

To view an archived recording of this presentation please click the following link:

<http://pho.adobeconnect.com/ps9befuo2ltq/>

Please scroll down this file to view a copy of the slides from the session.

Disclaimer

This document was created by its author and/or external organization. It has been published on the Public Health Ontario (PHO) website for public use as outlined in our Website Terms of Use. PHO is not the owner of this content. Any application or use of the information in this document is the responsibility of the user. PHO assumes no liability resulting from any such application or use.

Helpful tips when viewing the recording:

- The default presentation format includes showing the “event index”. To close the events index, please click on the following icon  and hit “close”
- If you prefer to view the presentation in full screen mode, please click on the following icon  in the top right hand corner of the share screen

The incidental impacts of initial COVID-19 public health measures on Ontario families.

Andrea Gonzalez, PhD
McMaster University
Offord Centre for Child Studies

DISCLOSURES

- None of the presenters at this session have received financial support or in-kind support from a commercial sponsor.
- None of the presenters have potential conflicts of interest to declare.

Objectives

1

Summarize a recent survey's findings on the impact of the initial COVID-19 lockdown on families in Ontario

2

Describe how to plan for potential future lockdowns and how we may support families

3

Identify useful resources to support families as the COVID-19 pandemic continues

Impact of COVID-19

What do you think the biggest challenges are facing Ontario families during COVID-19?



Hi Andrea, when you submit this form, the owner will be able to see your name and email address.

