



Chesterfield Mental Health Support Services



Resource and Information Guide COVID-19



**Chesterfield County
Mental Health Support Services**



**Resources and Information
COVID-19**

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I'm struggling with social distancing. What can I do?

- ❖ Helping others helps us. Try to focus on others. Ask yourself what you can do for someone else each day, whether it's shopping for a neighbor or preparing a nice meal for your family. Look for ways you can assist in your community while practicing social distancing. Ideas may include donating food to the [Chesterfield Food Bank](#), check on isolated neighbors (safely), volunteering virtually through [Hands On RVA](#), giving blood, or donating supplies to essential personnel.
- ❖ Listen to your body. Try to prevent getting "hangry" by eating a healthy diet. Incorporate moving your body throughout the day. Whether it's cleaning a space in your house that you've been meaning to get to or working outside, it is important to be as active as possible while quarantined. Try to get enough sleep each night.
- ❖ Find fun things to do at home. Ask yourself, "what activities I love would give me a sense of security? Which ones can I reasonably do at this time? Whether it's that arts and crafts project you've been meaning to complete or learning a new skill, YouTube and various Internet sites have many tutorials that can assist you. Remotely interview the older generation in your family. If you've been meaning to work on your family tree, take advantage of the time to do so. Other ideas include watching a favorite humorous TV show/movie; listening to music; engaging in favorite hobbies that can be done safely, and potentially sharing them with other members of your household, etc.
- ❖ Connect with others while maintaining social distancing. Let your creative ideas fly! Send pictures and notes through old fashioned mail. Start a book club and hold virtual meetings. If it is important and challenging for you to stay fit and healthy during social distancing, find an accountability partner or group to virtually check-in with daily to keep you on track.
- ❖ Find ways to connect online. Schedule morning coffee hour with friends online. Connect with friends for a virtual happy hour. Host an online birthday party using one of the many free platforms such as Zoom, Google Hangout or Skype.

My mind is racing with all the COVID-19 news. Help!

- ❖ Get a healthy amount of accurate info from reputable sources such as the [CDC](#) and [WHO](#). Distinguish between what's happening globally and what's happening locally. Limit your intake of news twice daily. If the onslaught of all things COVID-19 is overwhelming, then take a break from it.
- ❖ Practice positive thinking/coping self-talk. Self-talk is the thoughts, beliefs, and opinions that we tell ourselves. Steps to positive self-talk include:
 - Become aware of negative self-talk
 - Replace the negative with a positive thought. For example, if you are perseverating on the belief that your loved ones may get sick from COVID-19, remind yourself that they are well at present, and are taking steps to prevent infection.
 - Exclude any negative intrusions, such as constant news feed.
 - Focus on the present and what you can and are doing now.
 - Maintain realistic expectations for yourself and your family. We are all doing our best during this stressful time. Remember this quote: "mistakes are proof that you are trying." (unknown)
 - Practice mindfulness and relaxation techniques. There are many free apps you can download, such as Headspace, Calm, Aura, Relax Melodies, Stop Breathe, and Think. Even five minutes a day can make a positive difference.
- ❖ Keep routines. Set expectations about getting up, getting dressed, and eating breakfast. Routines give us a feeling of normalcy, even in abnormal times.

- ❖ Set daily goals, no matter how small. Write them down the night before. Feelings of accomplishment and the act of doing can bring calm. Whether you've been putting off cleaning the oven or organizing your bookshelf, now is the time to make it happen.
- ❖ Reach out if you need help. The saying "we are all in this together" couldn't be more applicable than right now. Ask family, friends, neighbors, or professionals for what you need. Chesterfield county has many hotlines and [resources](#) available to its citizens. You can check the [Chesterfield County Prevention Services Facebook page](#) for additional support.
- ❖ Focus on the positive. Each day find something that you are grateful for, despite the change in normalcy. Start each day with a positive affirmation, such as "I am thankful for what I have, even if it is not perfect," "I can control myself and my choices," "I have strength and courage to walk through my fears."
- ❖ Let go of the things you cannot control. Focus on what is within your control, such as maintaining a positive attitude and limiting social media. Examples of things you can control: your positive attitude, how you follow the CDC recommendations, your own social distancing, and your kindness and grace.

