

## USF projects centered on COVID-19

### College of Behavioral & Community Sciences

#### Department of Mental Health Law & Policy

- Faculty and students have been collecting food and hygiene supplies and distributing them weekly to groups of homeless people in downtown Tampa. This initiative started back in November but has increased in the last few weeks as the needs of the population we are serving have increased. Buddy Brew coffee shop has been giving their leftover pastries for a few weeks now. With their lower than usual business traffic, they've donated coffee, sandwiches, and other food too. We are working on connecting with other restaurant owners to do the same. We of course wash our hands before and after distribution and when putting together care packages, use gloves during distribution and provide hand sanitization to those we are serving on the streets. Our regular group of recipients have voiced fear and confusion over what is going on with Covid-19 and we've been able to bring them more accurate news and public health information while trying to assuage rumors and show compassion. They've reported a decline in their other meal/food availability since many shelters, kitchens, and food pantries are functioning at a much lower capacity. They generally seem very grateful that they haven't been forgotten! It's small, but it's something we can do to bring some comfort to people who need it.

#### Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders:

- The Forever Friends Student Organization (sponsored by Dr. Michelle Bourgeois) is having their members write cards and letters to the residents of the assisted living and nursing homes that they have been visiting. This is critical as these facilities are now locked down and social isolation is increasing.
- Cheryl Paul is leading online conversations with people who have aphasia using a collaborative platform, Virtual Connections (VC) between Lingraphica and Aphasia Recovery Connections (ARC).
- Dr. Nathan Maxfield is hosting a monthly online virtual support group for people who stutter in the community. Additionally, he hosts a private Facebook group with about 40 past and present stuttering clients (teens/adults) which hosts daily interactions about coping with stuttering and maintaining stuttering management skills This is crucial especially in this challenging time.
- As the American Academy of Audiology is recommending suspension of audiological services in the face of this pandemic, Dr. Devon Weist created online tutorials to help those who use hearing aids manage their devices from home. These videos, which were originally intended primarily for use by USF Hearing Clinic patients, have now gone viral and are being used nationwide to help cope with this tragedy.  
([https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCF7ig9UkP5kSkOhNbD65JfA/playlists?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCF7ig9UkP5kSkOhNbD65JfA/playlists?view_as=subscriber))
- Mrs. Michelle Hite and Dr. Carolyn Ford are collaborating with School Districts throughout Florida in developing and planning alternative ways to provide speech and language services to school-age children through various virtual formats. In cooperation with ASHA's staff, they are educating school district coordinators via TEAMS trainings. As part of this project, they are also volunteering to tele-supervise graduate students who are working full-time in the schools to provide remote therapy services.

### School of Aging Studies:

- Dr. Bill Haley is Chair of the Committee on Aging within the American Psychological Association. Under his leadership, the committee just completed and put out Key Points on COVID-19 that pertain specifically to older adults. We are sharing this information with our community partners. We are collaborating with the School of Social Work on Telehealth and other materials to be released to increase student preparedness.
- We are developing a pamphlet with a comprehensive list of resources related to COVID-19 and older adults to be sent to a two-time School of Aging Studies alumnus, Kerry Marsalek, who is on the Advisory Boards of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs and the Pasco/Pinellas County Area Agency on Aging. Kerry works for the City of Clearwater and the Pinellas Community Foundation, and heads an initiative called "Aging Well Connect", which provides resources for older adults living in Pinellas County. We will distribute this information to our other partners as well.
- We have lots of subscribers to our eNewsletter, which has been posting COVID-19 information. We are also active on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter in terms of posting COVID-19 related info, with lots of older adults and those working with older adults subscribing.
- Kathy Hyer and Lindsay Peterson (along with Dr. David Dosa from Brown U) publish this article on infection control in nursing homes: [https://theconversation.com/preventing-covid-19-from-decimating-nursing-home-residents-requires-spending-money-and-improving-infection-control-134220?fbclid=IwAR0aTL4zn-egzmHy79\\_PMNFTtYmu-p2Dw3XKcGj22UOHts4quNVwL27d-oA](https://theconversation.com/preventing-covid-19-from-decimating-nursing-home-residents-requires-spending-money-and-improving-infection-control-134220?fbclid=IwAR0aTL4zn-egzmHy79_PMNFTtYmu-p2Dw3XKcGj22UOHts4quNVwL27d-oA)
- We are working with Reliance Health Care group on improving digital connectedness and reducing social isolation. Gizem Hueluer, whose research revolves around technology and older adults, is leading the effort.
- Kathy Hyer is leading the Gerontological Society of America COVID-19 Task Force. This effort will reach older adults across the world.