1. What do you think the biggest challenges are facing Ontario families during COVID-19?

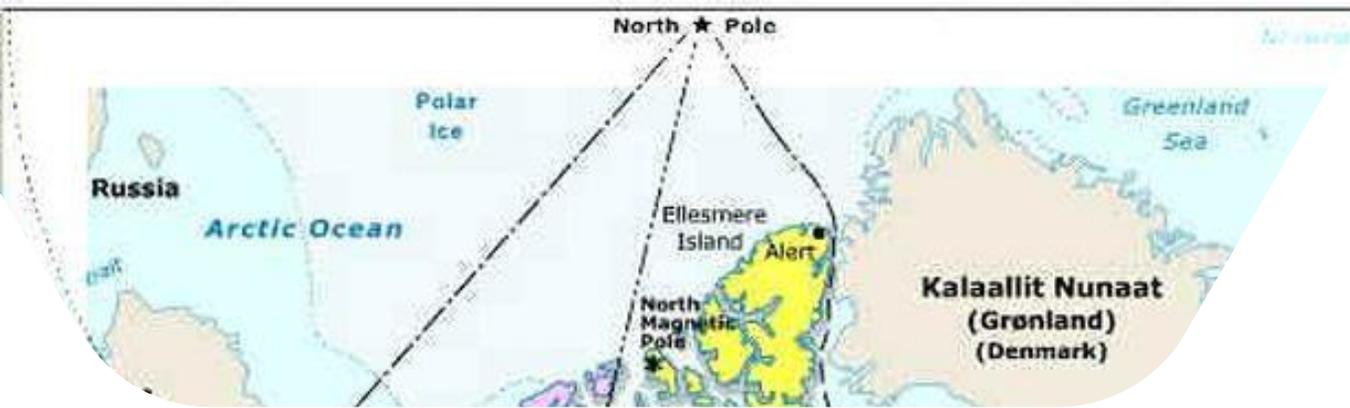
Physical health concerns



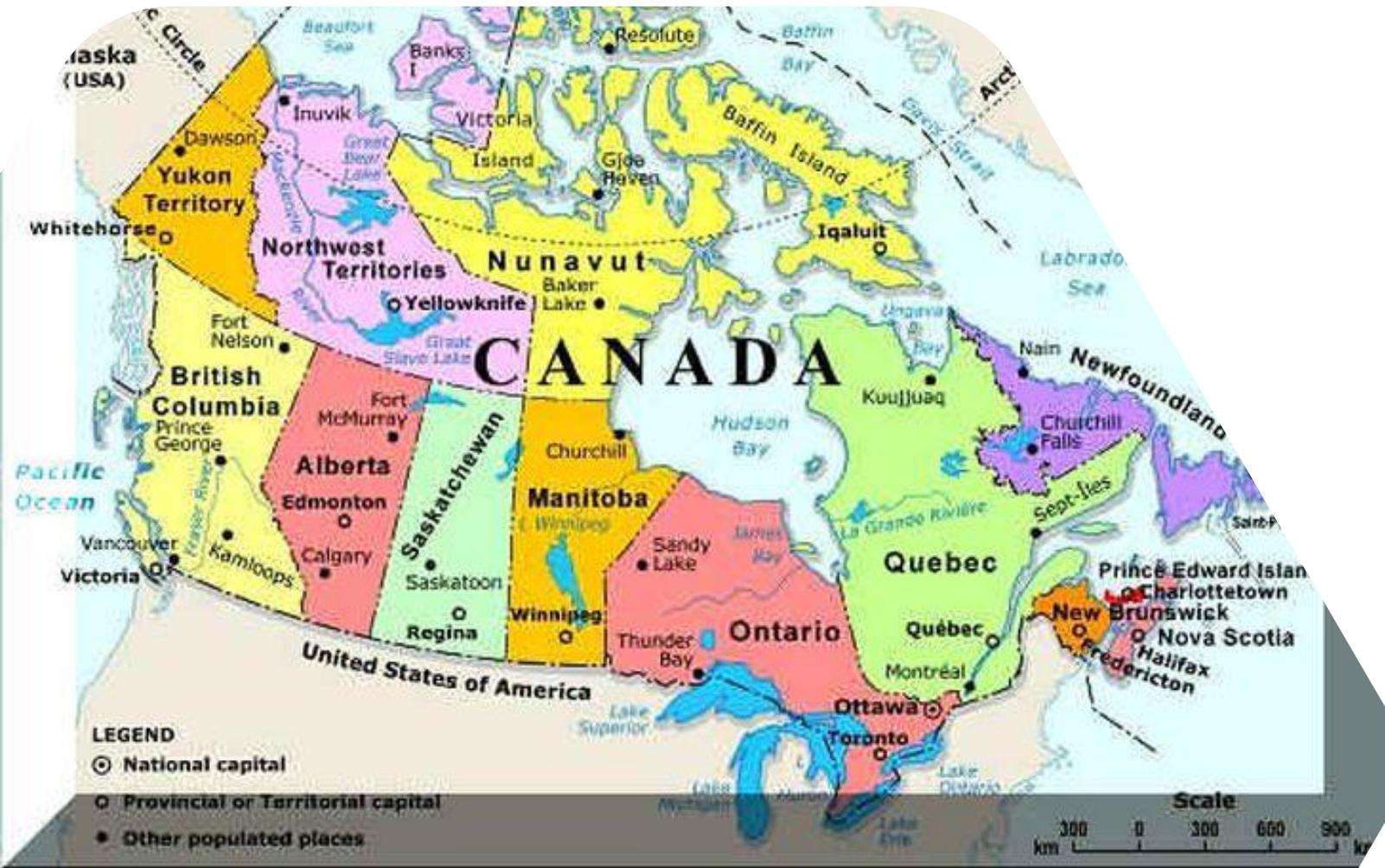
Global Pandemic

- COVID-19 represents an unprecedented time in our history with need for data about impact and implications more broadly, but also for how the pandemic is affecting families and children



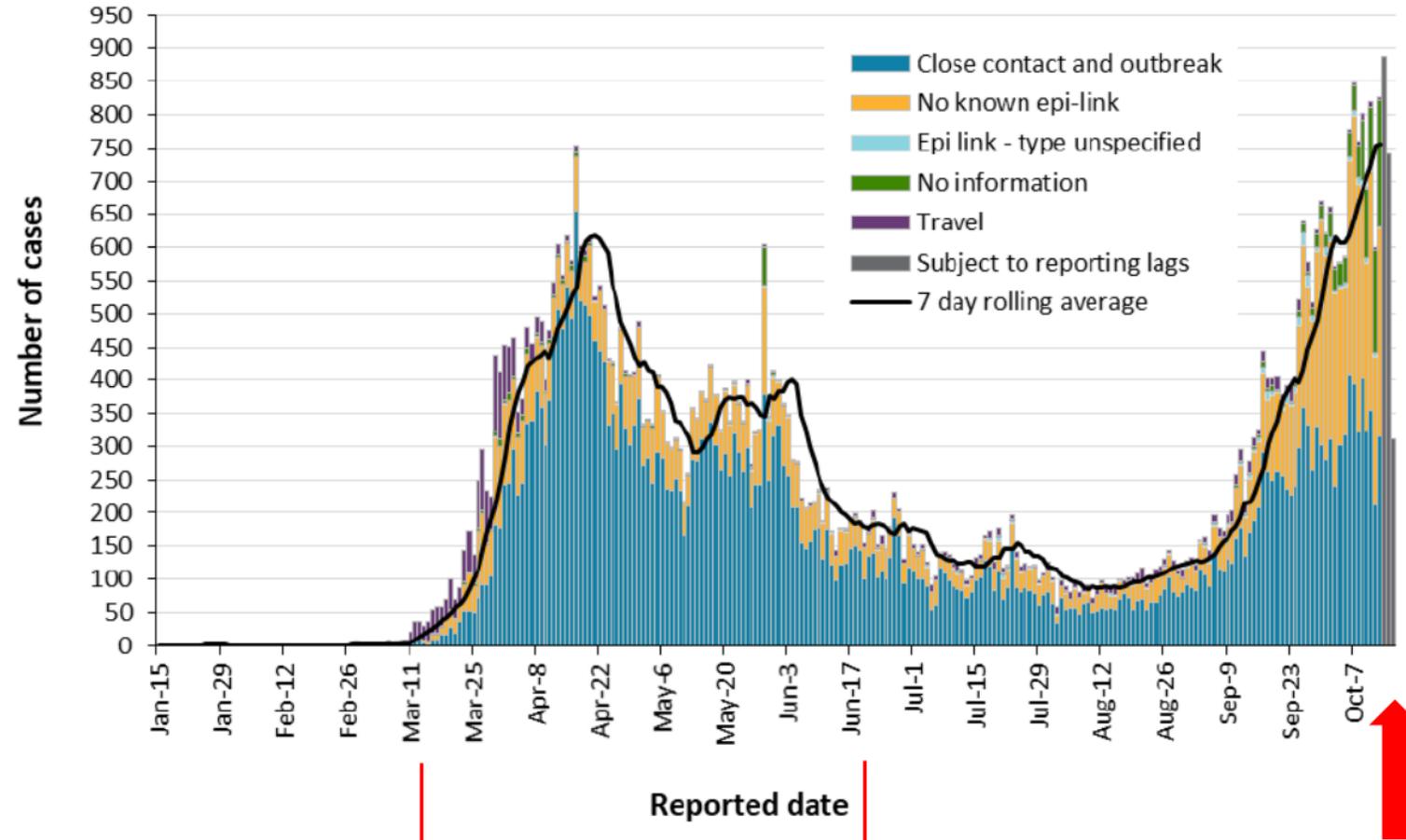


Canadian Context



- Between March 17th and 22nd every province and territory declared a state of emergency
- Daycare and schools were closed immediately;
- Bans of no more than 5 to 15 people depending on the province
- Stores and many services were closed/cancelled
- In most cases alcohol and cannabis stores remained open (exception cannabis stores in Ontario; and liquor stores in Newfoundland and PEI and Nunavut where prohibition laws were enacted)

Figure 1. Confirmed cases of COVID-19 by likely acquisition and public health unit reported date: Ontario, January 15, 2020 to October 16, 2020



Data Source: CCM plus

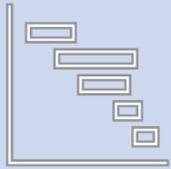
First wave - Public health measures instituted

Public Health Ontario – Daily Epidemiologic Summary; accessed October 17, 2020

What do we know from other contexts?



