
APRIL 28, 2021 • 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM
VIRTUAL EVENT
The Mental Health Impacts of the Pandemic on the Autism/Disability Community and NIH/NIMH Efforts

Joshua A. Gordon, M.D., Ph.D.
Director, NIMH
Chair, Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC)

The Federal Response to COVID-19: Addressing the Needs of the Autism and Disability Communities
April 28, 2021

Twitter: @NIMHDirector
COVID-19 Has Affected Many Aspects of Life
Individuals on the Autism Spectrum Have Unique Vulnerabilities to Impacts of COVID-19

- Higher levels of pre-existing co-occurring physical and mental health conditions
- Increased difficulty with adapting to and being flexible with abrupt changes and other traits can impact resilience
- Increased vulnerability to social isolation and economic hardship
- Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) have a higher likelihood of contracting and dying from COVID-19, especially when living in congregate settings
SPARK Survey: Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Families/Caregivers

Survey respondents: 8,000 families with dependents on the autism spectrum; March 2020

- School 84%
- Professional Clinic 52%
- Home (Administered by visiting staff) 26%
- Home (Administered by a parent or caregiver) 15%
- Daycare 7%
- Residential programs 6%

SPARK Survey: Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Autistic Adults

Survey respondents: 636 adults on the autism spectrum; March-April 2020

LEVELS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

16.7% Severe
28.6% Moderate
32.2% Mild
22.5% Minimal to none

Parts of life that have changed due to COVID-19

- Social life 70%
- Employment (paid or volunteer) 53%
- Homelife 48%
- Services or therapies 41%
- Financial security 36%
- School 20%
- None 6%

Autism Speaks Study: Food and Housing Insecurity During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Households of people with autism struggled with meeting basic needs like food and housing.

Survey respondents: individuals and families with dependents on the autism spectrum; May 2020

Autism Speaks Study: Food and Housing Insecurity During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Households of people with autism are experiencing significant food insecurity, especially minority households, compared with households with no disability.

**HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY RATES BEFORE AND AFTER COVID-19**

*Children with no disability 20%  27.1% **(after)*

*Children with autism 41%  57% **(after)*

**HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY RATES, FALL 2020**

**No disability 27.1%**

Person with autism, white 43.8%

Person with autism, Black non-Hispanic 65.7%

Person with autism, Hispanic 74.5%

Survey respondents: 1,369 individuals and families with dependents on the autism spectrum; November-December 2020

Promoting Resilience and Long-term Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Meet immediate needs
- Promote health and provide access to care for COVID-19 illness
- Increase access to vaccination for vulnerable populations
- Practice healthy coping habits and make mental health supports accessible
- Avoid social isolation and find ways to help others
- Maintain hope for the future and sense of control
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autistic adults report:</th>
<th>Families report:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>🔄 Telehealth</td>
<td>🔄 Social stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🔄 Check-ins with therapists via email and phone</td>
<td>🔄 Breaks for rest and relaxation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🔄 Journaling</td>
<td>🔄 Telehealth appointments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🔄 Maintaining a schedule and sticking to it</td>
<td>🔄 Pursuing hobbies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🔄 Walks and exercise</td>
<td>🔄 Cooking for family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🔄 Keeping in touch with family and friends via phone and video chat</td>
<td>🔄 Enjoying time with family in person and virtually</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

March-April 2020

Potential Positive Impacts of the Changes Brought on by the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Innovations in service delivery such as increased use of telehealth
- Increased parent/caregiver involvement in delivery of interventions
- Increased remote education and employment opportunities
- Increased use of virtual platforms for socializing & community interactions
- Some report reduced social demands and social stress


IACC/OARC Online COVID-19 Resources for the Autism Community

https://iacc.hhs.gov/resources/coronavirus/
NIMH Online COVID-19 Resources

NIH Online COVID-19 Resources

COVID-19 Vaccination and People on the Autism Spectrum

Karen Remley, MD, MBA, MPH, FAAP
Director, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities

The Federal Response to COVID-19: Addressing the Needs of the Autism and Disability Communities
National Institute of Mental Health
28 April 2021
Updates on vaccine recommendations and timeline
Currently authorized vaccines

- Pfizer-BioNTech
- Moderna
- Johnson & Johnson/Janssen

- mRNA vaccines
  - Require two doses
- Viral vector vaccine
  - Requires one dose

All three vaccines were tested in tens of thousands of adults from diverse backgrounds, including older adults and communities of color.