How do I help my children during this stressful time?

- ❖ We all know that children watch us like hawks and do what we do. This is also true with our fears and anxiety as parents. Use your own coping strategies for your own mental health and also to show children "how it's done."
- ❖ Have a consistent daily routine for your family—getting up, getting dressed, eating, going to bed. Create a flexible schedule for each day with your children to break up the time. This could include "class time," playtime, physical exercise, etc. Ask for their input for the daily schedule. This will help calm any strong feelings by having a predictable structure.
- ❖ Discuss age appropriate information with your children.
 - Focus on steps that adults are taking to keep everyone safe and that the adults in their lives will do anything to keep them safe. While these conversations might not happen every day, they will not be "one and done" talks. Take your child's lead and answer questions in a clear, calm manner. Use [social stories](#) and [cartoons](#) to help with your conversations.
 - Put a limit on social media/TV/video games. Encourage staying connected to friends but not obsessively reading the news or discussing the virus online.
- ❖ Demonstrate and have your children act out appropriate behavior (handwashing, coughing, hands away from the face, etc.) with visuals and praise if necessary.
 - Ideas include something that they can wear (that can be disinfected daily) to redirect them away from touching their face, using 20 seconds of their favorite song to sing while washing their hands, etc.
- ❖ Focus on the positive of this situation whenever possible.
 - It can be an exciting adventure for some children – getting to do activities that they might not usually get to do. Families can spend quality time bonding and reconnecting. Take pictures of the activities you and your family are doing together and scrapbook as a family.
 - Take a family walk in the woods or play hide and seek outside. Have a family dance party or plan and make dinner together as a family. Have scavenger hunts inside and outside. Ideas can be found [here](#).
 - Use online resources such as PBS Kids and GoNoodle for creative ideas.
- ❖ Chesterfield County Citizen Information and Resources is offering weekly challenges to get kids thinking about ways they can be helping their community from home as part of the COVID-19 response. Every Monday a prompt for youth will be posted on the

@cfieldyouthservices Instagram using #CfieldKids as well as on this Chesterfield Prevention Services page. As you or your kids complete the challenges, please share using #CfieldKids.

How can children help others? It's not just adults that feel better when they give back and help someone else.

- Encourage your children to reach out via phone or text to potentially isolated elderly family members and neighbors, participate in neighborhood programs like rainbow and bear scavenger hunts, sidewalk chalk art, etc.
- Keep your children active. Some great ideas for indoor and outdoor activities can be found [here](#).
- Talk to children about the fact that everyone has feelings, and there are ways to help get them out of their bodies. Use a [feelings wheel](#) to name accurately and acknowledge emotions they may be experiencing.
 - *Remember, there are no "bad" feelings—it's ok for them to feel whatever they feel, and your job is to help them use strategies to cope.*
- [Calming breathing](#) techniques and [mindfulness](#) activities to reduce stress
- [Yoga](#) or other movement and [stretching](#) exercises;
- Relaxation techniques like [guided imagery](#) or [progressive muscle relaxation](#)
- Fun indoor [physical activities](#) and [games](#)
- A private journal or sketchbook where they can express their emotions through writing or drawing
- For older children, find a [social cause](#) to learn more about together and support remotely.

My kids need ideas to connect with others without being physically present.

