

August 18, 2021

To Our Community:

We are psychologists, social workers, and pediatricians from across Northeast Tennessee who want to support parents as they guide and protect their children during COVID-19.

We want to reassure parents there is no known connection between wearing a mask and poor mental health, such as depression, among children or teens. We feel confident children and teens who wear masks in the classroom can do so without risk for harm and doing so will reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Research shows that COVID-19 has increased behavioral or emotional problems for some children and adolescents; however, experts agree that the specific causes of those concern are major changes and events such as:

- family economic loss and loss of resources,
- trauma around the loss/sickness of a family member,
- isolation,
- and major disruption of routine, particularly school attendance.

Parents should know that decades of family science research shows that *even when families face major challenges such as these, children who are supported by strong family leadership, including loved ones who consistently nurture, guide, and protect them, will fare well.*

Parenting during this pandemic has been very hard. The uncertainty and disruption in our lives has increased demands on caregivers. We offer our community the following resources:

- A national non-profit that promotes scientifically based guidance for early childhood development, **Zero to Three**, advises that young children do best with routine and consistency and that mask-wearing is a safe and developmentally appropriate expectation even for younger children. It is important for caregivers to “keep it simple, not scary” when talking to children about masks.
- **The National Child Traumatic Stress Network** offers guidance to families on how to keep children safe and promote resilience during the pandemic and how to notice signs of distress at different developmental stages.
- The **American Psychological Association** offers information for those caring for loved ones during COVID-19 including young children, teens, and older adults.
- Since parents’ well-being is so closely linked to child well-being, we strongly encourage you to seek help if you are experiencing symptoms related to anxiety, depression, or substance abuse. Call the **Tennessee Statewide Crisis Hotline (855-274-7471; 855-CRISIS-1)** or talk to your doctor.

Let’s keep our children in school this year by helping them mask up!

In Health,

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Resources

Zero to Three: A national non-profit that promotes scientifically based guidance for early childhood development advises that young children do best with routine and consistency and that mask-wearing is a safe and developmentally appropriate expectation even for younger children.

- <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3593-mask-up-talking-to-young-children-about-wearing-masks>



The National Child Traumatic Stress Network offers guidance to families on how to keep children safe and promote resilience during the pandemic and how to notice signs of distress at different developmental stages.

- https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/parent_caregiver_guide_to_helping_families_cope_with_the_coronavirus_disease_2019.pdf



The American Psychological Association offers information for those caring for loved ones during COVID-19 including young children, teens, and older adults.

- <https://www.apa.org/topics/covid-19/parenting-caregiving>



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- www.tngov/crisisline
- **855-274-7471 (855-CRISIS-1)**