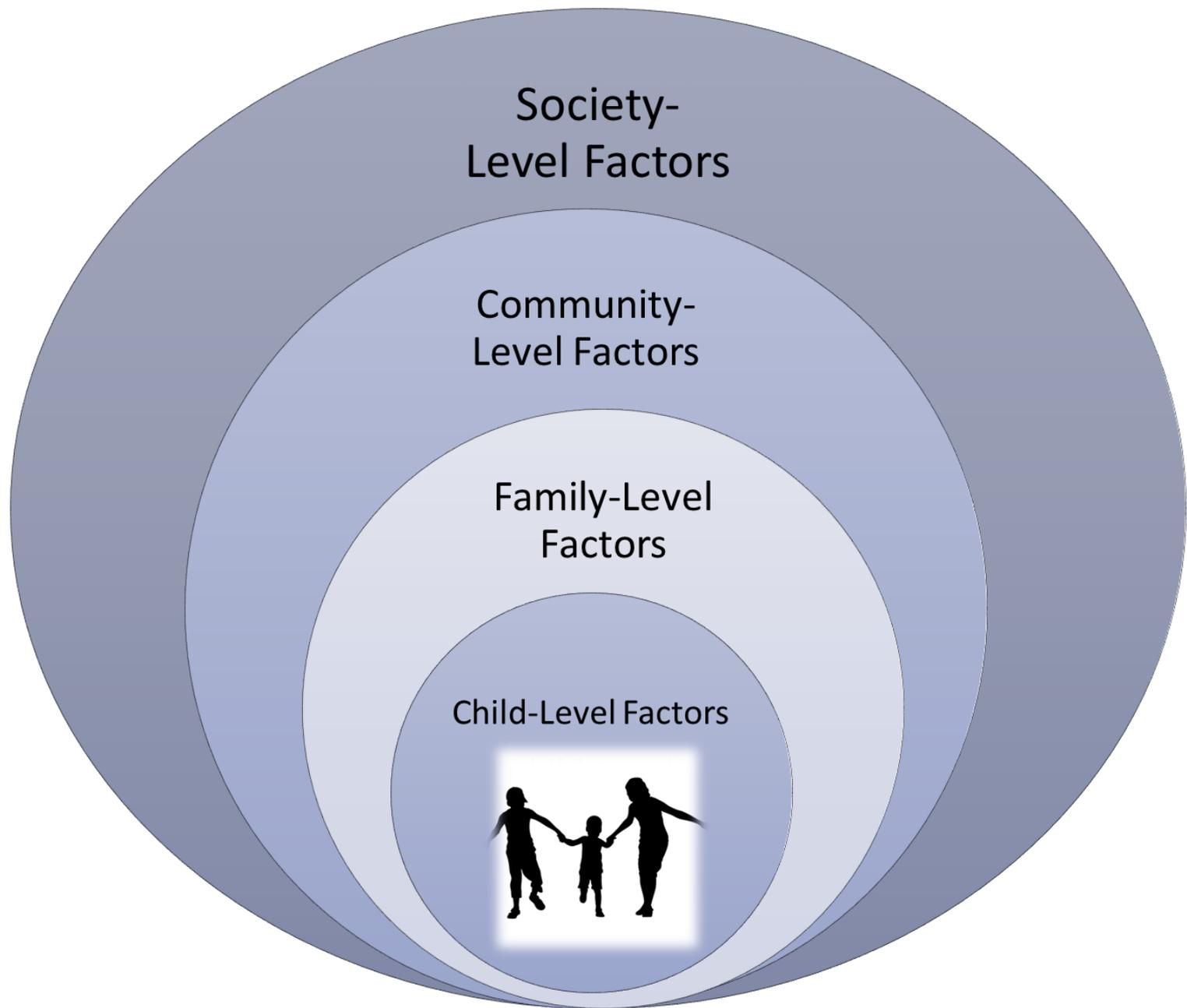
What do we know from other contexts?



A rapid review of the impact of public health measures on children and families indicated that school closures and stay-at-home orders negatively effects access to nutrition and vaccination programs through schools, and increases risk of financial stressors, mental health problems, decreased movement behaviour and increased risk of factors related to child maltreatment (Public Health Ontario, 2020).



A second rapid review of the psychological impact of quarantine identified 24 eligible studies and found numerous psychological effects including PTSD, confusion and anger. Stressors included longer quarantine duration, infection fears, boredom, frustration, inadequate supplies, inadequate information, financial loss and stigma (Brooks et al., 2020)

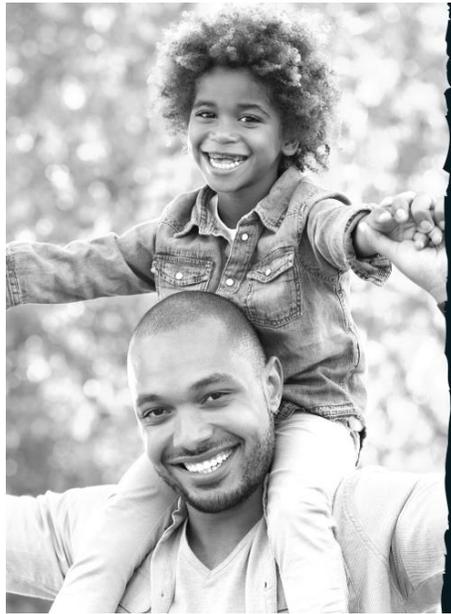


- Disruption or limited access to basic services

- Breakdown of support networks and disruption of social services
- Limited access to community support services, education and play spaces

- Economic scarcity – unemployment, increased poverty and food scarcity
- Loss or separation from family
- Fear of disease
- Increased caregiver distress
- Heightened risk of domestic violence

- Heightened risk of psychological distress and negative impact on development. Increased risk of child maltreatment.