- ❖ Take this time to be creative with a combination of communication methods for your children and your family.
 - Phone calls, snail mail, email, and text can be used for connection as well as social media outlets.
- ❖ Learn about the various forms of social media if you aren't already familiar with them.
 - Facebook, Zoom, Google Hangouts, and FaceTime are all great ways to connect with family and friends.
- ❖ Create virtual playdates for your child with Zoom or Google Hangouts.
 - Send invites to your child's friends' parents. Set up a "play date zone" in your home--complete with the needed technology and simple activities for children to do "together."
 - For younger kids, ideas might include rock, paper, scissors, charades, and bingo. For older ones, they might play supervised online games with friends.
- ❖ Connect with others as you go for daily walks.
 - Leave positive sidewalk chalk notes for others.
 - Pictures can be posted in your window or door to send positive messages to others.
 - Take pictures of your family on your front porch and post on neighborhood websites or Facebook pages.
- ❖ Document your children's activities by video and share through social media.
 - For example, you can teach your kids how to create a homemade [fortune teller](#). Tell virtual fortunes with family and friends through social media.

Parenting at home is just feeling so frustrating and overwhelming. What else can I do?

- ❖ Take care of yourself first. Your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being is essential for you to be able to take care of your children. Give yourself permission to do something for yourself every day, even if it's just for a few minutes.
- ❖ Be kind to yourself. You're doing the best you can.
- ❖ Think in realistic terms. Many sites are giving recommendations and ideas about how to parent during this time. Decide which are the most practical for your situation.
 - If today you met your children's basic needs, that's okay.
 - If tomorrow you complete at-home learning and your child has a virtual playdate, that's okay too.
- ❖ Reach out if you feel like you're at a breaking point and need help. Family, friends, and neighbors are a good first step. However, sometimes you might need more.
 - Chesterfield Mental Health Support Services is here for you.
 - Prevention Services staff offer family consultations on a variety of topics,
 - including dealing with challenging behaviors;
 - how to talk to your children about what's going on and how to help your children with strong feelings.
 - Please contact Melissa Ackley at 706-2010 or ackleym@chesterfield.gov to schedule an appointment.
 - If you need counseling services, please call our Intake number at (804)768-7318. Our Crisis department is available 24/7 for emergency services at (804)748-6356.
 - It is okay to get support during this difficult time.

I've been having feelings of grief and loss due to restrictions regarding people, places, and activities and I'm not sure what to do about it.

It's completely natural to feel discomfort when things in your life or the world are uncertain. The COVID-19 pandemic is new to everybody, and it brings up feelings that we may have never experienced before. David Kessler would say that this feeling of discomfort we are experiencing is called "Anticipatory Grief." Kessler was interviewed recently by Harvard Business Review about anticipatory grief during COVID-19 and ways to help you manage this new or uncomfortable feeling. You can read his interview [here](#).

- ❖ Take time to connect to how you are feeling. You may consider journaling, vlogging, dancing, doing something creative, talking with a friend or family member, or simply taking a walk. Do what feels best for you!
- ❖ Extroverts (and even some introverts) may be taking the social distancing mandate harder than others. Find ways to connect with your tribe and check-in with one another to keep from feeling isolated and alone. Chances are, other people in your circle are experiencing similar feelings of loss or uncertainty. Platforms such as Zoom, Google Hangout, and Microsoft Teams make it easy to connect and interact with others during COVID-19 social distancing.
- ❖ Understanding and responding to your own needs will help you manage your feelings of loss. It can provide you with the energy to help support your family, friends, and other loved ones.
 - This may just be giving yourself five minutes alone when you wake up in the morning, another five minutes in the middle of the day, and/or five minutes in the evening.
 - Add times for self-care to your daily routine.

- Ideas for self-care include practicing yoga, stretching, eating healthy, getting plenty of sleep, sticking to a routine, getting fresh air, doing breathing exercises, and taking care of yourself in the best way possible during these times.
 - There are free apps you can download to guide you through breathing and mindfulness exercises.
 - YouTube channels are dedicated to yoga, Zumba, and other activities to keep you moving your body!
- Read more on [Self-Care in the time of the Corona Virus](#)
- Check out some [Self-Care Apps](#) you can use on your phone. Some are free and some charge a fee.
- ❖ Consider online counseling. Give yourself time each week to care for your mental health if you feel you are struggling with grief.
 - Since many counseling offices are not currently open for one-on-one meetings, explore those who are offering online counseling.

