



**ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION**

222 North Seventeenth Street • Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-1299  
Phone: 215- 587-3585 Fax: 215- 587-2414 E-mail: [amclaughlin@archphila.org](mailto:amclaughlin@archphila.org)

Dear Elementary School Parents/Guardians,

You have received information regarding the coronavirus (COVID-19), and the steps our school is taking to prevent the spread of illness, we would also like to share with you, additional information to keep our students healthy.

**Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for include**

- Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in teens
- Poor school performance or avoiding school
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

**There are many things you can do to support your child to reduce their fears and help them feel safe:**

- Take time to talk with your child or teen about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and share facts about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.
- Offer reassurance. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you. Let children also know doctors and researchers are studying and learning as much as they can, as quickly as possible, to help keep people safe.
- Watch for signs of anxiety. Continue to reassure them and maintain normal routines. With schools being closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- Monitor media consumption. Keep young children away from frightening images they may see on TV, social media, computers, etc. Talk to older children about what they are hearing on the news and correct any misinformation or rumors you may hear.
- Give them control. This is a great time to remind children of what they can do to help — wash hands often, cough and sneeze into their elbow, and get enough sleep.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.
- Ways to take care of yourself include:

- Reading the news from reliable sources (like the Pennsylvania Department of Health) and taking breaks from the news.
- Recognizing the things, you can control, like having good hygiene.
- Taking measures only if recommended by the CDC.
- Practicing self-care.
- Help is available. If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, contact the crisis text line by texting PA to 741-741. Your child’s pediatrician office is also a great first line of defense.

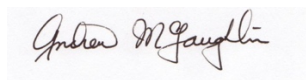
**Helpful Resources:**

- The National Association of School Psychologists also has great resources:  
[https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
<https://store.samhsa.gov/>
- American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry  
[https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/copy\\_of\\_home.aspx?hkey=f100857b-fb1c-42fa-8aad-5b7b15027acd&WebsiteKey=a2785385-0ccf-4047-b76a-64b4094ae07f](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/copy_of_home.aspx?hkey=f100857b-fb1c-42fa-8aad-5b7b15027acd&WebsiteKey=a2785385-0ccf-4047-b76a-64b4094ae07f)

Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents/guardians and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, you can provide the best support for your children. Parents/guardians can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared. If there is any additional assistance needed, please contact your principal.

As Archbishop Pérez said recently, “ The Church remains steadfast and is prepared to walk with you and serve you. God is always by our side. He never abandons us. I invite you to join me in prayerful solidarity for the intentions of the sick, suffering, and their caregivers as well as government and health officials. With God’s grace and blessing, we will navigate the difficult waters of this challenge as a united human family, for after all is said and done, we are people of Hope!”

Sincerely,



Andrew McLaughlin, Ed.D  
 Secretary for Elementary Education