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU ...

DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN AGED 0-17 YEARS? HOW ARE YOUR AND YOUR FAMILY COPING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

ONTARIO PARENT SURVEY.CA

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU ...

ONTARIO PARENT SURVEY.CA

DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN AGED 0-17 YEARS? HOW ARE YOU AND YOUR FAMILY COPING WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC? PARTICIPATE IN OUR SURVEY.



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU ...

Ontario Parent Survey.ca

How are you and your family coping with COVID-19? Tell us your story.



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU ...

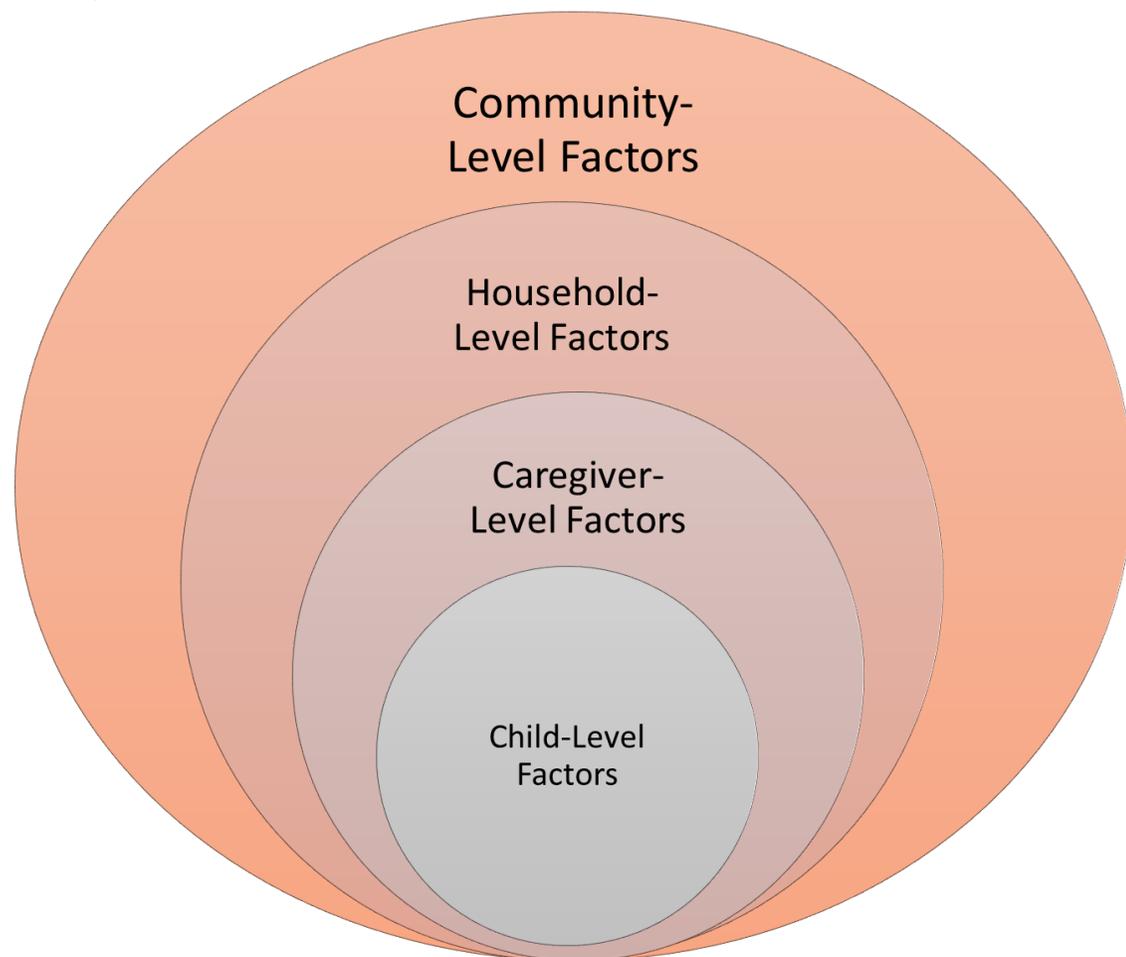
ONTARIO PARENT SURVEY.CA

Do you have children aged 0-17 years? How are you and your family coping during the COVID-19 pandemic?





Ontario Parent Survey



- Postal code information which could be matched with material deprivation index or with geographic region
- Household composition; employment (impact of COVID-19 on employment) and education
- Mental health; parenting; family functioning; partner conflict; alcohol and cannabis use
- Child socioemotional functioning and changes in child functioning since COVID-19 stay-at-home measures



Parenting Scale

- Important considerations
 - What can we safely ask with a web-based survey
 - Ethics of asking these questions in an anonymous survey

- Chose the Parenting Scale (Arnold et al., 1993); specifically the Overreactivity Subscales
 - Representing a harsh, angry discipline style, consistent with an authoritarian parenting style

At one time or another, all children misbehave or do things that parents don't like. Parents have many ways or styles of dealing with these types of problems. For each item, check the box that best describes how you may have dealt with problems over the past 2 months:

Question	Rating	
When I'm upset or under stress...I am picky and on my child's back	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	I am not more picky than usual
When my child misbehaves...I usually get into a long argument with my child	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	I don't get into an argument
When my child misbehaves...I give my child a long lecture	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	I keep talks short and to the point
When my child misbehaves...I raise my voice or yell	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	I speak to my child calmly
After there has been a problem with my child...I often hold a grudge	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Things get back to normal quickly
When there is a problem with my child...Things build up and I do things I don't mean to do	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Things don't get out of hand
When my child misbehaves...I spank, slap, grab, or hit my child Never or rarely	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Most of the time
When my child misbehaves...I handle it without getting upset	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	I get so frustrated or angry that my child can see I'm upset
When my child misbehaves...I rarely use bad language	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	I almost always use bad language
When my child does something I don't like, I insult my child, say mean things, or call my child names. Never or rarely	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Most of the time

Marital Conflict



All couples have conflicts from time to time and there are many ways that partners can try to handle disagreements when they arise. Please describe your disagreements in the last month.