I've lost a loved one recently to COVID-19. Where can I go for help?

- ❖ While grieving a loss is an inevitable part of life, there are ways to help cope with the pain, come to terms with your grief, and eventually find a way to pick up the pieces and move on with your life.
 - Acknowledge your pain.
 - Accept that grief can trigger many different and unexpected emotions.
 - Understand that your grieving process will be unique to you.
 - Seek out face-to-face support from people who care about you.
 - Support yourself emotionally by taking care of yourself physically.
 - Recognize the difference between grief and depression.
- ❖ Local Resources
 - [Full Circle Grief](#)
 - [GriefShare](#)

My college student was sent home. They had to pack up all their belongings and didn't get a chance to say goodbye to their roommate, friends, classmates, and professors. Now they are home and trying to manage taking courses online, all while getting resettled in a new environment. They seem to be grieving the loss of their spring semester and college support system. What are some things I can say or do to support them during this transition?

- ❖ Listen and validate those feelings of loss.
- ❖ Allow time to adjust to a new routine.
- ❖ Recognize that your college student is a young adult; allow space for independence.
- ❖ Encourage your college student to remain connected to their school through social media.
- ❖ Remind them this is temporary.
- ❖ Additional Resources:
 - [Tips](#) to help college students

My teenager is grieving the loss of activities they were looking forward to which were canceled due to school closing and social distancing. How can I best support my teen during this time?

- ❖ Prom, graduation, sports, music, and play performances, along with many other end-of-year activities that our young people look forward to have been canceled without notice. Many of these activities are rites of passage that teenagers no longer get the opportunity to experience. It comes as no surprise that as a result, our young people are mourning the loss of these anticipated events, especially those that are tied to that individual's identity.
- ❖ How to Help:
 - Listen attentively
 - Do not try to fix it
 - Sit Quietly
 - Allow for the expression of all feelings and validate them
 - Keep the focus on the person and the pain

How can I best help my elementary school aged child navigate the loss they are experiencing from the school closings and no longer being connected to their classmates and friends?

School-aged children did not have the opportunity to say goodbye to their friends, classmates, and teachers. School ending abruptly did not allow time for closure. Many activities they anticipated will no longer be available.

- ❖ How to help:
 - Listen attentively
 - Acknowledge and validate the loss
 - Limit the exposure to
 - Create a routine
 - Make cards with your child to mail to the school
 - Reach out to school through Facebook Page or other platforms
 - For additional information on how to help your child grieve click [here](#).
 - Additional resources click [here](#).

I've recently lost my job because of COVID-19. I'm stricken with grief. How can I help myself through this, and what resources are available to me?

- ❖ Grief is natural after a loss. Some people experience grief after the loss of a job. Work not only provides financial benefits, but it also provides structure, routine, companionship/friendship, and a sense of identity.
- ❖ It is essential to recognize and accept your feelings regarding this loss.
- ❖ Accept that job loss during this time is nobody's fault.
- ❖ Understand that grief is a process and has different stages. Some days will be better than others.
- ❖ Things that can help through the process:
 - Give yourself time to adjust.
 - Create a daily schedule and stick to it.
 - Take care of yourself- eat healthy, exercise, rest, and drink water.
 - Stay connected.
- ❖ Additional Resources:
 - Statewide resources available [here](#).

- Chesterfield County Resources [here](#).

How do I know if a loved one is suffering from anxiety? What can I do to help them?