### School of Social Work:

- The School of Social Work is mobilizing faculty, staff, and students to "fill the gaps" during the time of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative, based in field education, also aims to meet learning objectives for social work responses to an infectious disease pandemic. Community organizations have both increased workloads and reduced staff during this time, while the School of Social Work has a deep commitment to community and the resources necessary to meet needs in certain areas. We work with students and organizations to respond to the COVID-19 emergency in public health responsible ways, including remote work on the part of the students. For example, we provide a digital workspace and discussion room to the Florida Department of Children and Families and Child Welfare Agencies in the Central Region to identify and share common problems and issues they experience on a daily basis. Based on common themes in the discussion, faculty provide consultation, evidence-based support and information on interventions to child welfare agencies. The School is also developing a project that entails offering assistance to agencies with low-intensity interventions, ideal for implementation during disasters and other disruptions in mental health service delivery. Although on site internships were suspended, many social work students continue to work for their agencies from home by making case management calls, doing tele-therapy with vulnerable clients, doing much needed research under the direction of the agency and faculty, and creating and implementing surveys to check on client well-being. Other students, chose to sign a waiver and return to their functions at the agencies on site.

### Dean's Office:

- Dr. Howard Goldstein and his Early Literacy research team is making 9 weeks of e-books with interactive teaching of vocabulary words available as a public service (not research). We are contacting the teachers in 31 preschool and childcare classrooms. We have tested our delivery system and have set up an email account to get feedback from parents, answer questions, and troubleshoot. The letters to teachers went out this week.

### Child & Family Studies

1. One of the most important components of a successful classroom is the establishment of a behavioral support system. While teachers work hard to develop an effective and positive behavioral system throughout the year, the challenges presented by school closings and home instruction will require teachers to think differently about how to support their students' social and emotional growth at a distance. Likewise, parents want to know how they can better support the social and emotional growth of their children while they are social distancing and receiving remote instruction. In response to this need, the Florida Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports Project is developing a series of web resources to support teachers and parents to apply evidence-based approaches to enhance the behavioral and academic learning of all students during this period of home education. Within the next few weeks we will be distributing online modules for parents and teachers that are aligned to the five areas that research has linked to positive student outcomes:
  - Maximize structure in the classroom with predictable routines and a safe, orderly environment,
  - Teach, monitor, and reinforce expectations and rules that are aligned to the school-wide expectations,
  - Actively engage students by providing culturally responsive instruction that includes high rates of opportunities to respond,
  - Use a continuum of culturally responsive strategies to acknowledge appropriate behavior, and
  - Use a continuum of culturally responsive strategies to respond to inappropriate behavior.Many other resources will be distributed to address areas such as social emotional learning, mental health, and trauma-informed practices. Contact Dr. Don Kincaid at [kincaid@usf.edu](mailto:kincaid@usf.edu)
2. Students enrolled in Dr. Matthew Foster's (Rightpath Research & Innovation Center) math pilot project at Seven Oaks Elementary (Pasco County School District) are likely not returning to school this year. Dr. Foster provided participating teachers with their students login credentials, so that our students can continue learning mathematics through the math software programs that were being evaluated. Licenses were provided to 36 kindergartners and 54 first grade students (n = 90 in total), so that the students continue learning mathematics. Yesterday, a couple of teachers confirmed that they sent the login information to parents and that students were using the math software programs. Contact Dr. Matthew Foster at [mefoster@usf.edu](mailto:mefoster@usf.edu)
3. The Center for Child Welfare's (The Center) mission is to improve child welfare service delivery, support Florida's child welfare practice model, and to facilitate the identification, expansion, and transfer of expert knowledge and best practices in child welfare case practice, direct services, management, finances, policy, quality assurance, and organizational development to child welfare professionals, stakeholders, and caregivers throughout Florida.

