



Guidance for Children's Cabinets in Response to COVID-19

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Harnessing the Power of Cabinets

While the COVID-19 crisis is impacting entire communities, it particularly effects children and families due to school closures, program and activity cancellations, parent and caregiver job layoffs, and quarantines. Civic leaders are rightly worried about a host of challenges, from how to continue to educate children, to ensuring children who typically get meals at school continue to be fed, to meeting childcare needs, to addressing children's and families' anxiety.

“Use the structure of the children’s cabinet to coordinate services and messaging across community sectors.”

Communities with established children's cabinets have the benefit of a structure to address children's needs holistically during this crisis. While it may seem expedient for city leaders and agencies to work independently to make decisions at this time, we urge them instead to lean on their children's cabinet or other cross-sector body as an important mechanism for identifying needs and providing services. Through their children's cabinets, agencies and organizations that serve children have already developed strong collaborative relationships and practices.

We encourage communities to convene their children's cabinets — virtually if needed — to:

- Bring together information and data about the needs of and impacts on children and families from multiple agencies and organizations.
- Determine the most appropriate response for schools, childcare, youth and community programs, etc.
- Identify and coordinate the services available.
- Create a unified message and communication plan.

Following is a list of resources we have gathered that you might find helpful.

“Time and again it has been shown that communities where people know and care about each other are far better able to navigate the unknown than those where isolation is the norm. Communities become more resilient when they strengthen their natural networks of care.”
-[Tamarack Institute](#), 2018

Resources for Cross-Sector Collaboration During Times of Crisis

Boudreau, Emily. [“Providing Stability in a Time of Crisis: What leaders can do help calm their community and keep students ready to learn,”](#) Usable Knowledge, Harvard Graduate School of Education. March 10, 2020.

Boudreau, Emily. [“To Prepare for Coronavirus, Simple Measures Are Often Most Effective,”](#) Usable Knowledge, Harvard Graduate School of Education. March 8, 2020.

[Harvard EdCast: Schools, Families, and the Coronavirus](#), 2020.

[“Talking to Children About Covid-19.”](#) National Association of School Psychologists, 2020.

World Health Organization. [“Risk communication and community engagement \(RCCE\) readiness and response to the 2019 novel coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\),”](#) January 26, 2020.

“In times of crisis, whether it’s a flood, ice storm, or heat wave, communities need their municipalities, organizations and citizens working together and harnessing their collective skills and capacities. This is a community’s social infrastructure.”
-[Tamarack Institute](#), 2018