- ❖ Feeling anxious and unsure is a natural reaction to the COVID-19 virus. The many unknowns that exist with the virus, and the ripple effect from the virus such as social distancing. At the same time, we want to manage our anxiety and help others to do the same. Signs that someone is struggling with their anxiety include unrealistic or excessive concerns, racing thoughts, decreased concentration or memory, irritability, sleep disturbances, and/or vivid dreams.
- ❖ Understand what you can control. Obtaining pertinent information from trusted sources such as the CDC can be helpful to increase our knowledge and help us understand what we can control to make ourselves safer. At the same time, we want to be careful in the amount of media and information we absorb. Our anxiety can be triggered by too much COVID-19 news – especially regarding the concerns and struggles. It can start to feel like nothing else is happening except for the virus.
- ❖ Involve yourself in other activities. Stay involved with your hobbies, family functions, and other fun activities. Getting “away” from the virus for a while with other distractions can help lower anxiety. If you’re home with children, spend time playing with your children.
- ❖ Maintain a normal life where possible. If you’re homebound due to COVID-19, maintain as much of your usual routine as you can. Structure and routine help us feel in control of our days. Feeling aimless can add to anxiety. If you’re working from home, wake up at a consistent time and dress in your work clothes during your regular work hours.

Having to isolate myself, along with my concerns about the COVID-19 virus, are bringing up feelings of depression. What can I do?

- ❖ As numerous concerns surround the COVID-19 virus, it’s only natural that these concerns could affect our feelings of well-being, especially when someone is also isolated from others due to working at home and social distancing. Possible symptoms of depression include an unusually sad mood, loss of enjoyment, lack of energy, feeling worthless, and sleep difficulties.
- ❖ Seek out support. [The National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#) has an extensive resource list of warmlines, support groups, and other mental health/emotional support organizations. Many resources are accessible by phone or the internet. Chesterfield resources are also listed below.
- ❖ Reach out to family and friends. Keep in contact with family and friends. Discuss your concerns and feelings of depression. Allow others to support you during this difficult time. If feeling isolated, make sure to reach out enough to satisfy your need for social interaction. When possible, utilize video chatting to allow face to face contact with other people.
- ❖ Watch for the “blues” in students. With schools canceled for the remainder of the year, students are affected in many ways. Some have too much unstructured time and feel aimless. Some are devastated because of the loss of upcoming show choir productions, sports seasons, or the ending of an important senior year. This can be true of high school or college.
- ❖ Aid the student in your home to grieve the real loss of these experiences. Help them find some closure wherever possible, such as video chatting with ex-teammates or singing songs from the canceled school play on Skype with fellow cast members. Make new, positive family memories by celebrating events like prom and graduation at home.
- ❖ Take it easy on yourself. A common symptom of depression is feeling guilty for things that we are not guilty of and feeling “less than” others. Remind yourself that feeling down is a normal reaction to the virus and its results; that feeling isolated is natural with social distancing.

Understand that you are not alone – that others are also struggling with depression over personal and societal changes.

- ❖ See above for ideas regarding anxiety. The symptoms of depression can significantly mimic the symptoms of anxiety, and the two issues often overlap. The tips above for managing anxiety can also help with depression.
- ❖ Just like with physical health, it is important to get professional help when a mental health concern becomes more serious. If you or someone you care about is experiencing a mental health emergency, contact Chesterfield County Emergency Services at 804-748-6356. This is a 24 hour a day, 7 days a week service.
- ❖ Chesterfield County Mental Health, and many local counseling providers, are continuing to provide outpatient counseling through telehealth.
 - Insurance providers, EAPs, and medical providers are great referral sources.
- ❖ Individuals wishing to begin outpatient counseling services through Chesterfield Mental Health Support Services can call the Intake number at 804-768-7318.
- ❖ Please use the following resources below if you feel that you or a loved one needs other professional help:
 - District 19 Mental Health: 804-863-1689
 - (Serving residents of Petersburg, Hopewell, Colonial Heights, and Prince George)
 - Chesterfield Employee Assistance Program (EAP): 1-855-278-6865
 - Children’s Mental Health Resource Center: www.mentalhealth4kids.org

I am having thoughts of suicide. Where and how can I get help?

