

Reimagining Summer: Planning for the New Normal

For many of us, staying safer at home to limit our risk of getting COVID-19 will continue well into the summer months. Because our children are at higher risk if they become ill with this virus, we need to seriously weigh the risks of jumping back into community activities.

In addition, many camps and community programs have been delayed or canceled for the summer. So we're all scrambling to think creatively and reimagine a fun and active summer for our kids with special needs.

Tip for Families:

Your child's camp should follow the [American Camp Association \(ACA\) guidelines](#). The ACA worked closely with health professionals, like the American Academy of Pediatrics, to make a safe camp for every camper. Also, talk with your child's health care provider to decide if it's safe for your child to participate in activities with other children.

IDEAS FOR SUMMER FUN

Find ways to get outdoors and stay active. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) [guidance on visiting parks and recreational facilities](#) has some great suggestions for families who want to enjoy the outdoors. Some of these recommendations are to visit parks close to home, prepare for your visit with things like masks and hand sanitizer, practice social distancing, and **avoid** playgrounds or parks that look crowded.

Think about low-cost activities for your family. Try planting an herb garden with your kids; turn walks into adventures by making scavenger hunts; read your favorite childhood books together; or, bring out your kids' inner chef by cooking and baking together. You can also ask your child's physical or occupational therapist for ideas to incorporate IEP goals into these activities.

Look into online classes, programs or learning apps. There are so many different choices available that you'll find plenty to match your child's interests. Your child's special education teacher or school librarian may have lists of these resources to continue your child's virtual learning this summer.

Your local public library is another great resource for activities and materials. You can also go to wplc.overdrive.com for online books for your child or yourself.

Take a virtual tour of the world. Get your old paper maps out or download one and learn about a new country each week using Google Maps or by watching some YouTube videos with your family. You can also include virtual tours of museums, national parks, and historic monuments. Both [National Geographic](#) and the [National Park Service](#) websites have great activities for kids to learn about the world.

Try to stick to a schedule. By now you've realized that your family is much more fun to be around if everyone has regular bedtimes and mealtimes. Try to keep other daily activities like reading, doing puzzles or playing games on a schedule. It's also a good idea to limit screen time and encourage lots of outdoor time to help manage your children's anxiety.

Finally, keep in mind that our "reimagined" summer might be less structured, less busy and less social than in the past, but there's a **bright side**—We'll have more time to enjoy our family, more chances to be creative and we'll learn to appreciate the world a little closer to home. Remember, it's worth living in this "new normal" to keep our kids with disabilities healthy and safe.

Tip for Families:

It's important to know the facts! Wisconsin's [Department of Health Services](#) (DHS) regularly updates state and local information about COVID-19.

Did You Know? Now You Know!

Having Caregivers in Your Home During COVID-19

Having respite, personal care or other direct caregivers in your home may be necessary for you to be able to work or just to keep everyone sane this summer. But there are risks involved and serious health concerns for our families if they're exposed to COVID-19.

Health professionals recommend that you limit the number of outside providers in your home. Ideally, find one or two direct caregivers who **don't work with other families** and who are following the [CDC's guidelines](#) to protect themselves and others from COVID-19. If it's possible, an extended family member with limited exposure is a good choice to help you this summer.

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services has recommended the following for those who need a caregiver:

- Ask that the caregiver wear a mask and gloves at all times in your home.
- If you need help finding personal protective equipment (PPE) talk with your child's service coordinator or go to dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/ppe.htm.
- Have providers wash their hands and wear gloves as soon as they enter your home and change them before and after providing personal care.
- When possible, maintain a **social distance of 6 feet** from you and others in your home.
- Most importantly, ask your caregiver to **not come** into your home if they're sick or if their family members or housemates are sick.

To learn more read the [Wisconsin DHS fact sheet](#) on protecting yourself during a home visit.

TELEMEDICINE A New Option for Families

Changes to Wisconsin's Medicaid rules and the increase in availability of technology now make it possible for many of us to have virtual visits with our children's health care providers.

These virtual visits may seem intimidating, but we need to adjust to the reality of our new normal in order to effectively communicate with health care providers and make sure that our questions and concerns regarding our children's care are addressed. If you need to get ready for your first telehealth meeting the Midwest

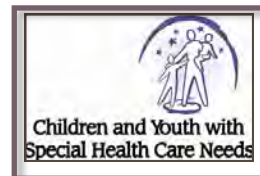
Genetics Network has developed some great videos for families at midwestgenetics.org/resources/telemedicine-resources. These videos explain how to prepare for a telemedicine visit, what to expect and the best way to follow up after an appointment.

**All Abilities
Market**

Showcasing Wisconsin-Based Artists and Makers with Disabilities!

Need a special gift for that graduate? Shop online and find unique crafts and products created by artists with disabilities. The Market is an innovative approach to highlight and empower microenterprise owners who now need to limit their face to face interactions.

Go to allamarket.org



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Children's Hospital
of Wisconsin
Fox Valley
877.568.5205

Northern Region
Marathon County
Health Dept.
Wausau
866.640.4106

Southeast Region
Children's Hospital
Milwaukee
800.234.5437

Southern Region
Waisman Center
Madison
800.532.3321

Western Region
Chippewa County
Dept of Public Health
Chippewa Falls



Policy/Budget Update

COVID-19 and Changes to the Children's Long-Term Support Program

In response to the current pandemic, Wisconsin's Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS) Program has put a number of changes in place to provide more flexibility and ensure that children and their families have access to the services and supports they need.

These changes include things like eliminating the requirements for face-to-face contact for eligibility, intake and monthly contact with support and service coordinators. These can now be done by phone or video meeting. Parents or other family members may also be able to get paid for services like respite or supportive home care. This change may be especially helpful for families struggling to find direct caregivers during this time.