In the past month, how often did the following occur? NOTE: scale ranges from 0 (not at all) to 3 (a lot)

Question	0	1	2	3
I was angry at my partner/spouse				
I was annoyed with my partner/spouse				
I yelled at or criticized my partner/spouse				
I felt distant or withdrawn from my partner/spouse				
I nagged my partner/spouse				
I flew off the handle or exploded at my partner/spouse				
My partner/spouse was angry at me				
My partner/spouse was annoyed with me				
My partner/spouse yelled at or criticized me				
My partner/spouse felt distant or withdrawn from me				
My partner/spouse nagged me				
My partner/spouse flew off the handle or exploded at me				



COVID-19 Experiences

Health

Since the pandemic started (March 12, 2020), which of the following have you experienced? Please check all that apply

- You were ill
- You were diagnosed with COVID-19
- Someone you live with was ill
- Someone you live with was diagnosed with COVID-19
- Someone close to you, but who you do not live with was ill
- Death of a person close to you

Resources

- Someone you live with or someone close to you was hospitalized
- Loss of income
- Unable to access necessary supplies or food
- Unable to access usual healthcare
- Unable to get usual prescription medications and treatments
- Unable to pay for rent or mortgage
- Unable to pay for other utilities and bills
- Do not have access to needed technology (computer, tablets) or internet

Conflict

- Increased verbal or physical conflict
- Separation from family

Caregiving

- Increased time caregiving for young and/or school-aged children
- Increased time interacting with adolescents
- Increased time caregiving for older adults
- Unable to care for people who require assistance due to health condition or limitation

Positive

- New connections with supportive people
- Increased time to do activities with children
- Eating meals with family more often
- Increase in exercise or physical activity
- More time in nature/being outdoors.
- More time doing enjoyable activities (e.g., reading, books, puzzles).
- More appreciative of things usually taken for granted.
- Volunteered to help people in need.
- Increased contact with family and friends (through phone or video).
- Don't know/No answer

All of his activities were cancelled, and he's lost without it. We did park visits regularly. His entire life has
d, and he is at an age where he expresses it with tantrums and testing limits. It's exhausting" "My child is
remely defiant and so we have resorted to allowing her to be on a screen for many hours every day. She
t want to do school and doesn't even show much interest in going outside. This is not unusual for her.
plified in the quarantine, allowing her sit on the iPad all day and not enjoy other activities.
eed a major deal eventually." "I was a child who was very cooperative and I was very cooperative.
outine and I was very cooperative. We were very cooperative. We were very cooperative.
ooperativ
s. It is h



Offord CENTRE FOR CHILD STUDIES
McMaster University 

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Ontario Families with Children: Findings from the Initial Lockdown



A light blue map of Ontario is the central focus. A thick teal brushstroke is drawn across the upper part of the map. A vertical dotted orange line with small circles at both ends connects the text 'Representing 14,000 children across Ontario' to a text box at the bottom. The text box has orange brackets on its left and right sides. The word 'Ontario' is written in a teal script font over the map. The number '7,434' is in a large orange font, and '14,000' is in a large black font.

7,434

Caregivers/Parents
participated.

Representing **14,000**
children across

Ontario

The purpose of this report is to
provide a snapshot of the experiences
of Ontario families during the initial
phase of the lockdown.



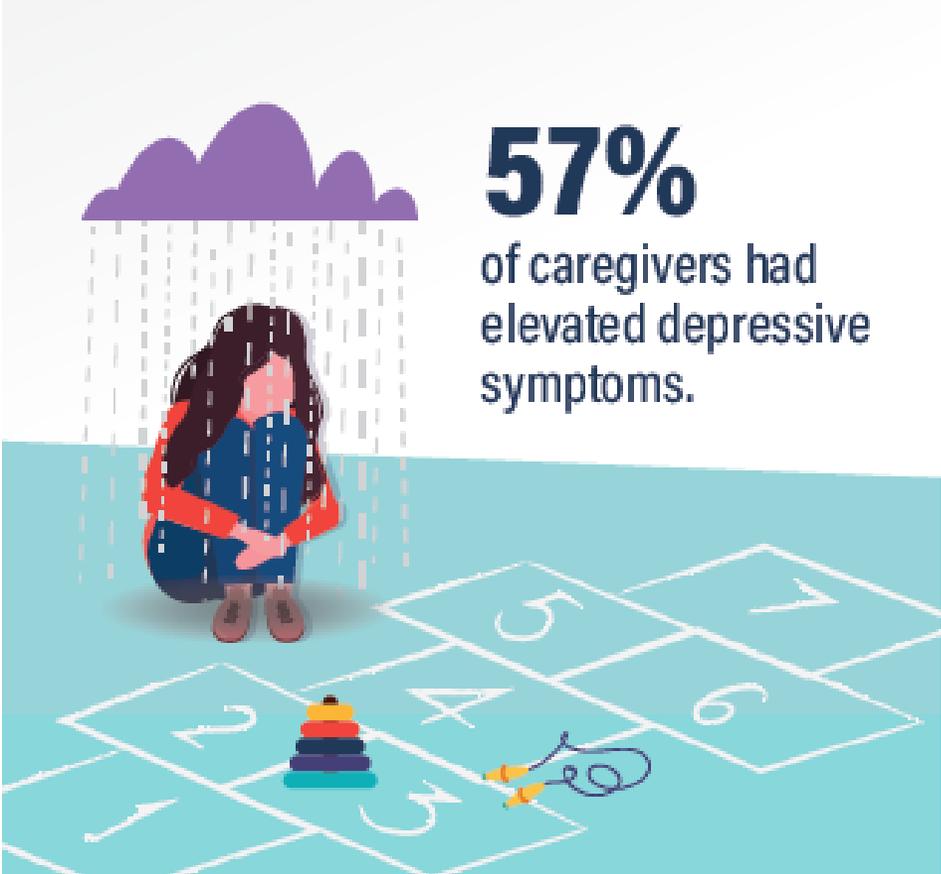
Sample demographics

- 93.6% female
 - Marital status
 - 86.4% married/common-law
 - 6.1% single parents
 - 7.6% divorced/separated/widowed
 - 88.8% identified 'North American/European' ethnicity
 - 52.1% university degree
 - 64.9% employed full-time
-



