


Talking with young people

For out-of-home care (OOHC) providers
in the context of COVID-19

Module One: How young people may be
impacted by COVID-19.



The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognises their continuing connection to land, water and community.

The Centre pays our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders: past, present and emerging.



Housekeeping

- Today's presentation will provide the opportunity to participate in polls
- Today's presentation will provide the opportunity to ask questions through 'chat' – the questions asked will be collated and addressed at the end of the presentation

Disclaimer – the presenter is not a medical or health professional. For current health and medical information, including in relation to government regulations, which are regularly being updated, please refer to the websites at the end of this presentation

Overview

The following presentation contains the first of four modules. Each module provides guidance and suggestions for carers of children and young people (between the ages of 10 – 18 years) in OOHC during a crisis.

References are provided at the end of this presentation.

The modules

Module One: How young people may be impacted by COVID-19.

Module Two: Intersectionality and additional considerations in working with young people.

Module Three: Responding to behaviours of concern

Module Four: Talking with young people about family and community, trauma, suicidality and hope.

Module One

How young people may be impacted by COVID-19



Learning outcomes

At the end of Module One, participants will understand:

- The context of COVID-19 for young people in out of home care and how to support them.
- The emotional and behavioural impacts of COVID-19 on young people in residential care.
- Ways of responding to young people's fears.

Introduction

Young people

- need to know about the virus
- will experience a range of impacts, which may in turn influence behaviors
- may be more at risk of mental health problems, including suicidality and/or self harm.

**Carers need to support the young person's safety
and the safety of others.**

Activity:

Key terms young people need to understand

- virus
- epidemic
- pandemic
- infectious
- contagious
- testing
- positive test result
- negative test result
- transmission
- quarantine
- isolation
- social isolation
- sanitizer

Offering support to young people

Talking to young people is important to reduce the risk of negative impacts and outcomes.

- This resource provides information to carers to have conversations and understand how to best support young people and members of the community in this difficult time.
- Providing accurate, timely, age and developmentally appropriate information helps to reduce the negative psychological and emotional impacts on young people.

Activity

- What are you most concerned about for the young people you are supporting?

What young people may worry about

Concerns may include:

- What is coronavirus?
- How did the virus start?
- How can I catch the virus?
- Will I get the virus? What happens if I get sick?
- What happens if I get tested because I'm sick?
- How will it impact my care and living situation?
- Will it impact my friends, family or carer?
- Is everything being done to stop me getting the virus?
- How long will isolation last?
- How long will the virus be an issue?
- Can pets and animals be infected? Can they infect me?
- We're already dealing with climate change, then there were bushfires. Now COVID-19. What's happening?

Common questions and helpful responses

What is coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that can cause illnesses such as the common cold or severe acute respiratory syndrome.

How did the virus start?

In 2019, a new coronavirus was identified as the cause of a disease outbreak that originated in China. (WHO, 2020)

How can I catch the virus? How does the virus spread?

COVID-19 is spread through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes or speaks. People can also be infected by touching a contaminated surface and then their eyes, mouth or nose. (WHO, 2020)

Common questions and helpful responses

How will I know if I have the virus?

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are a temperature/fever, tiredness and dry cough. Some patients may have aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose or a sore throat. (WHO, 2020) Some people have trouble with breathing.

Why do we have to stay inside and not see our friends and family?

COVID-19 spreads from person to person among those in close contact (within about 1.5 meters). (WHO, 2020)

Common questions and helpful responses

What happens while I'm waiting to get tested?

If you are feeling unwell and your doctor says you are well enough to return home while you are waiting for your test results:

- remain in your home and do not attend work or school;
- wash your hands often with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet ;
- cough and sneeze into your elbow;
- avoid cooking for or caring for other members of your household; and
- wear a mask (provided by your doctor or pharmacist) if close contact with other people is unavoidable.

Common questions and helpful responses

What will happen if I get sick?

Many people are worried about this. If a person in your care gets sick, call a doctor. There may be a need for the young person to have a COVID-19 test.

The test is really quick and simple. It may take a few days to find out if it is the virus.

If you suspect a young person may have COVID-19 call the dedicated hotline - [1800 675 398](tel:1800675398)

Common questions and helpful responses

How long will isolation last?