All of the available vaccines have been proven effective at preventing serious illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19.

It is unknown how long protection from vaccines might last.

Health equity for people with disabilities

To help the United States succeed against COVID-19, federal, state, local, and tribal partners and community-serving organizations are working together to ensure all public health actions address health disparities for all populations.

Populations of focus:

- Racial and ethnic minority populations
- People living in rural or frontier areas
- People experiencing homelessness
- Essential and frontline workers
- People with disabilities
- People with substance use disorders
- People who are justice-involved

Intersection of disabilities and special healthcare needs

Birth defects
Developmental disabilities
Acquired disabilities

Underlying medical conditions

May affect various activities or domains

Vision
Thinking
Movement
Social relationships
Remembering
Communicating
Hearing
Mental health
Learning
COVID-19 Vaccination Accessibility

- CDC is working with partners across the country on implementation of vaccination plans for their respective areas.

- CDC playbook was developed to provide important information for jurisdictions to consider when vaccinating people with disabilities.


Available Accessible COVID-19 Resources

- Resources about COVID-19 for people with limited English and that are easy-to-read or in American Sign Language

- CDC Foundation supported the GA Institute of Technology (GA Tech) to translate COVID-19 resources into accessible formats

- Ongoing development of repository of accessible COVID-19 vaccine information


Disability is a part of vaccine equity
Supporting People with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Related Disabilities

- Partner organizations disseminating disability-related vaccine guidance and accessible documents
  - Autism Science Foundation
  - Autistic Self Advocacy Network
  - Autism Speaks
  - Autism Society
  - Other organizations such as AAP, AAHD, AAPD, AUCD, NACDD, NASEM and more

- Disability Toolkit with COVID-19 vaccine equity and prevention guidance
- Promising Practices: Reaching Populations with Limited Access to Vaccines
- Prioritizing and Scheduling People with Disabilities and Caregivers for Vaccination
Study to Explore Early Development

- CDC longitudinal study of children aged 3-9 with autism spectrum disorder, other developmental disabilities, and in the general population who participated at ages 2-5

- COVID-19 impacts including
  - Education and use of remote learning; use of services and telemedicine; testing and mitigation strategies; and changes in routines and well-being.
  - Changes in household structure, finances, employment and health insurance; and COVID-19 infection
  - Pre-COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 assessment of behavior problems
Considerations for pediatric populations and children with disabilities and special healthcare needs
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mRNA: encodes stabilized spike; lipid NP</td>
<td>mRNA: encodes 2P-stabilized spike; lipid NP</td>
<td>Replication incompetent Ad26; stabilized spike</td>
<td>Replication incompetent ChAdOx1 chimp Ad; wild type spike</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dose/Schedule Adults</td>
<td>Dose/Schedule Adults</td>
<td>Dose/Schedule Adults</td>
<td>Dose/Schedule Adults</td>
<td>Dose/Schedule Adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IM 2 doses X 30 µg 21 days apart</td>
<td>IM 2 doses 100 µg 28 days apart</td>
<td>IM 1 dose at 5 x 10¹⁰ vp (also testing 2 doses (0, 56 days))</td>
<td>IM 2 doses at 5 x 10¹⁰ vp (0, 28 days)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Status</td>
<td>Current Status</td>
<td>Current Status</td>
<td>Current Status</td>
<td>Current Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) ages 16 and up</td>
<td>EUA ages 18 and up</td>
<td>EUA ages 18 and up</td>
<td>Phase 3 adults</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents</td>
<td>Adolescents</td>
<td>Adolescents</td>
<td>Adolescents</td>
<td>Adolescents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully enrolled</td>
<td>Fully enrolled</td>
<td>Start 4-6wks after results from adult trials</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger Children</td>
<td>Younger Children</td>
<td>Younger Children</td>
<td>Younger Children</td>
<td>Younger Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Studies have begun</td>
<td>Studies have begun</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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Adapted from source: Emily Erbelding, M.D., M.P.H. Director, Division of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases, NIAID
Routine vaccines widely available to pediatric populations

- Children receive routine vaccinations according to the recommended schedule.
- The Vaccines for Children (VFC) program provides vaccines at no cost to children who might not otherwise be vaccinated because of inability to pay.
- Approximately half of U.S. children are eligible for VFC and ~86% of U.S. pediatricians provide care in a VFC-enrolled practice.

https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/schedules/index.html


https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/schedules/index.html
Considerations for ensuring equity to vaccine access for children with disabilities or other healthcare needs

- It is important that people with disabilities get the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Some children may have more interaction with trusted healthcare or service specialists than with general pediatricians.
  - Pediatric hospital systems
  - Pediatric specialists and/or disability-specific practices and clinics
  - Occupational, physical, or speech specialists
- Vaccinating children with disabilities and special healthcare needs, their caregivers, family members (e.g., parents and siblings), and service providers as soon as they can to reduce risk of negative outcomes from COVID-19.
- Vaccination sites and providers and vaccination messaging should be accessible to all populations with disabilities.

