net/>

We are going to focus on WH questions this week. WH questions are WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHY, and WHEN questions. We will focus on a different type of question each day. Stories are great to work on questions! The following website also lists some example WH questions you can work on throughout the week.

<https://www.home-speech-home.com/wh-questions.html>

Let’s start with WHO questions today. WHO questions are about people. Talk about WHO the book is about. Try to talk about each of the story’s characters.

Ask questions about family members in your house such as “Who is the oldest?” – “Who is sleeping?” – “Who is wearing a hat?”

Ask who questions about community helpers such as “Who teaches you at school?” – “Who drives a firetruck and puts out fires?” – “Who drives a tractor and works on a farm?”

If your child is older, talk about WHO (what celebrity) is reading the story for the [storylineonline.net](http://storylineonline.net) website. Have the child think of their own WHO questions about the story. Ask them WHO questions related to social studies, science, or literature lessons they are learning about in their e-learning from school.

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

Have your child practice the same WH questions as described each day about the story, but have them monitor their speech to correctly say their targeted speech sounds.

### **Tuesday, April 21st**

Pick a different story from one of the websites above. Today let’s work on WHAT questions. WHAT questions often ask about objects or they can ask about actions if asking “WHAT doing?” questions.

Ask WHAT questions about the pictures in the story, both the objects you see or what the characters are doing.

Act out different actions such as running, jumping, dancing, swinging, sliding, coloring, etc. and ask “What am I doing?”

Look out the window and ask “what” the child sees?

Ask about “what” you do with an item such as “What do you do with a book?” or “What do you do with a coat?”

Ask your child what their favorite items are such as “What is your favorite color?”

Try asking about hypothetical events such as “What would you do if you felt sick?” or “What would you do if you were hungry?”

For an older child, have the child think of their own WHAT questions about the story. Ask them some open-ended questions about their thoughts on the book such as “What do you think is going to happen next?”

### **Wednesday, April 22nd**

Pick a different story from one of the websites above. Today let’s work on WHERE questions. WHERE questions are about places.

Talk about the setting of the book and ask questions about WHERE the characters are in the story.

Ask questions about family members or items in your house such as “Where is your brother?” – “Where is the phone?”

Ask questions about WHERE you go to do certain activities such as “Where do you go to rent books?” – “Where do you go to learn?” – “Where do you go to buy food?”

Ask questions about WHERE a child wants to go such as “Where do you want to go on vacation?” – “Where do you want to order food from tonight?”

For an older child, have the child think of their own WHERE questions about the setting or locations in the story.

### **Thursday, April 23rd**

Pick a different story from one of the websites above. Today let’s work on WHY questions. WHY questions are about the reason for something. If these questions are too challenging for your child, practice WHAT, WHO, or WHERE questions instead.

Ask questions about WHY events happened in the story.

Talk about WHY a character feels a certain way. For example, if a character is sad, ask your child “Why is he sad?”

Ask about why we do certain things. For example, “Why do we eat?” – “Why do we brush our teeth?” – “Why is it important to wash our hands?”

For an older child, have the child think of their own WHY questions about the story. WHY questions are great for older children because it can be a nice way to start a discussion.

### **Friday, April 24th**

Today let’s work on WHEN questions. WHEN questions relate to time. If these questions are too challenging for your child, practice WHAT, WHO, or WHERE questions instead.

Talk about when events occurred in the story. You can talk about the order of events or the time of day that they occurred.

Talk about when daily routines occur such as “When do we brush our teeth?” – “When do we get the mail?” - “When do we need to wear a coat?”

Talk about the last time you did activities such as “When was the last time you went to the zoo?”

In the morning, talk about your routine that day and ask WHEN you should do activities such as “When should we start your e-learning school work?”

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

This week let's think about the types of foods offered at snacks and mealtimes. If possible, offer the child as many of the following types of foods at each meal and snack so that they are exposed to a variety of types of foods. Please consider your child's ability, any diet restrictions, and how safe they are with different foods. Consult with your intervention team for more guidance as needed.

- Consider offering different food groups at mealtimes such as offering a protein, a starch, and a fruit/vegetable, as well as a drink. For example, offer chicken (protein), rice (starch), green beans (vegetable), and milk (high calorie drink).
  - Some children benefit from a high calorie drink at the end of the meal as they may prefer to fill up on this drink at a mealtime. Consult with your intervention team as appropriate.
- There are different textures of foods to consider at mealtimes such as hard munchables, purees, meltable hard solid foods, and soft cubed foods.
  - Hard munchables – These are often foods that a child can hold and gnaw on. Often they are harder to bite through. This can be many raw vegetables including jicama, raw green beans, or parsnip. A thick slice of apple or pear can be a hard munchable. Chewy foods such as fruit strips or Twizzlers can be hard munchables. Frozen foods such as strawberries can be a hard munchable. These foods work on jaw strength as well as tongue and jaw movements.
  - Purees are textures that do not require chewing such as yogurt, applesauce, pudding, etc. Often you can work on spoon use with these foods.
  - Meltable hard solids are hard foods that turn into a puree as you eat them such as Ritz or Club crackers, Gerber puffs, Cheeto puffs, Veggie Straws, etc.
  - Soft cube foods are foods that do not turn into a puree such as chunks of meat, chunks of softer fruits/vegetables such as pineapple or corn, etc.

## Contact Us

### **Easterseals Joliet Region**

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