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, respond immediately. If a person is harming themselves or about to harm themselves, **call 911**.

❖ ***Other helpful resources:***

- Chesterfield Mental Health Support Services Crisis: 804-748-6356. Available 24/7.
- Chesterfield Mental Health Support Services: 804-768-7318. Call to schedule an appointment for services that are not a mental health crisis.
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255 or text 741741. Available 24/7.

I am concerned that more people may become depressed, anxious or suicidal as a result of COVID-19 and its effects on people’s health, economics, and social isolation. Can anything be done to prevent people from having suicidal thoughts?

Many people have adverse effects from stressful events such as the COVID-19 virus and the changes that continue to occur as a result. Many people have asked what they can do to help during this unique event.

- ❖ Yes, there are many ways to help prevent suicide.
 - **Safe storage** of medications and guns limits access to common methods used to suicide. [Lock and Talk](#) is a great resource for ideas.
 - **Stay connected** to family and friends and co-workers.
 - **Reach out** to others who may not have support.
 - **Maintain healthy habits** by getting plenty of rest, making healthy food choices, and getting physical exercise.

A person I know might be thinking about suicide. How do I know if they are? Can I do anything to help them?

- ❖ **Look for potential signs to look for include:**
 - Threatening to harm or kill oneself
 - Talking or writing about suicide
 - Examples of this include “I wish I was dead” or “My life will never get better”
 - Posting about death or dying by suicide
 - Hopelessness
 - Withdrawal from friends and family
 - Loss of interest in leisure activities
 - Increased agitation or anger
- ❖ Ask the person if they are thinking about suicide and listen to him/her.
- ❖ If the person is harming or about to harm themselves, call 911.
- ❖ Connect the person with resources
 - [Chesterfield Mental Health Crisis Line](#): 804-748-6356, Available 24/7.
 - [Chesterfield County Mental Health Support Services Intake](#): 804-768-7318. Call to schedule an appointment for services for an individual not in a mental health crisis.
 - [National Suicide Prevention Hotline](#): 1-800-273-8255 or text 741741. Available 24/7.

How can I stay connected to my recovery community during COVID-19?

- ❖ [Stay connected](#) online. Many meetings are now online. You can attend [NA](#), [AA](#), or [Smart Recovery](#) meetings by phone or video ([Zoom](#)). Make plans to “meet” your peers at an online or phone meeting. Try and keep your routine the same, make a cup of coffee to enjoy during the meeting or plan to “meet-up” with a friend online after the meeting.
- ❖ Keep working on your recovery.
 - If you are working NA or AA, talk to your sponsor about how to keep moving forward. Read the book and stay grounded in your recovery.
 - If you are working SMART recovery, work on some of the online activities or watch their YouTube talks.
 - For other recovery paths, find a way to work the program from home. Be creative!
 - If you are in outpatient treatment, stay in contact with your clinician, they may be able to have your session by phone or video.
- ❖ Have a plan to call someone every day to check-in. If you are able, be that person for someone else. Try and talk using [video chat](#). Seeing other people, even on a screen, helps us feel more connected.
- ❖ Call [Alive RVA](#), a local peer to peer hotline, if you need someone to talk to or need help (such as food, MAT, online meetings...etc.): 1-833-473-3782

How do I stay motivated in my recovery?

- ❖ Take it one day at a time. It’s important to stay in the [present moment](#).
- ❖ Brush up on [relapse prevention](#).
- ❖ [You Tube](#) has many recovery stories to keep you inspired.
- ❖ Watching [motivational speakers](#) might help lift your mood.
- ❖ [Make a plan](#) for each day. Being isolated can be hard but having a routine can help.
- ❖ If safe to do so, go outside for fresh [air and sun](#).
- ❖ If you are able, try working out. There are many [free resources online](#). Taking care of your physical health is good for your recovery and mental health.