During this time of uncertainty the child welfare community faces additional stressors as their positions are essential to the local communities who rely on them to serve and protect children and families in need. In response to this pandemic The Center is staying connected with our more than 10,000 child welfare users providing them with timely and accurate information that is specific to their roles (<http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/CoronavirusUpdates.shtml>). On March 24, 2020 The Center partnered with Dr. Anna Armstrong, Assistant Professor, College of Public Health at USF to provide a live event giving practical guidance when in the field during this time. More than 400 users participated in this live web event, recording will be available for viewing in the future. The Center continues to be in close contact with The Department of Child and Families working with them on communication strategies to leadership and the field. Contact: Pam Menendez at [pmenendez@usf.edu](mailto:pmenendez@usf.edu)

4. Program-Wide Positive Behavior Supports (PWPBS) at USF provides training and technical assistance to selected child care centers and family child care homes in Hillsborough County for utilizing Positive Behavior Supports for children from birth to 5 years old. PWPBS coaches work with teachers and families to support children's social-emotional development and learning using a multi-tiered approach. Currently the sites we support are temporarily closed or have seen a significant decreases in enrollment. During these times, we are offering multiple avenues to continue our services. PWPBS is holding virtual coaching hours for teachers or families who are looking for support around social-emotional skills or addressing challenging behavior. From 8am to 4pm, families and teachers can access our Zoom "office" hours to ask questions of our coaches or to help locate resources. PWPBS coaches are reaching out directly to the families they support with behavior plans to ensure they have the resources and materials needed to provide continuity while children are at home. Teachers have been provided resources such as scripted stories specific to handling the impact of this pandemic along with any other materials they request that to meet the needs of the children and families they serve. We have been using social media to connect more broadly with members of the community and make them aware of the supports we can offer remotely, as well as the resources available to them specific to early childhood. Contact: Anna Winneker at [awinneker@usf.edu](mailto:awinneker@usf.edu)
  
5. Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) has partnered with parents to prepare their children for preschool for more than 30 years. Home visitors typically spend an hour each week working with parents of children ages two to five on the evidenced-based curricular activities that the parent then provides to their own children the rest of the week. This program is well-known for reaching parents in low-resourced communities and also for having a consistently high kindergarten readiness rate among its participating families. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting need to keep children at home and practice social-distancing, HIPPY has responded by delivering curriculum to families' homes and providing its home visiting services by way of video conferencing, social-media, and through phone calls.  
It is through this weekly contact with families of young children that home visitors are learning about working class families' rising needs as a result of lost wages. In Florida, HIPPY's almost 100 home visitors are reporting to their coordinators, who in turn are working with their agencies, to obtain assistance for families in all of the following ways:
  - By collecting and distributing food and household supplies for families and children
  - By connecting families to agencies aiding with rent and utilities
  - By strategizing with families on creative ideas for family time, but also for ways to give children individualized attention

- By providing families with evidenced-based information about COVID-19, the importance of practices that will help mitigate its spread, and how to talk to their children about their concerns. Contact Dr. Tracy Payne at [payne12@usf.edu](mailto:payne12@usf.edu)

6. CARD-USF (Center for Autism & Related Disabilities) continues to provide support and resources relating to the COVID-19 virus and the impact on families caring for loved ones with autism and related disabilities. Parents are being asked to combine working, parenting and teaching at the same time, and caregivers for older individuals are also helping their loved ones adapt to at-home routines when community activities and outings are not available. Here are some tips to help during this overwhelming time:

- Use this social story to explain what’s going on in the world and why their lives have been interrupted by the social distancing and other changes. [Coronavirus Social Narrative](#)
- *What are social stories?* [https://www.special-learning.com/article/what\\_are\\_social\\_stories](https://www.special-learning.com/article/what_are_social_stories)
- Wake up and go to bed at regular times, just like a regular school/work week, if possible.
- Create a regular structure and routine to every work day with plenty of time for transitions.
- Provide frequent warnings for transitions (10, 5, and 2 minutes) before making a change in activity. You can use a visual time keeper, like an egg timer, kitchen timer or a countdown clock on a tablet/smartphone.
- Make transitions interesting times. You can use music, make up a song or try “brain breaks” – which are silly, stimulating and fun activities that last 2-5 minutes during transitions from one type of learning to another.
- When creating new routines, consider making a social story about the new routine. If possible, allow your loved one to participate in making the new schedule; giving them choices about which activities they would like to do at certain times. (CARD will be providing a training on how to create a social story soon!)
- Don’t be surprised if you hit difficulties in encouraging children and adolescents to comply with your requests and demands for academic learning. It’s highly likely that they may respond to a teacher as a teacher, but have difficulty seeing a parent in that role. They may reject it. They may tell you you’re doing it wrong. Making a social story about the change in roles could be helpful.
- Parents – give yourselves the flexibility with how and when you teach: teaching can be built into cooking, cleaning, watching TV and personal care, crafting projects, sorting laundry, doing yardwork, etc. Find ways to build in math, science, language and learning into daily activities.
- Engage in activities that are enjoyable and consider reducing the amount of time spent watching the news if that increases anxiety in you or your loved one.
- Engage in activities that are creative – drawing, coloring, painting, clay work, creative problem solving, puzzles, Legos, or games that require some physical activity: Twister, Jenga, relay races, obstacle
- If your loved one has a special interest, consider using this as a tool for teaching and motivation.
- Provide time for movement, brain breaks, celebration of completion of hard tasks, providing choices between tasks, and within the task. For instance, a school-aged child can choose 5 out of 10 problems to solve for math work. Or they can choose to do reading before or after science work.
- Make time for cuddles, laughter, and jokes. Your loved one can make their own joke books or comic book characters and stories. Help your family choose funny and uplifting comedies for kids and adults to watch.

