



Weekly Newsletter #6

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 27, 2020](#)

[Easterseals Joliet](#)

Issue #6: April 27th - May 1st, 2020

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Easterseals Services

Easterseals Virtual Programs

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 for an invitation to join the group.

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 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 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

Laraway School District 70

Food Pickup: Family packs will be available for pick up at Laraway School, 1715 Rowell Ave, Joliet.

Pick up times on each Tuesday during school closure:

9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Families should check the Laraway website www.laraway70c.org for changes or updates.

Meals 4 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.

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 Kendall County:

5/2/2020 10:00 - 11:30 am at Harvest New Beginnings Church
5315 Douglas Rd., 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

Erikson's Center for Children and Families is offering virtual therapy services to parents and caregivers of children 0-5 in both English and Spanish, regardless of their ability to pay. Through their HIPAA compliant video conferencing platform, they're also extending services to meet the immediate needs surrounding the pandemic by offering crisis counseling and consultations to support caregivers, first responders, and early childcare providers of children 0-8.

Their infant and early childhood mental health services during the COVID-19 pandemic include:

- Virtual parent/child therapy for children 0-5 exhibiting emotional or behavioral issues.
- Individual crisis counseling for parents, caregivers, or teachers working with children 0-8.
- Consultations to childcare settings, preschools, and early education providers focused on supporting staff and parents, and developing social emotional lesson planning.
- Hosting and facilitating group consultations, forums, and trainings for early education staff and parents.

Parents and caregivers can reach out to set up an appointment through their intake line at 312-709-0508 (English) or 312-934-6446 (Spanish), or by visiting www.Erikson.edu/ccf.



The graphic is a yellow rectangular box with a blue border. On the left side, there is a cartoon illustration of a baby crying. To the right of the illustration, the text reads: "Fussy Baby Network® Erikson Institute". Below this, in blue and black text, it says: "YOU ARE NOT ALONE WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER". Further down, it provides contact information: "For more information call 888-431-BABY email fussybaby@erikson.edu or find us on Facebook @fussybabynetwork fussybabynetwork.org". On the right side of the graphic, under the heading "PARENTS WITH BABIES:", it states: "During this time of being home more, we are here to support you and your family in new ways:". Below this, there is a bulleted list of services: "• Warmline telephone support is open and ready", "• Call 888-431-BABY or email fussybaby@erikson.edu", "• Video Home Visits available", "• Parent Web Groups available", "• Launching Facebook Live Sessions for infant massage, baby yoga, play and connection ideas and more", and "• There are no fees for Fussy Baby services during 'shelter-in-place'". At the bottom right of the graphic, there are three small cartoon illustrations of babies with different expressions: one crying, one neutral, and one smiling.

Another resource for parents with young children is [Erikson's Fussy Baby Network](http://www.Erikson.edu/ccf). If you are struggling to care for a baby under age 1 who is crying excessively, or having difficulties sleeping or feeding, consider utilizing this service. **There are no fees for Fussy Baby services during "shelter in place" orders.** Their team of infant specialists are available Monday – Friday (9-5 p.m.) to support parents, and can be reached at 888-431-2229 or at fussybaby@erikson.edu.

Follow this [link](#) for more information on the services they are offering during this time.

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](#) 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 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.

[National Geographic Kids](#)

Play games, watch videos and use educational tools to teach kids about their favorite animals. Read May's issue of National Geographic Kids to learn all about koala rescues!



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

Social Skills Activities for Elementary Students with Autism. (Adapted from [Waterford.org](#))

Monday

How would it Feel to Be _____?

The next time you read a book to your child, try asking him/her how it would feel to be the main character in the story. For example, if you're reading a picture book about Cinderella, you could ask your child how he/she might feel if they had 2 evil step sisters who were mean to them?

This can encourage your child to put themselves in the shoes of another person and think about how someone else might feel.

Tuesday

Sorting with Snacks Activity

This is a tactile activity which can be a fun way to engage children. Give your child a variety of snacks and ask them to sort by color or shape and older kids can practice addition or subtraction and once the activity is over they can eat their snack! Sensory activities can be helpful ways for a child to gain emotional regulation.

Wednesday

Vegetable Paint Stamps

This art activity engages touch and sight! Cut slices of vegetables like potatoes, cucumbers, or peppers. Pass out a few slices and a cup of paint and show students how to "paint" or "stamp" using the vegetables. This is another sensory activity and also engages a child's creativity which can promote emotional regulation.

Thursday

Let's make slime!

Slime is a popular craft for children and another great sensory experience for students including students with autism. Use one of your favorite recipes or find one of many online! Allow your child to measure and mix the ingredients and see how the slime comes together.

Friday

Calm down box

Tactile toys are often favorites and can help individuals with autism feel more regulated. Find a shoe box sized container and have your child be part of the process and find items such as play dough, fidget toys, stress balls, etc... Encourage your child to grab their calm down box when you see him/her starting to get dysregulated.