The health of the child is the power of the nation.

Children's Year

APRIL 1918

UNITED STATES CHILDREN'S BUREAU AND WOMAN'S COMMITTEE OF THE COUNCIL OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

APRIL 1919
The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
Office of Special Education Programs

COVID Technical Assistance

LARRY WEXLER
DIRECTOR, RESEARCH TO PRACTICE
LARRY.WEXLER@ED.GOV
VIDEO

HTTPS://IRIS.PEABODY.VANDERBILT.EDU/MODULE/C19/CHALLENGE/#CONTENT
Resources from Across the Department

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
- School Climate & Safety Centers
- School Improvement & Accountability
- Equity Centers
- Special Populations

Office of Special Education Programs
- Technical Assistance & Dissemination Centers
- Parent Program Centers
- Technology, Personnel, & Data Centers

Institute of Education Sciences
- Regional Educational Laboratories
- What Works Clearinghouse
- ERIC

Other Centers:
- IDEAs that Work
- Initiative to Improve Learning and School Safety (WestEd)
- Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS)
- Comprehensive Center Network (CC Network)
- Regional Educational Laboratory Program (REL)
Department Coordination

• Formed ED Technical Assistance Coordination Team (OESE, OSEP, IES)

• Collecting and Disseminating Resources
  • Collected Continuity of Learning Resources
  • Created COVID-19 resource pages
  • Cross-posting and sharing resources
  • Hosting webinars with grantees

• Updating ed.gov and POC websites

• Coordinating with Partner Organizations (NAESPA, CCSSO, NASDSE)
OSEP COVID-19 Resources

OSEP Continuity of Learning During COVID-19 Homepage
This webpage offers information, tools, and resources to help educators, families, and related service providers meet the educational, behavioral, and emotional needs of children and youth with disabilities through remote and virtual learning.

Continuity of Learning During COVID-19 Resource Database

K-12 Resources
National Center on Systemic Improvement (NCSI): COVID-19 Resources for Supporting Students with Disabilities
https://ncsi.wested.org/

Early Childhood Resources
Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA): COVID-19 Early Childhood Resources and Information Webpage
https://ectacenter.org/topics/disaster/coronavirus.asp
Webinar Series: Continuity of Learning During COVID-19

- **Highlighting Resources for Teachers and Parents to Enhance the Continuity of Learning During COVID-19 for Children with Disabilities**
  - Highlights products from OSEP-funded investments to support teachers, providers, and parents to provide services and supports to children with disabilities through distance instruction.

- **Highlighting Strategies and Practices in Providing Related Services to Enhance the Continuity of Learning During COVID-19 for Children with Disabilities**
  - Focuses on the provision of related services to address the ongoing needs children with disabilities through remote and distance methods.

- **Highlighting Resources and Practices to Support Back to School and Continuity of Learning During COVID-19 for Children with Disabilities**
  - Highlights exemplar resources and practices for teachers, leaders, and other providers to support students with disabilities from Preschool—Grade 12 in in-person, remote, and hybrid instructional formats.
**Brief Series:** Evidence-Based and Promising Practices to Support Continuity of Learning for Students With Disabilities

1. **TOPICAL ISSUE BRIEF**
   - Practices and Resources to Support Parents and Families

2. **TOPICAL ISSUE BRIEF**
   - Practices and Resources to Support Teachers
     - [https://osepideasthatwork.org/sites/default/files/SWD Learning-Teachers-508.pdf](https://osepideasthatwork.org/sites/default/files/SWD Learning-Teachers-508.pdf)

3. **TOPICAL ISSUE BRIEF**
   - Practices and Resources to Support Related Service Providers
     - [https://osepideasthatwork.org/sites/default/files/SWD Learning-Providers-508.pdf](https://osepideasthatwork.org/sites/default/files/SWD Learning-Providers-508.pdf)
OSEP COVID-19 RESOURCES