Main Findings

COVID-19 negatively impacted caregiver's mental health





- 45.6% of caregivers reported no change in alcohol consumption since the start of the pandemic; 37.5% reported an increase in alcohol intake
- Most parents reported no cannabis use within the last six months (80.7%). However, among those reporting using cannabis, over a third of parents reported changes in amount of cannabis consumption since the start of pandemic; with 87.9% reporting increased usage.

Parents/caregivers reported moderate to high levels of concern for:



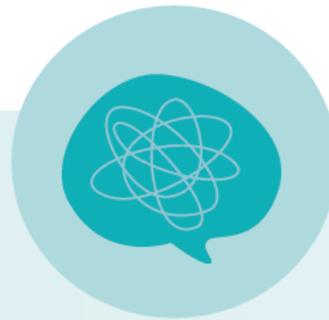
48%

Managing their children's remote learning.



54%

Managing their children's screen time.



48%

Managing their child's anxiety and stress.



31%

Managing their child's behaviour.



48%

Managing household routines, organization and meals.

What parents are *saying*...

"I see my kids becoming more distanced from their activities and friends"

"My child is undereating and losing weight. Already too thin. Unsure how to address it. Want to take him to a doctor but not essential."

"I worry how my children will handle real life again."

"Our young kids enjoy being home with us and we have lots of games and crafts to do. They watch more TV than usual but are otherwise thriving well. I did this survey to balance the results."

"My middle child is in Grade 8 so while it's 'optional' he would be disadvantaged if he didn't participate. He also had to mourn the loss of graduating and grad trip. He has snuck out resulting in us calling the police in the middle of the night on a work night. This has been hell."

"The kids fight with each other often, they are bored, miss school and friends, they absolutely hate home schooling. I find it hard to picture another few months like this. I know we will get through it, but it's hard being cooped up with each other all the time."

"I'm very concerned that my active child is not getting enough exercise. I have to work all day and can only take short breaks. Also, my child is an only child, so I worry she doesn't have enough interaction with her peers right now. Also, is she falling behind in school? So many stresses right now."

"My child can't see his psychiatrist because his therapy is play-based but his stress and anxiety is elevated."

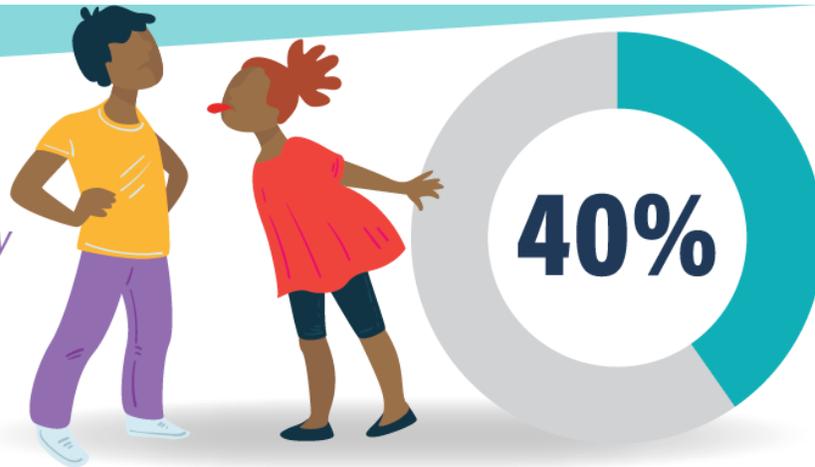
"Concern with my toddler losing social skills as he isn't interacting with anyone but mom and dad."

"My 11-year-old thinks everyone is going to die and says, 'it doesn't matter', and 'I don't care' a lot."

"They now live in fear of other people. I am scared that their social ability will be affected by this in the long run. They see people as germ carriers that can kill them."

"My oldest teen with diagnosed mental health issues... these issues have worsened due to pandemic i.e., no school, can't work, can't see friends or girlfriend and difficult to access therapy and difficulty with on-line courses."

"Working from home full time and helping children with online learning is exceptionally stressful for all of us and as a result, patience is quite short resulting in more arguments."



of caregivers reported deterioration in their children's behaviour or mood.

32% reported needing assistance with their children's behaviour and/or mood during the pandemic.

What parents are saying about what they need:

Parents were asked an open-ended question regarding anything else that may concern them about 'the impact of Coronavirus/COVID-19 on you or your child'. More than 3,000 responses were recorded — many themes were consistent and related to respite childcare, more virtual lessons and guidance from teachers and the school, and more options in terms of counselling services when needs either arose during the pandemic or for pre-existing conditions.

Parents need...

- *"Mental health help for my children with diagnosed mental health disorders. But this has been a problem since before the epidemic."*
- *"Support for my child's anxiety - she previously had therapy which has now been cancelled."*
- *"Better access to therapies or treatments for children (occupational therapy, speech, physio). Better online learning options or resources for children with special needs and/or Individual Education Plans."*
- *"Ideas on how to structure the day for tweens. Such a minor part of the day is for online schooling...she has a lot of time to put in and I am occupied with work and am not able to 'curate' for her...that's stressful. What is healthy for her mind, socialization, emotions?"*
- *"My younger daughter struggles with anxiety and free support with this for all children would be beneficial."*
- *"A resource for kids to go for info related to COVID geared to their age. A forum to speak with other kids, moderated by an informed adult who can answer questions and ease fears."*
- *"More online physical activities for ages 12+. There are adult Zoom classes and lots of things for younger children. More online social networking opportunities for 12+ beyond video games and school; safe environments where he could meet friends, discuss hobbies, etc."*
- *"I would have appreciated more support for healthcare workers at the beginning of the pandemic. Counselling services, help with organizing childcare and suggestions on how/when to protect our children from the virus."*
- *"Potential tutoring for my eldest, as he has learning difficulties. I am working full time from home and do not have time to plan activities for my children. If there are any suggestions as to how to manage and plan more of a routine/easy activities, I would be open to that."*

COVID-19 has affected family functioning.



