



Child Protection Case Management Task Force Lebanon
Guidance for Child Protection Case workers
How Caregivers can Support Children during COVID-19

March 2020

Child Protection COVID -19 DropBox [LINK](#)

As a Child Protection Case Worker, providing direct services to vulnerable populations during the COVID¹ 19 outbreak, it's important to make sure you are equipped with right information to support the families as much as you can.

This guidance note² focuses on **how to support caregiver during the outbreak to better understand their children**, their needs and their reactions and ways in which they can support them. This can be utilized:

- As a standalone with a family which you may deem very vulnerable and has not received the necessary information;
- As part of regular cases management follow-up.

Note: this can be complemented by other MHPSS activities which are being developed and delivered by multiple agencies

Note: It is also important to use this call as a chance to follow up on parents' well-being and on their own coping situation before starting the conversation on how they can support their children. For this, Case Workers can also refer to the **Guidelines for the Provision of Remote Psychosocial Support to caregivers during COVID-19** available in the IA COVID-19 drop box [LINK](#)

1. KEY MESSAGES to explain to parents and caregivers over the phone or during a home visit.

EXPLAIN during the house visit or phone³ call the aim of the call and ask the parent/ caregiver **if you can speak to them alone without children present**. Explain to the parent/caregiver that you are here to provide them with some information about COVID-19 and that one of the ways that you will be supporting is by going through some very normal reactions of children about the situation during this time.

EXPLAIN that it's important for them to know **that children react, in part, to the behavior they see from adults around them** such as their caregivers, extended family members and neighbors and that when caregivers deal with the crisis calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children.

¹ Please note the content was adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC website), for the information to be helpful for case workers either making phone calls to families visiting households and raising awareness to caregivers in Lebanon regarding the potential impact of COVID-19 on children. <https://www.cdc.gov/Covid-19virus/2019-ncov/about/coping.html#for-caregivers>

² Please note that this document was developed as part of an Inter-Agency Effort by numerous child protection case management agencies in Lebanon including Save the children, Himaya, IRC, UNICEF and UNHCR

³ Please note if house visits are not possible at this time, please ensure this information is passed over the phone.



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EXPLAIN that they **play a very important role in building their child’s foundation to manage challenging situations** by modelling certain types of behaviors and that how you react to the situation will influence how they also react to the situation as children reach, in part, to what they see from the adults around them.

EXPLAIN that regardless of the child’s age, he or she may feel upset or have other strong emotions after an emergency. **Also, some children react right away, while others may show signs of difficulty much later.**

EXPLAIN that how a child reacts, and the common signs of distress can vary according to the child’s age, previous experiences, and how the child typically copes with stress.

EXPLAIN that in this case you as a child protection case worker are here to support the family to access local resources.

EXPLAIN that caregivers can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

2. EXPLAIN COMMON REACTIONS THAT CHILDREN COULD HAVE⁴:

EXPLAIN to the caregiver or caregivers that not all children respond to stress in the same way and that some children might not even show any signs of being affected by the situations and that this can also happen, however, they should provide support to all children.

Some general common changes to watch for in children:

- Excessive crying and irritation
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (e.g., toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors
- Poor school performance or avoiding school
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs for preteens or teenagers
- Children with special needs might have more intense distress, worry or anger than children without special needs because they have less control over day-to-day well-being than other people.

⁴ Factors that Influence the Emotional Impact on Children in Emergencies

The amount of damage caused by the crisis such as Covid-19 can be overwhelming. The disruption to the child’s schedule, separation from school, family, and friends can create a great amount of stress and anxiety for children. The financial shock and pressure that working children experience. The emotional impact of an emergency on a child depends on a child’s characteristics and experiences, the social and economic circumstances of the family and community, and the availability of local resources-. Not all children respond in the same ways and it’s important not to label a child, shame them for being scared. Both adults and children might have more severe, longer-lasting reactions. Caregivers can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared. Both adults and children can become more distressed if they see and hear images and testimonies of a crisis in the media, on social networks, on the radio. Early on, consider limiting the amount of exposure you and your loved ones get to media coverage



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- Note: Children with special needs may need extra words of reassurance, more explanations about the event, and more comfort and other positive physical contact such as hugs from loved ones

| There are some specific factors that may affect a child’s emotional response, these include but are not limited to: | |
|--|---|
| Examples of Negative Factors | Examples of Positive Factors |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Direct experience with Covid-19• Previous traumatic or stressful events• Belief that the child or a loved one may die• Loss of a family member, close friend, or pet• Separation from caregivers• Ongoing stress due to the change in familiar routines and living conditions including economic hardship• Repeated exposure to mass media coverage of the emergency and aftermath | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How caregivers and caregivers respond during the Covid-19 outbreak – for example maintaining a calm composure• Relationship building amongst family members• Community Resilience |