Developmental Therapy

Monday: Kitchen Time

Use old food containers, utensils, tupperware etc. to create a pretend kitchen. Practice stirring and pouring- great opportunities for imitation. Pretend to eat your delicious creations. Feed yourself, other family members and your favorite stuffed animals!

Tuesday: Superhero for the day

Dress the part...Maybe you already have a costume at home? If not, be creative and use what you have. A superhero can look different for everyone. You can make your own superhero cuffs by coloring and cutting a toilet paper roll in half. Talk about your "super powers" and what makes each person special.

Wednesday: Animal play

What is your favorite animal? How fun it is to act like animals. Hop like a bunny, crawl like a cat, slither like a snake. Talk about how each animal moves and act it out. Do not only the action but also incorporate animal sounds. Our favorite song is "Kids in Motion: Animal Action".

Thursday: Phone play/Symbolic play

Take any object and pretend it's a phone. Call someone special like grandma or grandpa. We love using cucumbers, bananas and remotes while doing this activity.

Friday: Freeze dance

Shake your sillies out and dance to the beat! Parents can incorporate the "freeze dance" song or sing your own favorite song. Make sure you model when to "stop" or "freeze". Include the smallest members of your family. Babies respond to music at an early age so have them join in on the fun.

Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy

Space Week

Monday

Occupational Therapy (OT): Make your own telescope. Use an empty paper towel or toilet paper roll and decorate it with whatever you can think of. You can use markers and crayons, glitter, feathers, dry pasta, or anything else you have at home.

Physical Therapy (PT): Blast off into the universe with a Cosmic Yoga session on YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga>

Tuesday

OT: Play flashlight tag on a wall inside or against the outside wall of your home. Practice turning the flashlight on and off on your own.

Bonus- Add shadow puppets into the mix and put on show.

PT: Do blast off jumps (jump up or forward after a 3-2-1 blastoff countdown).

Bonus- Try hopping on one foot. You can even pretend that socks or objects are planets or stars and jump over them. Don't let the sun burn you!

Wednesday

OT: Draw the galaxy or a spaceship while sitting in your own spaceship. Your spaceship can be a large box or under the table.

PT: Rocket ship launch! Fly your rocket ship (your body) at 3 different speeds - slow, normal, and fast while doing different movements (walking, running, galloping, jumping, crawling, etc.).

Thursday

OT: Build a blanket fort and have some quiet reading or drawing time in there (like the quietness of space).

PT: Dance to space-themed music/songs. Check out YouTube, Just Dance Kids (on YouTube), and Go Noodle for songs.

Bonus- Make up your own space songs while flying around.

Friday

OT: Write a story about traveling to space. If that's a little too tricky, write down some space words instead.

PT: Planet bowling or toss. Use a ball (planet) and toss it through space (your yard, house, open field, etc.). To bowl, roll the ball to knock over empty toilet paper or paper towel rolls, dolls, blocks, plastic cups, etc.

Physical Therapy- Gross Motor Movement

Monday- "Walking the plank"—Gather couch cushions, throw pillows or bed pillows. Create a balance beam or "walk the plank" by placing the items in a line. You can hold your child's hand if needed for balance. Change it up by walking backwards, sideways, or adding space between each pillow to reach your foot to the next surface. As always, make sure they help clean up!!

Tuesday- pig races—create a ball out of crumpled paper, rolled up socks or get a soft nerf ball. Have your child crawl on their hands and knees and push the ball with their nose. You can make a start and finish or get a solo or plastic cup for a goal to roll the ball into. You can take turns making courses, race and have fun even making pig noises!!

Wednesday- Potato sack races with pillow cases - get pillow cases and have your child stand inside it and hold the sides with their hands. Parents should always be present for balance safety. Have your child practice walking while holding onto the pillow case. If able, you can have your child attempt jumping forward while holding pillow case. You can make a start and finish and race (if safe).

Thursday- Balancing—Use a book or bean bag and try balancing the item on various body parts. In standing can you balance it on your head? Back? On top of your knee standing on one leg? On your foot while standing on one leg? When in crawling position: on your head? Back? Can you balance it while walking? Moving fast? Crawling?

Friday - Play hide and seek—One person counts and other person hides. Get creative. You can play inside and outside in the back yard.

Speech Language Therapy Ideas

Monday, April 27th

LANGUAGE – Younger Children

Let's focus on spatial concepts this week! Spatial concepts describe the location of items such as the following: under/over, in/out, in front/behind, on/off, top/bottom, next to, between, etc.

Here is a handout from Super Duper that describes spatial concepts:

https://www.superduperinc.com/handouts/pdf/240_SpatialConcepts.pdf

On Mondays we have been focusing on books since reading is very important to the development of language skills. Today, find a book around your house. Talk about how to hold the book and where the "TOP" and the "BOTTOM" of the book are located. Talk about how you start reading at the TOP of the page. If you have a bookshelf, put the book on the TOP shelf and then the BOTTOM shelf. See if your child can follow directions to place it where you indicate. See if they can label "TOP" and "BOTTOM" depending on where you put it. Try to work on these terms throughout the day.