49%

reported a high level of conflict with their partner/spouse.



One quarter reported having exploded at their partner/spouse.

Parents also reported a high level of conflict (“somewhat” to “a lot”) with their partner/spouse since the lockdown began – 49 per cent reported feeling angry or annoyed with spouse; 34 per cent indicated moderate to high levels of criticizing or yelling at their partner; 47 per cent reported high levels of feeling distant from their partner, and almost one quarter reported having exploded at their partner in the last month. Similar patterns were observed when participants were asked about their spouse/partner’s behaviour towards them. **Almost 10 per cent of parents indicated increased verbal or physical conflict since the pandemic started.**

Caregivers struggled with discipline strategies and experienced challenges in caregiving



A third of parents reported higher levels of raising their voice or yelling when a child misbehaved

21% indicated getting frustrated or angry enough that their child could see they were upset

Almost 40% indicated being picky or 'one their child's back' when stressed or upset

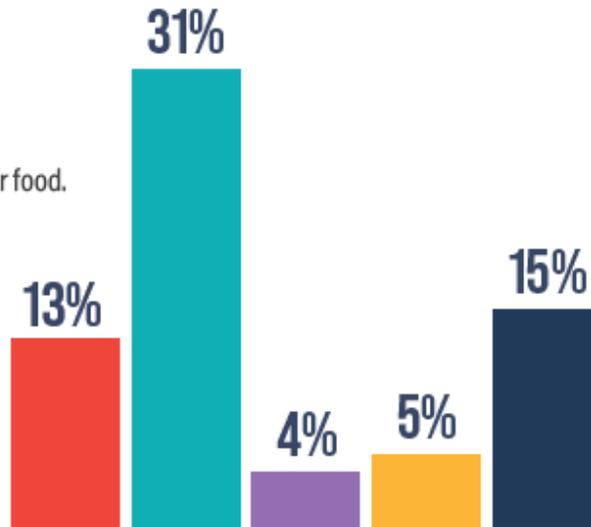
21% indicated getting into long arguments with their child due to misbehaviour

Experiences during COVID-19 (May-June 2020)

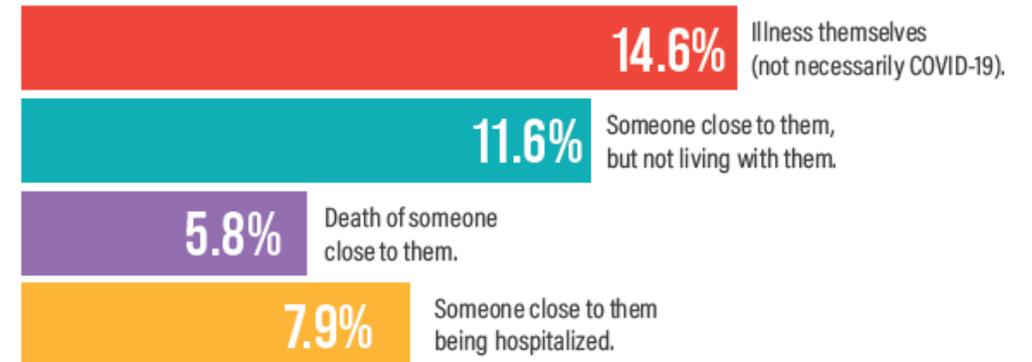


One-half of caregivers reported resource issues, with 34 per cent reporting some loss of income, and 48 per cent indicating that a household member had applied for financial help offered by the federal or provincial governments.

- 13% unable to access necessary supplies or food.
- 31% unable to access usual healthcare.
- 4% unable to pay rent or mortgage.
- 5% unable to pay bills or utilities.
- 15% did not have access to needed technology (computers or tablets) or internet needed to support distance learning during the lockdown.



Almost one-third of families experienced health issue:



Not surprisingly, in terms of caregiving experiences, an overwhelming number of parents reported **increased time caregiving for young and/or school-aged children (76%) and assisting adolescents (26%).**

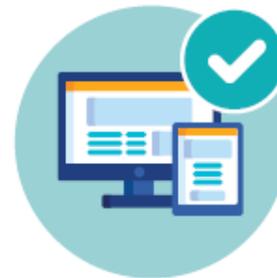
Almost 10 per cent of parents reported additional time caregiving for older adults, whereas approximately five per cent indicated they were unable to care for people who require assistance due to health conditions or limitations.

Family needs during the COVID-19 pandemic

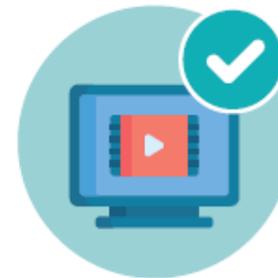
- One third of parents indicated needing assistance with their own stress and/mood (32%)
- More than one-half of parents stated they would be interested in receiving parenting tips and information about children during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In open ended questions, many parents cited the need for respite care, daycare, or nanny/babysitter either more frequently or occasionally for a break. Parents also cited greater assistance with distance learning and more structure around lessons and homework needed to be provided.

