

DCF Guidance for Supporting Children and Families during COVID-19



COVID-19 has changed the way we work, connect with others, and live our daily lives. At the Department of Children and Families, we understand that families may be struggling with a variety of issues. We hope to provide some guidance and resources for those who need help. For more information, please visit our website at ct.gov/dcf or visit the designated COVID-19 website for the state of Connecticut at ct.gov/coronavirus. Thank you!

RESOURCES

COVID-19 Family Resources

If you are in need but are not sure where to start, try one of the following:



- **211** connects callers, at no cost, to critical health and human services in their community. Services are offered in a variety of languages. **Call:** 2-1-1 **Visit:** 211ct.org
- **CT's Coronavirus Website** includes the latest guidance, emergency orders, and up-to-date information about the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-2019). In addition to resources, there is also a chat function that lets you ask questions related to the virus. **Visit:** CT.gov/coronavirus

Childcare

Childcare is available for essential workers. For non-essential workers, please keep your children at home. If you are an essential worker, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Look to trusted friends, neighbors, and family members who are not in a high-risk category to fill in care for children. Remember to ask the following questions each day:
 - Have you traveled to a country that the CDC has issued a Level 2 or 3 travel designation in the last 14 days?
 - Have you had contact with anyone under investigation for COVID-19 in the last 14 days, or with anyone known to have COVID-19?
 - Do you have any symptoms of a respiratory infection (cough, sore throat, fever, or shortness of breath)?
- If you are not able to do the above, call the designated **2-1-1** number (860-756-0864) or visit their [website](#) for help connecting with a child care provider referral.



Domestic Violence (IPV)

Staying at home may not be safe for individuals experiencing Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). In an emergency, always call 9-1-1. If you are affected by abuse and need support, reach out to one of the below:

- **CT SafeConnect** provides victims with extensive information, safety planning, and counseling, as well as referrals to one of CCADV's 18 member organizations for ongoing support and services locally. All services are confidential, safe, free, and voluntary.
Call: 888-774-2900 (English) or 844-831-9200 (Español)
Chat: CTSafeConnect.org **Email:** safeconnect@ctcadv.org
- National Domestic Violence Hotline - Creates access by providing 24-hour support through advocacy, safety planning, resources, and hope to everyone affected by domestic violence.
Call: 1-800-799-7233 **Text:** LOVEIS to 22522
- Love is Respect - Works to engage, educate, and empower youth and young adults to prevent and end abusive relationships.
Call: National Dating Abuse Helpline 866-331-9474 **Visit:** loveisrespect.org
- Learn more at the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence website: ctcadv.org



Education

With schools closed, parents and caregivers may find themselves playing a greater role in their child's education. The Department has compiled a list of resources that may be helpful in supporting your child's learning. The list is available [here](#) and breaks down the resources by grade level and by subject matter, and also includes resources for students learning English. Other education-related resources include:



- **CSDE Professional Support Series for Families:**
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/COVID19/Professional-Support-Series-for-Families>
- **School Based Health Centers:**
<https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Family-Health/School-Based-Health-Centers/School-Based-Health-Centers>
- **CT Legal Services COVID-19 EDUCATION HOTLINE:** (860) 786-6363
- **Special Education Guidance and Resources for COVID-19:**
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Special-Education/Bureau-of-Special-Education/Coronavirus>
- **Special Education Advocacy and Support** Call: 860-739-3089 Email: cpac@cpacinc.org
- [Tips for Homeschooling](#)
- **National Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)** - [Webpage](#) for children, families, and educators to support education during the pandemic
- **Connecticut Public** Launches On-Air and Online Educational Programming and Resources to Support At-Home Distance Learning for Students Pre-K through 12: <https://ctpublic.org/learn-at-home/>

Family Activities

There are many things that families can do to stay entertained and connected. The Department has links to several helpful guides that will help you make the most of this time with your children. This resource guide is [here](#) on our website, and here are some helpful tips:



- **Nationwide Children's Organization** has a [list of activities](#) for several age groups available.
- DCF has a [list of educational games](#) on their website.
- The "[This Weekend](#)" page of **CtVisit.com** has a variety of virtual events for kids, including online museum tours and aquarium/zoo tours.

Food

If you or your family need food, the DCF website has a full resource guide [here](#). Here are some of the most important resources, but we recommend checking the website for a full list or calling 2-1-1.

- CT Food Bank has a mobile pantry; the [schedule](#) is available on their website.
- The Emergency Meal Program provides meals to students attending their schools and any child in the household age 18 or younger. A list of participating districts can be found [here](#), but parents should also check the website and social media pages for their district or municipality for the most current information.
- Foodpantries.org has a [list](#) of pantries in Connecticut.
- [2-1-1](#) can help you find the closest resources.



Housing/Eviction

Connecticut has placed a temporary freeze on evictions. Landlords are not permitted to file new eviction cases until July 1, 2020 and existing eviction cases are on hold. The one exception to this is that landlords can still file an eviction for a nuisance, such as physically harming another tenant or the landlord. All protections against discrimination in housing apply during this health emergency. Lamont's Executive Order provides a 60-day grace period for April rent, which means you have 60 days from the date your April rent was due to make the April rent payment to your landlord. If you



are not able to pay May rent, you can request a 60-day extension to pay rent owed if this request is made on or before May 10. If you live in public or subsidized housing, or pay the rent with a RAP or Section 8 voucher and you have lost income, report the change immediately to the administrator of your voucher. It is currently illegal for your landlord to shut off your utilities like gas, electricity, or water, except for reasons of public safety. For more information and housing resources, visit DCF's [Housing and Eviction Portal](#) or go to one of the following resources:

- The **CT Department of Housing** (ct.gov/doh) has links for finding, paying for, and maintaining housing.
- The **Connecticut Fair Housing Center** has [info sheets and FAQ guides](#) for homeowners and renters.
- The [Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness](#) has statistics on homelessness and resources for those experiencing homelessness.
- [2-1-1](#) can help you find housing if you are in need.

Income

If you have become unemployed due to COVID-19, you should file for unemployment benefits with the Connecticut Department of Labor. You can do so [here](#). The following may also be useful to you:

- The [CT DOL FAQs Guide](#) addresses common questions for both employees and employers.
- This [YouTube video](#) by the CT DOL helps explain the process of filing for unemployment.



Internet

Several internet providers in Connecticut have been making efforts to help state residents get online and stay connected. For a full list of packages and offers in Connecticut, please visit the DCF portal for [Internet Access](#).

- Virtually every internet company in Connecticut has signed onto the [Keep America Connected Pledge](#), meaning they will not terminate service to residential/small business customers due to an inability to pay their bills due to the disruptions caused by COVID-19, waive late fees for said customers due to economic circumstances related to COVID-19, and open all Wi-Fi hotspots to the general public.



Mental Health & Substance Use

During this pandemic, it is important to make sure we take care of our mental health as well as our physical health. Fears surrounding illness and loved ones as well as the disruption to the normal routine may impact or be impacted by your mental health. This is an especially challenging time for those struggling with substance use. The DCF website has a detailed list of resources for dealing with [mental health](#) and [substance use](#), some of which are below. In an emergency, always call 9-1-1.

- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** **Call:** 1-800-273-8255 **Text:** Crisis Text Line (741741)
- **TrevorLifeLine** serves LGBTQ+ youth
Call: 1-800-488-7386 **Text:** 678678 **Chat:** [TrevorChat](#)
- [2-1-1](#) can help connect you to a mental health professional
- **AddictionResource** has information on free addiction counseling as well as a confidential drug hotline.
Call: Free & Confidential Drug Hotline (888-915-8128) **Chat/Visit:** addictionresource.com



FAQ/QUESTION SECTION

How do I manage stress and anxiety about COVID-19?

If you are feeling anxious or fearful right now, you are not alone. Stress can manifest in a variety of ways, and it is important to pay attention to how you are feeling, mentally and physical, and recognize when you are feeling stressed or anxious. Remember that coping with stress will make you stronger. We recommend taking breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting. Take care of your body by eating healthy, exercising regularly, and getting plenty of sleep. Try to find time to unwind through hobbies or activities you enjoy and connect with others. Social distancing should not mean social isolation, and talking with people you trust about your feelings is very useful for managing stress. The CDC has more information [here](#).

I have a young child, and I find it difficult to explain to them what is happening. Do you have any advice for talking with kids about the pandemic?

Remember that very young children do not understand things like germs or infection, so try to use age appropriate language with them. You can keep things in simple terms and validate their observation that something different is happening without being detailed. Be sure to let your child know what to expect from their new routine and explain that these measures are helping to keep them safe and healthy. For more tips on how to respond to specific questions, Zero to Three has an excellent guide [here](#).

Are there any risks to my child being online?

Natural disasters (including a pandemic) can increase family stress and disruption in normal safety nets for children. These stressors can be an opportunity for traffickers to reach out to vulnerable children. The vast majority of child victims are lured in and/or sold online. While this does not mean you need to monitor your child's every move online, be sure to develop activities to maintain your child's connection to others in a safe manner and discuss things like responsible social media usage and privacy best practices. DCF will have an online Zoom training on May 4 to discuss these risks (register [here](#)), and our Human Anti-Trafficking Response Team's website is [here](#). If you are a trafficking victim and need assistance, call the National Trafficking Hotline (1-888-373-7888) or text 233733. If you are aware of a child who is being victimized, please call the DCF Careline (1-800-842-2288).

For more great FAQs, we recommend visiting [The Village's Information Line](#) and the CDC's [FAQ page](#).

WHEN IT BUILDS UP...TALK IT OUT

Being a parent or caregiver during this crisis can be extremely stressful. It is perfectly normal to be experiencing varying emotions and feel overwhelmed. No matter what you're feeling, we're here to listen. Parents and caregivers can call our toll-free Talk It Out line to discuss their feelings in a judgement-free environment.

Call: 1-833-258-5011

Visit: www.talkitoutct.com

Watch: [Talk it Out PSA](#)

DCF CONTACT INFORMATION

- To report suspected abuse or neglect, call our Careline at 1-800-842-2288
- If you have a question concerning COVID-19 and the CT Department of Children and Families, please reach out to DCF.COVID-19@ct.gov or check out our [website](#).
- DCF's Office of Community Relations can be reached at 1-866-637-4737. The OCR serves clients, foster, and adoptive parents, caregivers, providers, and citizens to resolve disputes and respond to inquiries concerning the Department, in the best interests of children.