IRIS CENTER

PARENT RESOURCE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION
OSEP COVID-19 RESOURCES

FIVE CENTER COLLABORATION
PBIS
LEAD TO LITERACY
SPDG
NCIL
MI INTEGRATED SYSTEM OF SUPPORT

GUIDE: RETURNING TO SCHOOL DURING AND AFTER A CRISIS

HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=JUXPGNJ2CFY
Returning to School During and After Crisis


State & District

Guides & Briefs
- State Guide
- District Guide
- Attendance in Remote Learning

Example Webinars & Videos
- Meeting Social & Emotional Needs for All

Action Plan Templates
- District & State Action Plan

School & Classroom

Guides & Briefs
- School Guide
- Creating Teaching Matrix for Distance Learning
- Adapting CICO for Distance Learning

Example Webinars & Videos
- Effective Environments
- High Leverage Instructional Practices

Action Plan Templates
- Staff PD Day Agenda Template
- Creating Effective Classroom Environment Template

Family & Student

Guides & Briefs
- Supporting Families with PBIS at Home
- Supporting Students with Disabilities at School and Home

Example Webinars & Videos
- Coming soon

Action Plan Templates
- Supporting PBIS at Home Template
OSEP COVID-19 RESOURCES

TIES AND NCEO

HELPING YOUR CHILD WITH COMMUNICATION AT HOME

HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/451891910/3BE2BFE213
OSEP COVID-19 RESOURCES

NCPMI

WEARING MASKS

HTTPS://CHALLENGINGBEHAVIOR.CBCS.USF.EDU/DOCS/WEARING-MASKS_STORY.PDF
OSEP COVID-19 RESOURCES

NATIONAL DEAF CENTER

INTRODUCING DEAF SUCCESS IN FALL 2020

HTTPS://WWW.NATIONALDEAFCENTER.ORG/FALL2020GUIDES
Questions?
Autism & COVID-19

Updates from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy

Jennifer Sheehy
Deputy Assistant Secretary

April 28, 2021
What Do We Do?

• Develop and influence policies that increase the number and quality of employment opportunities for people with disabilities
Current Priorities

• Ensure a disability-inclusive COVID response and recovery – “Recover Into Inclusion”
• Promote racial and social equity in disability policy and programs
• Support workers with mental health conditions and promote mental health-friendly workplace policies and practices
• Expand opportunities for training and employment in clean/green energy and other high-growth industries
• Help youth with disabilities prepare for and succeed in employment in the post-pandemic era
Ensuring an Inclusive Response & Recovery

• Assisting workers with disabilities who have lost jobs
• Ensuring workers with disabilities have access to needed accommodations and supports
  – Including those experiencing Long COVID
• Helping employers and workers understand the intersection between safety and health guidelines and the ADA
• Promoting best practices for workplace mental health
• Educating about accessible telework
An Inclusive Recovery: Tools to Assist from JAN

- Wide range of resources on pandemic-related topics:
  - Stress and mental health conditions, such as:
  - Requesting accommodations
  - Masks in the workplace
  - Telework
  - Long COVID
- One-on-one assistance with individual situations
Response & Recovery: “Long COVID”

- Between 10 and 30% experience ongoing symptoms
- May be covered by ADA and other laws (and thus entitled to accommodations)
- JAN can help!
An Inclusive Recovery: Tools to Assist from EARN

COVID-19 and Job Applicants and Employees with Disabilities: Emerging Practices to Employ and Protect Workers

Adopting an Integrated Telework Policy for Employees With and Without Disabilities
Mental Health Toolkit

The 4 A's of a Mental Health-Friendly Workplace

1. AWARENESS
   - Build Awareness and a Supportive Culture

2. ACCOMMODATIONS
   - Provide Accommodations to Employees

3. ASSISTANCE
   - Offer Employee Assistance

4. ACCESS
   - Ensure Access to Treatment

AskEARN.org/mentalhealth
Autism-Specific Resources

• JAN (AskJAN.org)
  – Common accommodations
  – Interviewing tips
• EARN (AskEARN.org)
  – Neurodiversity in the Workplace
• Autism@Work Roundtable (DisabilityIn.org)
Questions?

Jennifer Sheehy
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Disability Employment Policy
Sheehy.Jennifer.C@dol.gov
Thanks

IACC Website: https://iacc.hhs.gov/
VideoCast: https://videocast.nih.gov/