Mode of delivery for parenting and child information during COVID-19

Parents indicated they would appreciate receiving tips through:



84%
Website



59%
Links to Videos



40%
Online Parenting
Discussions



17%
Pamphlets

Summary

- Ontario families are struggling
- These findings also represent a call for help with one third of parents indicating they need assistance with their own mood and stress and a third indicating needing help with their children's behaviour and mood

Limitations and Future Directions



Crowdsourcing survey – limits generalizability



Cross-sectional – snapshot in time



Follow up survey



Women, moms at risk of binge-drinking during pandemic: CAMH study



Parents, women among Canadians struggling most with mental health during pandemic: surveys



Calls to Canadian domestic violence helplines jump during pandemic



Implications and potential ways to reduce negative secondary effects of COVID-19

Identify	Identify, develop and disseminate evidence-based resources related
Develop	Develop preventive public health messaging
Monitor	Monitor psychosocial needs
Link	Link to resources about stress management and coping
Refer	Refer patients to social and mental health assistance when needed

They love to ask questions you don't want to answer.

Honesty is...
having open communication with your child when they ask questions.

For more **Parenting** tips during COVID-19 go to www.unicef.org or www.who.int



unicef | for every child

All games need some rules to be fun.

Structure is...
creating a daily plan for the whole family to enjoy.

For more **Parenting** tips during COVID-19 go to www.unicef.org or www.who.int



unicef | for every child

One word can quickly lead to another.

Patience is...
taking 5 deep breaths when you are about to shout.

For more **Parenting** tips during COVID-19 go to www.unicef.org or www.who.int



unicef | for every child

Laughing out loud will always beat shouting out loud.

Fun is...
dancing round the kitchen with your kids for 10 minutes.

For more **Parenting** tips during COVID-19 go to www.unicef.org or www.who.int



unicef | for every child

A high five makes all the difference.

Positive is...
spotting a child being good and praising them.

For more **Parenting** tips during COVID-19 go to www.unicef.org or www.who.int



unicef | for every child

PARENTING DURING COVID-19

Parents, caregivers and children across the country are facing new challenges as the COVID-19 pandemic affects our daily work and home routines. Schools, daycares and most workplaces have closed, and children and parents are suddenly at home full-time.

The ideas and tips below can help parents and caregivers adjust to this new and unexpected situation.



SUPPORT AND ENGAGE WITH YOUR CHILDREN

- ▶ **Create opportunities for quality one-on-one time with each child**, whenever possible. One-on-one time makes children feel loved and secure, and shows them that they are important.
- ▶ **Help your child stay virtually connected** with their friends, neighbours and extended family members through email, phone calls, video chats and social media platforms. This can be a reassuring way for them to interact with people they love.
- ▶ **Create a flexible but consistent daily routine**, and involve your children! Asking for their input and allowing them to make decisions helps build their self-confidence. Set up a schedule that includes structured activities, physical activity, as well as free time. This can help children feel more secure.
- ▶ **Play and engage with your children**. It helps them to learn, express their feelings and build their self-confidence. Spend time with your children by taking part in their preferred activities. If you are not in **quarantine (self-isolation)** or **isolation**, get fresh air while keeping a distance of least 2 metres from other people.

BE KIND, CALM AND PATIENT WITH YOUR CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOURS

- ▶ **Listen to your child's concerns**. Acknowledge and validate their thoughts and feelings. Be honest, open and supportive. Provide clear, factual information in a reassuring and age-appropriate way. Ask them how they are feeling. Let them know you are there for them.
- ▶ **Encourage positive behaviours**. Children are much more likely to do what is asked if they are given positive instructions and praise for their efforts.
- ▶ **Be a positive role model**. Model healthy and positive behaviours as children learn almost everything by watching what other people do.
- ▶ **Take steps to calm down before you react**. Children may respond to stress and anxiety by acting out. They need you the most when they are misbehaving.
 - Before you respond, take three deep breaths or count to ten. Staying calm helps you stay in charge of the situation.
 - If you can safely leave your child, take a step back from the situation to calm down, and reassure your child that you will be back.
 - Respond in a calm and thoughtful way, and redirect your child's attention to a good behaviour.



TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- ▶ **Self-care is important**. Parents and caregivers take better care of their children when they **take care of themselves**, too. Eat well, get enough rest, take breaks, and do something fun or relaxing. Be kind to yourself. Some individuals may use substances, such as alcohol and cannabis, as a way to cope with stress and anxiety during difficult times. However, substance use presents potential health risks and can negatively impact your mental health and wellbeing. If you use substances, do your best to minimize the amount and frequency that you consume, and try to avoid using substances around children.
- ▶ **Connect virtually with others**. You are not alone. Find support and relieve stress by talking about your feelings and concerns with your friends and family.
- ▶ **Recompose yourself**. Practice a one-minute mindfulness activity. Notice your thoughts. Notice how you feel emotionally. Notice if your feelings are happy or not. Notice how your body feels. Notice anything that hurts or is tense. This will help you relax and feel grounded.

It is normal if you or your children feel overwhelmed, stressed, confused, scared or angry during this time. For additional support, or someone to talk to about your feelings and concerns, reach out to:

- ▶ **Kids Help Phone**
- ▶ **Canadian Paediatric Society – Community-Based Supports for Parents**
- ▶ **Familles Canada – Family Support Centres**
- ▶ **Crisis Services Canada – Resources and Supports**
- ▶ **Wellness Together Canada: Mental Health and Substance Use Support**
- ▶ **Support for Individuals**
- ▶ **Provincial and territorial resources for COVID-19**



WE CAN ALL DO OUR PART IN PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19. FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT

Canada.ca/coronavirus or contact 1-833-784-4397

Acknowledgements

- Funding provided by PHAC as part of the GBV initiative and the Promoting Healthy Families project
- Research Team
 - Harriet MacMillan
 - Tracie Afifi
 - Marni Brownell
 - Teresa Bennett
 - Eric Duku
 - Kathy Georgiades
 - Susan Jack
 - Magdalena Janus
 - Melissa Kimber
 - Ellen Lipman
- Lil Tonmyr for advising and conceptualizing measures

QUESTIONS?
gonzal@mcmaster.ca