3. EXPLAIN HOW THE CAREGIVER CAN SUPPORT THEIR CHILD:

- Take the **time to talk** with your child about the COVID-19 outbreak explaining what virus are, how this one is different to others. Highlight information shared from awareness sessions.
- Depending on the age of the child **consider demonstrating** some of the practical tips about COVID-19 prevention in a child friendly and fun way. For example, for younger children share practical tips about how we can wash our hands making it a game, agree on a little rule between yourself and your child on how they can practice social distancing (maintaining a meter distance).
- Make sure to **answer your child’s questions** about COVID-19 in a way that your child can understand, depending on the child’s age choose words that are understandable.
- **Reassure** your child that they are safe. Let them know that is ok and normal if they feel upset.
- **Share positive constructive stress management techniques** with your child, or the child you are caring for regarding how you deal with your own stress. The child you are caring for can learn how to cope from you. Try to demonstrate these behaviors’, children observe caregivers. For example, spending time with loved ones, playing games and reading, listening to music, and praying.
- **Try to limit your child’s exposure to media coverage** of the event in radio, TV, online social networks groups such as Facebook as well as discussions in the community where adults discuss COVID-19 excessively. Remember that children may misinterpret what they hear on TV, on the radio, and in the community and can be frightened about something they do not understand.



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- Help your child to **have a sense of structure** as best you can under the current circumstances. For example:
 - a) Waking up at the same time every day, playing a game at a certain time, eating meals at the same time, any positive steps you can take to create consistency and structure is helpful.
 - b) Taking breaks when you can throughout the day, get as much sleep as you can and encourage your child to do so, exercise by walking, running, or eat healthy food when possible.
 - c) Connect with your friends and family members via phone hearing their voices and rely on your social support system.
When you are **prepared, rested, and relaxed you can respond** better to unexpected events and can make decisions in the best interest of your family and loved one.

4. OTHER TIPS FOR CASE WORKERS:

Case workers should share the following tips that can help reduce stress before, during, and after a disaster or traumatic event:

Before:

- **EXPLAIN** that as a CP case worker you are here to support the family consider different scenarios which could potentially impact the family during the outbreak and if the family were to be affected. For example, if a caregiver falls ill with Covid-19 what would they do, whom would take care of the children and what support would they need.
- **EXPLAIN** to the caregiver that by working with them on a risk mitigation plan which given them solutions for the different scenarios, and the exact steps to take in a challenging situation, they will be better equipped to deal with the situation, and to speak to their children about their plans to keep them safe.
- ***VERY IMPORTANT:** [Review safety plans with the caregiver by phone or in person following the safety protocols to prepare in case someone in the family is affected by COVID-19. Having a plan will increase the family's resilience and the child confidence as well as help give them a sense of control.](#)

Explain that as the outbreak spreads it's important to:

- Stay calm and reassure your children.
- Talk to children about what is happening in a way that they can understand. Keep it simple and appropriate for each child's age.

After:

- For parents to provide children with opportunities to talk about what they went through during the Covid-19 outbreak, how they feel. Encourage them to share concerns and ask questions.
 - Parents can help their children feel a sense of control and manage their feelings by encouraging them to recuperate their routines prior to the situation of extreme stress (COVID-19 in this case) and go back to do all the things they used to enjoy individually and/or as a family..
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MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: Inform the child and caregiver of the hotline provided by the Ministry of Public Health (**EMBRACE 1564**) if they need emotional support, if they themselves or their child is experiencing suicidal ideation. Let the caregiver know there are also many other resources being developed and that you can put them in touch with colleagues who will support on this specifically.

Note on Data Safety:

If CP case workers fill out any forms during the conversation, it is **imperative to ensure the safe storage** of any identifiable information of the child. Documents prepared during remote case management should be cared for in the same way as face-to-face case management. In such cases, please keep the information in a safe place with a lock. In case any electronic case management system (such as PRIMERO) is in place, please follow the agreed-upon data safety measures.

Contacts:

Please note should you require additional guidance for child protection case workers, kindly inform the National Child Protection Case Management Task force leads:

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Or the Child Protection in Emergencies Working Group lead:

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