People arriving from overseas need to self quarantine and be in isolation for two weeks. If people get the virus they need to self isolate until their doctor clears them of infection and they no longer pose a risk to others.

What does social distancing in public mean?

- stay at home and only go out if it is absolutely essential
- keep 1.5 metres away from others
- avoid physical greetings such as handshaking, hugs and kisses
- use tap and go instead of cash
- travel at quiet times and avoid crowds
- avoid public gatherings and at risk groups like older people
- practise [good hygiene](#)

Common questions and helpful responses

Is everything being done to stop me getting the virus?

Yes. The Australian and Victorian governments are taking steps which are informed by high level expert medical advice to stop the virus and protect everyone. Sometimes this can seem like overkill but it is an example of how much effort governments are putting in to prevent people catching it and dying.

How long will the virus be an issue?

It is hard to say but all data indicates the Victorian and Australian governments are doing everything possible to prevent its spread. It is possible that social distancing may be relaxed next month but it is likely some form of restrictions, for example, overseas travel, will continue for at least a year

Common questions and helpful responses

Can pets and animals be infected? Can they infect me?

There is no clear evidence that transmission of the virus from humans to animals or vice versa. Some animals may infect other animals but the scientific evidence is not yet clear.

We're already dealing with climate change, then there were bushfires. Now COVID-19. What's happening?

It is difficult that we have had to deal with several scary and overwhelming events. These are incidental and hopefully will not be repeated in the near future.

Useful resources for answering young people's questions

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>

<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/covid-19>

<https://www.who.int/>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org>

Activity

COVID-19: Its impact on young people

- Young people may experience a range of reactions in relation to COVID-19.
- There is no right or wrong reaction or impact. Each young person will respond differently depending on age, developmental stage, prior life experience, personality, current environment etc.
- Challenging behaviours, like absconding, refusing to take the situation seriously and follow rules like social distancing, put young people and others at risk.
- Challenging behaviours towards others and/or to police may result in charges, fines and involvement in the youth justice system.

Emotions and behaviours

- We know a young person's feelings and emotions will impact their behaviour.
- It is important to understand what a young person may be experiencing to understand why they are behaving the way they are.
- Carers can learn a lot about how a young person is coping through observation.

Activity

Are there any common themes that young people are talking about in relation to the virus?

Observations

Signs that a young person may be having difficulty coping include:

- Loss of interest in activities they enjoyed
- Eating less or more or not at all, eating unhealthily
- Difficulty getting to sleep and staying asleep
- Social withdrawal, voluntarily staying in their room
- Crying, seeming anxious, seeming preoccupied
- Vocalising feelings of hopelessness and helplessness
- 'Pushing the boundaries' and increased risk taking behaviour
- Constantly talking about the virus and asking questions.

It's important to follow up any observed changes in mood and behaviour with questions.

Activity

- What have been the emotional impacts you have observed individually, and collectively in young people with whom you are working?

Emotional impacts

- sadness
- anxiety
- depression
- boredom
- loneliness
- worry and uncertainty
- anger
- frustration
- hopelessness
- stressed and overwhelmed
- increased experiences of the above

Activity

Have you noticed any changes in the behaviour of young people, individually and collectively?

What is the general mood? Any there any indicators of misinformation or rumour? Are young people expressing concerns about their care and their futures?

Behavioural changes

Behavioral changes may include:

- being 'clingey'
- aggression
- pushing boundaries
- breaching rules
- absconding more frequently
- withdrawal regression eg. bed wetting
- self-harm
- suicidality

Activity

- Are the behaviours of young people putting themselves and others at risk?
- Do young people understand the importance of government regulations?

Responding to young people

- Respond to the young person's reactions in a supportive way, listen to their concerns. They may need extra attention.
- Listen, speak kindly and reassure them.
- Provide opportunities for play and relaxation (Smiling Minds).
- Having regular online or phone contact with family.

Responding to young people

- Provide regular routines and schedules
- Create a new environment, including schooling/learning
- Provide facts about what has happened, explain what is going on now and give clear information about how to reduce their risk of being infected by the disease in words that they can understand depending on their age.

Thank you

Questions?

References

- <https://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/childrens-guide-to-coronavirus>
- <https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/supporting-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>
- <https://headspace.org.au/young-people/how-to-cope-with-stress-related-to-covid-19>
- <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-cope-with-stress-print.pdf>