- Practice self-compassion. You aren't doing it wrong. It really is a job for 3 people (maybe 4). Do the best with what you have, and choose kindness and connection with your loved ones over becoming frustrated and forcing them to comply. The most important thing for all of us right now is health and well-being.
7. CARD continues to provide support to families, training and technical assistance through virtual methods. We also continue to take CARD referrals and providing information and resource dissemination on an ongoing basis. Contact us at any of the following:
    - Phone: (813) 974-2532
    - *Para asistencia en Español, llámenos al número 813-974-2297*
    - Email: [card-usf@usf.edu](mailto:card-usf@usf.edu)
  8. Below are other resources that may be helpful.  
From the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities:
    - <http://flfcic.fmhi.usf.edu/program-areas/emergency.html>
 From Accessible Tampa:
    - <https://www.tampagov.net/accessibility/covid-19>
  9. CARD will be offering remote trainings and sharing a wide-variety of supports and information through our social media sites:
    - Facebook in English: <https://www.facebook.com/cardusf/>
    - Facebook en Español: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2356238681161290>
    - Grupo de Apoyo para Padres con hijos con necesidades especiales: (Support group for parents with special needs children) <https://www.facebook.com/groups/467608003344268>
    - Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/card\\_usf/](https://www.instagram.com/card_usf/) @card\_usf
    - YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/cardusf>
    - Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/cardatusf/>
    - Wordpress: <https://cardusf.wordpress.com/>
    - Dr. Beth Boone will be involved in a virtual town hall meeting in early April. Entitled "COVID-19: Understanding the Needs of Individuals with Disabilities, their Families and Caregivers," it will be sponsored by Councilman Luis Viera and will also include the Tampa ADA Coordinator, a School Board member, a health professional, and other community support agencies.
  10. The Learning Academy continues to assist the community via post-secondary education, job seeker training, employment & re-employment, business technical assistance, and training
    - <http://learningacademy.fmhi.usf.edu/>
    - <https://www.facebook.com/TLAES/>

Contact Dr. Beth Boone at [boone4@usf.edu](mailto:boone4@usf.edu)
  11. Interdisciplinary Center for Evaluation and Intervention (ICEI)
    - Sending out information on the supports we can provide to families (who have been associated with us), special education directors of the districts we serve, teachers/principals, and community agencies (e.g., child care centers, medical clinics that refer to us). This will be accompanied by a Qualtrics survey that will ask them what they need most from us. That can set the stage for partnerships.

- The resources we are currently able to provide or will be developing to provide immediately include:
    - a. Direct virtual or phone behavior consultations to families to support child/youth behavior in the home setting.
    - b. Direct virtual or phone behavior consultation with educators on how to teach families to implement behavior intervention plans in the home setting. We are also developing briefs, fact sheets that teachers can download and implement.
    - c. Resources/tools that can be downloaded and used by families to help with home structure (e.g., visual schedules, first then boards)
    - d. Tools on general behavior strategies and principles that are practitioner friendly (e.g., positive behavior change tools such as pivot, reinforcement, redirect, ignore junk behavior, stay close).
12. The faculty and students in the Rehabilitation and Mental Health program have been working with community agencies to provide continuity of care for client mental health services during the COVID-19 pandemic. We currently have 29 students who are continuing to provide mental health services to their existing clients and are taking on new clientele to serve the needs of our community during this time. Our students are addressing a variety of new clinical concerns as a direct result of COVID-19 including financial stress, job loss, parenting difficulties, stress, family dynamics, social isolation, and anxiety management. The majority of the work is being done using tele-therapy, but some students have signed a waiver to continue working at their sites doing face to face sessions, mainly in the residential treatment centers. Our students are still providing over 150 hours a week of important mental health services to clients in the community. The work our students are doing in the community is a huge support to the agencies and clients they serve, especially with the uncertainty and fear that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused.