

Hanover Public Schools

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Dear Hanover Families,

We, your school nurses and psychologists, wanted to reach out to you to provide some information and reassurance to help you navigate the next few weeks.

When anything stressful or challenging is going on in life, it can be difficult to know how to talk to our kids of all ages. Kids, whether three or seventeen, look to adults to figure out what they need to know and how they should react. In the Hanover Public Schools, our staff and administrators always want to help support you with these conversations. The following suggestions from the National Association of School Psychologists may be helpful in discussing COVID-19 (a type of Coronavirus):

Remain calm and reassuring.

- Children will react to and follow your verbal and nonverbal reactions.
- What you say and do about COVID-19, current prevention efforts, and related events can either increase or decrease your children's anxiety.
- If true, emphasize to your children that they and your family are fine.
- Remind them that you and the adults at their school are there to keep them safe and healthy.
- Let your children talk about their feelings and help reframe their concerns into the appropriate perspective.

Make yourself available.

- Children may need extra attention from you and may want to talk about their concerns, fears, and questions.
- It is important that they know they have someone who will listen to them; make time for them.
- Tell them you love them and give them plenty of affection.

Avoid excessive blaming.

- When tensions are high, sometimes we try to blame someone
- It is important to avoid stereotyping any one group of people as responsible for the virus

Monitor television viewing and social media.

- Limit television viewing or access to information on the Internet and through social media. Try to avoid watching or listening to information that might be upsetting when your children are present
- Speak to your child about how many stories about COVID-19 on the Internet may be based on rumors and inaccurate information
- Talk to your child about factual information of this disease—this can help reduce anxiety.
- Constantly watching updates on the status of COVID-19 can increase anxiety—avoid this
- Be aware that developmentally inappropriate information (i.e., information designed for adults) can cause anxiety or confusion, particularly in young
- Engage your child in games or other interesting activities instead

Maintain a normal routine to the extent possible.

- Keep to a regular schedule, as this can be reassuring and promotes physical health. For instance, typical bedtimes, wake times, and mealtimes can be helpful.

Be honest and accurate.

- In the absence of factual information, children often imagine situations far worse than reality
- Don't ignore their concerns, but rather explain that at the present moment very few people in this country overall are sick with COVID-19
- Children can be told this disease is thought to be spread between people who are in close contact with one another—when an infected person coughs or sneezes
- It is also thought it can be spread when you touch an infected surface or object, which is why it is so important to protect yourself by washing hands often
- For additional factual information contact your school nurse, ask your doctor, or check the <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> website.

Know the symptoms of COVID-19.

- The CDC believes these symptoms appear in a few days after being exposed to someone who is symptomatic with the disease:
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
 - For some people the symptoms are like having a cold; for others the symptoms can be severe
- So far, it seems that children are less likely to get sick from the virus

- In either case it is important to check with your child's healthcare provider (or yours) if anyone in your family becomes ill
- The risk of developing COVID-19 for the average person in the United States remains low, but influenza rates, are still high
- As of yesterday, there are no presumed or confirmed cases of COVID-19 in all of Plymouth County, including Hanover and as of this writing there are no persons under investigation for COVID-19 in the Town of Hanover

Many of the things you do to help prevent colds and the flu can help protect you against other respiratory viruses, including COVID-19:

- **Wash your hands often** with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds
- **Avoid touching** your eyes, nose and mouth.
- **Clean things that are frequently touched** (like doorknobs and countertops) with household cleaning spray or wipes.
- **Cover your mouth** when you cough or sneeze. Use a tissue or your inner elbow, not your hands.
- **Stay home if you are sick** and avoid close contact with others.
- Giving children guidance on what they can do to prevent infection gives them a greater sense of control over disease spread and will help to reduce their anxiety.
- Encourage your child to eat a balanced diet, get enough sleep, drink plenty of fluids and get regular exercise; this will help them develop a strong immune system to fight off illness.
- For more information please refer to the MDPH website:
<https://www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

Adapted from [https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource)

A word about privacy and bullying:

Please model and teach your children the practice of keeping private information private. Because people are very worried right now, people who are ill with any condition, or who have traveled out of state are at risk of being singled out, harassed, intimidated or bullied. Trust that health authorities and school officials give you the information you need to know to keep your family safe.

Please feel free to email your school nurse, school psychologist, school counselor, or school social worker if your child is having difficulties as a result of anxiety or stress related to COVID-19. We may be able to provide the guidance you need to support your child at home.

Student Medication and Supplies

If you need to pick up your child's medication or medical supplies from the health office, your school nurse will be available to meet you on Monday, March 16, 2020 from 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM. If that time is not convenient for you, please email Patricia Smith at psmith@hanoverschools.org to make an arrangement for pick up.

For additional age-specific resources, please see the following:

Young Children

Talking to Children About COVID-19:

<https://www.brighthorizons.com/family-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid19?spMailingID=22976271&spUserID=NDMzMDk1Mjc4Mjk4S0&spJobID=1700518326&spReportId=MTcwMDUxODMyNgS2>

Elementary-Aged Children

Talking to Children About COVID-19:

<https://www.brighthorizons.com/family-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid19?spMailingID=22976271&spUserID=NDMzMDk1Mjc4Mjk4S0&spJobID=1700518326&spReportId=MTcwMDUxODMyNgS2>

Comic for Kids Explaining the Coronavirus:

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus>

Middle-School Aged

Comic for Kids Explaining the Coronavirus:

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus>

Talking to Teens and Tweens About Coronavirus:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/02/well/family/coronavirus-teenagers-anxiety.html>

High-School Aged

Talking to Teens and Tweens About Coronavirus:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/02/well/family/coronavirus-teenagers-anxiety.html>

Please do not hesitate to reach out to any of us at HPS any time for further resources or support!

Stay Well!

Sincerely,

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