LANGUAGE – Older Children

While the above focuses on simple spatial concepts, for older children try focusing on more advanced prepositions. This website has a handout that discusses prepositions:

https://www.superduperinc.com/handouts/pdf/318_Teaching_Prepositions.pdf

Talking about different prepositions and how they are used is a great way to build vocabulary, to understand how words relate to other words, and how words are used grammatically in a sentence. The following website gives some examples of prepositions to talk about and practice using in sentences:

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

Articulation or "Speech Sounds/Intelligibility"

Have your child practice the language activities indicated for each day. Have them monitor their speech to say their target speech sound(s) correctly. You can also choose items that have your speech word to follow the spatial concept directions with or choose vocabulary for the older language activities that specifically have your child's target sound(s).

Tuesday, April 28th

LANGUAGE – Younger Children

Today let's focus on "UNDER" and "OVER." Try to incorporate this vocabulary throughout the day. Play ball and throw the ball OVER items or roll it UNDER items. You can look at animals outside and talk about what they are flying or climbing OVER or UNDER. Play with toy airplanes or kites and talk about

the things they fly OVER. Hide items and talk about how they are UNDER items. Have your child follow directions with these vocabulary words, but also practice using them in their speech.

LANGUAGE – Older Children

Let's focus on synonyms today! Synonyms are words that mean the same or similar. Talking about synonyms is a great way to build vocabulary or a child's understanding of how words relate. Talk about synonyms of words in a book your child is reading or in their e-learning activities. The following website gives some examples of antonyms:

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

Wednesday, April 29th

LANGUAGE – Younger Children

Today let's focus on "IN" and "OUT." Try to incorporate this vocabulary throughout the day. At mealtimes, talk about putting food IN bowls or dumping it OUT into the garbage can. Work on putting shapes IN a shape sorter, or taking toys OUT of a bin. Talk about how people or pets go IN the house or OUT of the house. If these words are simple for your child, work on using them in short phrases such as "put it in" or "take it out." You can work on following longer directions with the vocabulary. Have your child follow directions with these vocabulary words, but also practice using them in their speech.

LANGUAGE – Older Children

Let's focus on homophones today! Homophones are words that are pronounced the same, but are spelled differently. Talking about homophones is a great way to build vocabulary or a child's understanding of how words relate. Look for homophones when reading a book or during e-learning activities. The following website gives some examples of homophones:

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

Thursday, April 30th

LANGUAGE – Younger Children

Today let's focus on "FRONT" and "BEHIND." Try to incorporate this vocabulary throughout the day. Place toys IN FRONT or BEHIND objects and see if your child can tell you which it is. Look outside and talk about what items are IN FRONT of other items. Hide items and tell your child to look BEHIND certain objects. Play with figures and give your child directions to make the figure walk IN FRONT or BEHIND items. You can work on following longer directions with the vocabulary. Have your child follow directions with these vocabulary words, but also practice using them in their speech.

LANGUAGE – Older Children

Let's focus on multiple meaning words today! Some words can mean multiple things depending on the sentence. Talking about different meanings for a word is a great way to build vocabulary or a child's

understanding of how words relate. Try to find a multiple meaning word in a book your child is reading or in their e-learning work. The following website gives some examples of multiple meaning words based on grade level:

<https://www.home-speech-home.com/multiple-meaning-words.html>

Friday, May 1st

LANGUAGE – Younger Children

Today let's focus on "ON" and "OFF." Try to incorporate this vocabulary throughout the day. At mealtimes talk about putting items such as butter ON bread or taking the lid OFF of a bottle. Give your child a direction to put items ON different things around the house or to turn ON different items. You can then give the directions to take items OFF or to turn items OFF around the house. Act out these actions with dolls or figures. If these words are simple for your child, work on using them in short phrases such as "put it on the..." or "take it off the...." You can work on following longer directions with the vocabulary. Have your child follow directions with these vocabulary words, but also practice using them in their speech.

LANGUAGE – Older Children

Let's focus on antonyms today! Antonyms are words that mean the opposite. Talking about antonyms is a great way to build vocabulary as well as a child's understanding of how words relate. The following website gives some examples of antonyms to talk about, or you can pick out words when reading a book or doing e-learning and discuss what could be antonyms of the target word.

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

This Week's General Feeding Recommendation for Picky Eaters:

During meals and snacks children need to have improved postural stability. An appropriate chair and table that fits your child's height is recommended. A foot rest can be used for improved postural stability with taller tables and chairs. A child's ankles, knees, and hips need to all be at 90 degree angles for correct seating. The tray/table surface should be at a level that falls in between the child's belly button and nipples.

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