To learn more, talk with your child's service coordinator and go to dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/clts.htm.

You can also stay current on policies and new initiatives related to Wisconsin's CLTS Programs by reading the newest issue of the **All in for Kids** newsletter at dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/akids.htm.

STEPS TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS



Clean your hands often



Avoid close contact



Stay home if you're sick



Cover coughs and sneezes



Wear a facemask if you are sick



Clean and disinfect



For more information on these articles visit these websites:

Family Voices of Wisconsin
familyvoiceswi.org

National Family Voices
familyvoices.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
cdc.gov

Family Voices Online Trainings

There's never been a better time to take advantage of the many Family Voices online training opportunities. Watch **Medicaid Made Easy** to learn more about Medicaid or learn about the world of transition to adulthood by watching **What's After High School?** View these trainings any time at familyvoiceswi.org/learn.

Please Note: All in-person training sessions have been cancelled for this spring. Check later this summer for our fall trainings schedule.



[What's After High School?](#)

Learn about the transition to adult life for youth with disabilities and special health care needs.



[Medicaid Made Easy](#)

Gives you a solid understanding of Medicaid programs for children and how they're funded.



[Did You Know? Now You Know!](#)

Explains all the resources and services for children with disabilities and special health care needs from birth through young adulthood.



[Coordinating Your Child's Health Care](#)

This training was created to help you partner with your child's care team.

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Summer 2020 Volume 15, Issue 2

This newsletter is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number H84MC21690-01-00. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.

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Family Voices of Wisconsin is dedicating this issue of our newsletter to the **New Normal**. We know that this isn't how any of us thought that we'd be spending

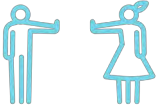


our summer but we're all adjusting. To help families out, we've included some great ideas and resources in each of our articles so your family won't just get by—you'll be healthy and enjoy some summer fun!

About Family Voices

If you have a child with a disability or special health care need, you've come to the right place! We're here to help you **navigate** the services available to your family. It's a complicated system and our goal is to provide you and your family with some tools. **Connect** with other families, learn how to **advocate** for your child, and discover how you can be a voice for all children with special needs.

Avoid Close Contact with Others and Practice Physical Distancing



- Stay close to home as much as possible.
- Avoid group activities, events or gatherings of more than 10 people.
- Follow social distancing guidelines by staying at least **6 feet away** from people.
- Make playdates for your kids with just one friend or one other family.
 - Have kids play outside and find activities that don't involve sharing toys or food.

Practice Good Hand Hygiene



- Remind your kids to wash their hands regularly for **20 seconds**, especially when they've been out of the house or in close contact with others.
- Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Teach your children to avoid touching their faces, especially when they're in public.

Cover Your Mouth and Nose with a Cloth Face Covering When You Go Out



- Make or buy a cloth mask or face covering that you and your children feel comfortable wearing.
- Have your kids practice wearing the mask before they leave the house.
- Remind your children that wearing a mask, especially at indoor public spaces, protects you and the people around you.

If You—or Your Child—Start to Feel Sick



- **Stay home!** Call your primary care provider if you have concerns and ask if you need to be tested for COVID-19.
 - To learn more about symptoms go to dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/symptoms.htm.
 - To find community testing sites contact your county's health department dhs.wisconsin.gov/lh-depts/counties.htm.
- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue or use the inside of your elbow when you cough or sneeze and teach your children to do the same.
- Clean surfaces and objects that are touched daily like tables, countertops, light switches, doorknobs and cabinet handles. See more information on cleaning and disinfecting at cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html.

Sources:

Wisconsin DHS, COVID-19: Avoid Illness, dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/protect.htm.

CDC, How to Protect Yourself & Others, cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html.

A Parent's Guide

Helping your child wear a face mask

Your child may have challenges or discomfort when wearing a face mask. After talking about the importance of face masks, ask your child about what might be bothersome and any preferences in type, color, or style. Once you understand, you can help work with your child to help make the face mask more comfortable to wear.



ABOUT FACE MASKS

WHY

Coronavirus can be spread when we breathe, cough or sneeze. Wearing a mask reduces spread from person to person.

WHO

People who wear face masks help prevent the virus from spreading. Children under the age of two and those with breathing challenges should not wear face masks

HOW

When wearing a face mask, make sure it covers both the nose and mouth. After using the face mask, remove it and be sure to wash hands. Disposable masks should be thrown in the trash and fabric masks should be washed in the washing machine.

WHERE

Use face masks when in public settings, especially in places where you are in close contact with others such as a grocery store, laundromat, pharmacy, or bank.

TYPES OF MASKS

Depending on your child's comfort level and face shape



Face mask



Neck Gaiter

GETTING COMFORTABLE

Mask Anxiety

If your child expresses fear over the mask, address what is bothering them. This may be due to fear of the mask itself, itchiness, feeling hot or difficulty breathing.

- Include your child in making the mask or even **decorating** it with stickers or using fun fabrics
- Have a child feel more comfortable with face masks by seeing other family members wear them as well
- When creating or choosing a mask, experiment with **different fabric textures**

Ways to get used to a face mask

Use a "visual timer" technique. Put a timer on and wear a mask alongside your child at home. Incrementally increase the time to allow your child to get used to the feel.



Rewards. Give your child a reward for practicing wearing the mask at home. For example, allow your child screen time while wearing the mask.

How to make a mask:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/DIY-cloth-face-covering-instructions.pdf>

Be patient! It may take days or even weeks for a child to get used to a face mask. There are people around you who could help. Ask your health care provider to get the support you need.

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Through a partnership with Kohl's Cares,
Children's Specialized Hospital is improving access
to care for children with special health care needs.


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www.childrens-specialized.org