- ❖ Try and learn something new. Chesterfield Library has many ways to [learn online](#). No library card? Call 804-751-CCPL to speak to staff between 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

What about my MAT?

If you are using Suboxone, Vivitrol, Methadone, or Antabuse work with your doctor/clinic to continue to take these important medications. Many clinics are giving extra days for take-homes. Do not go to the clinic if you have symptoms of COVID-19. Call the clinic for instructions. They may meet you in the parking lot.

How can I help during this time?

- ❖ If it's safe and you are able, find ways to give back. [Donate blood](#), check on your neighbors (stay 6-10 feet apart), or reach out to your local [food bank](#) to volunteer.
- ❖ Check-in with your recovery peers and help them stay connected.
- ❖ Follow the social distancing rules so you can avoid catching and spreading COVID-19.

I am worried about myself, or someone I care about's mental health or substance use.

How can I get help?

- ❖ If you or someone you care about is experiencing a mental health emergency, contact Chesterfield County Emergency Services at 804-748-6356. This is a 24 hour a day, 7 days a week service.
- ❖ If someone is at imminent risk of hurting themselves, call 9-1-1.
- ❖ Chesterfield County Mental Health, and many local counseling providers, are continuing to provide outpatient counseling through telehealth.
 - Insurance providers, EAPs, and medical providers are great referral sources.
- ❖ Individuals wishing to begin outpatient counseling services through Chesterfield Mental Health Support Services can call our Intake number at 804-768-7318.

How do I support a person with a mental illness during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- ❖ Encourage them to continue taking their medication.
 - The COVID-19 Pandemic is not a reason to stop taking medication.
 - The prescribing doctor should give specific directions to any changes in medications.
- ❖ Clinicians at Chesterfield Mental Health Support Services and many private counseling centers are providing ongoing counseling by phone during the epidemic.
 - A person receiving clinical services should continue to do so and not lose touch with their clinician and prescribing doctor.
- ❖ If the individual is homebound due to COVID-19, help them maintain as much of their usual routine as you can.
 - Structure and routine help people feel in control of their days. They can wake up at a consistent time and keep a regular daily schedule.
 - Provide ongoing encouragement and support.
- ❖ If needed, contact the Chesterfield Mental Health Support Services intake line at 804-768-7318 or the crisis line at 804-751-2278.

Are there any online resources for therapy/support groups or mental health apps?

- ❖ The National Alliance on Mental Illness, [NAMI](#), has online resources for mental health supports.
- ❖ Online therapy is an increasingly popular alternative to regular treatment.

- Options range from online chats with actual therapists to free downloadable tools, worksheets, and mental health apps.
- Peer-led, online support, and discussion groups offer an option to those who can't get to in-person support groups.

I'm the aging parent of an adult child living with a serious mental illness. I want to be sure they are taken care of.

- ❖ Visit the [NAMI Online Knowledge Center](#) to learn about [Creating a Longterm Care Plan for a Loved One Living with a Serious Mental Illness](#).

How do I help a person with a developmental disability?

The COVID-19 virus creates unique challenges for children with special needs. Here are some apps that can be helpful:

- ❖ [My PlayHome](#) is a free app that gives kids a digital doll family of up to 15 people in various skin tones with whom they can explore, play, and share stories with other people. These shared stories help to increase student verbalizations, provide a place for social and emotional learning, and teach necessary early language skills.
- ❖ [SoundingBoard](#) is a free mobile augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) app designed for children who are unable to speak (or who have limited speech) to help them communicate. The app comes with preloaded boards using symbols with recorded messages, to meet the needs of this population. Students select and press images on the board to prompt a verbal message.
- ❖ [LetterSchool](#) promotes early literacy and numeracy skills by guiding children to tap, touch, and trace colorful animations. Children learn letter formation, letter sounds and names, spelling, counting, and other preschool and primary skills. This app, which offers a free trial, also does an excellent job of developing fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination.
- ❖ [Tales2Go](#), an audiobook service that offers a free one-month trial, helps students who struggle to read while boosting their listening skills. This app has an extensive collection of stories and books for all ages, with scores of splendid narrators who bring stories from every genre to life.
- ❖ [Epic!](#) is an e-library that is great for supporting reluctant or struggling readers. It provides access to more than 20,000 high-quality children's books and educational videos and includes an assortment of both fiction and nonfiction books from prominent publishers. Epic is offering free access to schools during this time.
- ❖ [Busy Shapes](#), by Edoki Academy, is based on Piaget's research on cognitive development, and it begins with cause-and-effect play that evolves into an exercise in problem-solving and tool use. The game also helps children improve fine motor skills through a series of puzzles in an exploratory and evolving playground.
- ❖ [Edoki Academy](#) also offers a series of math apps using a step-by-step approach whereby students learn Montessori math by manipulating various objects that appear on the screen. It also helps boost motor skill development.
- ❖ [Math Drills](#) is a skill-based math drills app that students tend to love, as they can compete against themselves to increase their speed and accuracy. It includes basic math operations like addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Also, it features advanced options in the

settings so that teachers and students can create personalized environments, and track scores and test history.

- ❖ [Phonics Genius](#) provides a simple way for children to learn how to recognize, read, and speak words through letter sounds. The app contains more than 6,000 words, compiled by phonetic groups, in addition to the fun games for practicing skills.
- ❖ [SentenceBuilder](#) is a conversation simulator designed to help elementary-aged children learn how to have conversations with their peers in a variety of social settings, which can be a challenge for special needs students.
- ❖ [ConversationBuilderTeen](#), for older students, is geared to help kids learn when it is appropriate to introduce themselves, ask questions, and change the subject of the conversation. This app also covers sarcasm and addresses how kids should respond to bullying.
- ❖ [Word Wizard](#) has a talking alphabet that allows kids to experiment with phonemic awareness and word building. The verbal feedback helps teach children in a nonthreatening way, as the voice reads any words the child creates—allowing for self-correction. The app also supports letter recognition, phonological awareness, and spelling, and comes with 184 built-in word lists such as the 1,000 most frequently used sight words. It even keeps tabs on children’s progress with detailed monitoring and has an extensive teacher activity guide.
- ❖ [The Anti-Coloring Book App](#) series. This suite of online books uses the space at the bottom of the page for a question, and the child draws the answer. These are open-ended questions—with no right or wrong answers—that promote a child’s critical thinking skills, foster creativity, and encourage risk-taking and problem-solving.

Aside from apps, digital modifications are critical for online home learning for special needs students. Text to speech (TTS) is a type of assistive technology that reads digital text aloud and works with almost all digital devices—phone, iPad, computer. Many types of text files and most web pages can be converted into audio with TTS software.

- ❖ Mac/iPad—in Settings under [Accessibility](#)
- ❖ Windows—in Control Panel under [Ease of Access](#)
- ❖ Android—in Settings > Accessibility > [Text to Speech Output](#)
- ❖ Chromebook – in Settings under [Accessibility](#)

Speech recognition (dictation) is another necessary tool, found on most digital devices, that enables students to express themselves by simply talking without having to worry about typing, spelling, and grammar. Dictation software is available on most devices in the settings menu, and it helps students expand their writing skills and achieve new levels of success. Note: Apple has a more advanced speech recognition system than Windows.

A helpful site for children with autism is [The Autism Educator](#). It includes an easy to understand explanation of COVID-19, *What is the Coronavirus?* The [ARC/DBHDS](#) website is another helpful site with COVID-19 information and resources. The Arc of Virginia has sections on:

- ❖ Staying healthy
- ❖ Information about disability services
- ❖ Early intervention and young children
- ❖ Direct support professionals
- ❖ COVID-19 in easy to understand videos

- ❖ Impact of coronavirus on Medicaid and waivers
- ❖ Ideas for staying connected