

## **The COVID-19 Pandemic- How do we keep children and staff of Child Care Institutions safe?**

### **Recommendations for Action that may be taken by the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Karnataka**

Submitted by  
**Enfold Proactive Health Trust, Bangalore**  
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#### **Introduction:**

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), children and young people are global citizens, powerful agents of change and the next generation of caregivers, scientists, and doctors. Any crisis presents the opportunity to help them learn, cultivate compassion and increase resilience while building a safer and more caring community. Having information and facts about COVID-19 will help diminish children's fears and anxieties around the disease and support their ability to cope with any secondary impacts in their lives.<sup>2</sup>

WHO reiterates that maintaining safe schools (*and Child Care Institutions*) requires many considerations but, if done well, can promote public health. It has declared COVID-19 as a pandemic<sup>3</sup>, while cautioning that this term is not a word to use lightly or carelessly, given that if misused, can cause unreasonable fear, or unjustified acceptance that the fight is over, leading to unnecessary suffering and death. A pandemic is the highest level of global health emergency and signifies widespread outbreaks affecting multiple regions of the world. However, the WHO statements remain hopeful that the pandemic can be controlled and the damage minimized by taking immediate aggressive steps. The formal declaration of COVID-19 or any other infectious disease as pandemic tells governments, agencies and aid organizations worldwide to shift efforts from containment to mitigation. It has economic, political and societal impacts on a global scale, and the WHO takes extreme care when making this determination.<sup>4</sup>

The Department of Women and Child Development, (DWCD), Government of Karnataka needs to recognize that children in the care of the State, residing in CCIs are particularly vulnerable given the potential risk of being infected by the COVID - 19 while being in a closed institution from which they cannot leave at their own will. Urgent measures therefore need to be taken on priority to prevent the spread of the virus to CCIs in the State. This guidance note provides suggestions for key messages and considerations for engaging administrators of Child Care Institutions (CCIs), parents, caregivers, community members working in or associated with CCI, as well as children themselves, in promoting safe and healthy CCIs. These would naturally need to be vetted by the

<sup>1</sup> Research undertaken by Arlene Manoharan, Part time Consultant, Restorative Justice: Rehabilitation and Re-integration, Enfold Proactive Health Trust, with inputs from Swagata Raha, Dr. Sangeeta Saksena, as well as Shivangi Puri and Neeth D'souza. This document was submitted to the Director, Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Karnataka on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020. For more information contact [info@enfoldindia.org](mailto:info@enfoldindia.org)

<sup>2</sup> Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools, March 2020, The World Health Organization, pg 3, available at [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/key-messages-and-actions-for-covid-19-prevention-and-control-in-schools-march-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=baf81d52\\_4](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/key-messages-and-actions-for-covid-19-prevention-and-control-in-schools-march-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=baf81d52_4)

<sup>3</sup> Speech made by Director General of WHO, 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020, available at <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>

<sup>4</sup> The Associated Press, News 18, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2020, available at <https://in.news.yahoo.com/declares-coronavirus-pandemic-heres-different-021340402.html>

Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Karnataka and issued at the earliest. A list of suggested Action that may be taken by the DWCD and other duty bearers is also included.

### **Recommended Guidelines for Child Care Institutions for prevention and control of COVID - 19**

The Person in Charge of CCIs, shall adhere to the following Basic Guidelines and take the following steps in order to deal with COVID-19, in addition to those enshrined in directives/circulars issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, or the Department of Health and Family, Government of Karnataka, from time to time.

#### **Fundamental Principle of Safety and the COVID- 19**

- The Person in Charge of the CCI and all other staff working in the CCI shall proactively and diligently take all necessary steps to keep the children safe from the risk of harm arising out of COVID-19, in furtherance of the fundamental principle of safety enshrined in the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children), Act, 2015 (JJ Act, 2015).

#### **Basic Guidelines**

1. Children, staff or any other individual found to be exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 should not be permitted to enter the CCI.
2. CCIs should enforce regular hand washing with safe water and soap, alcohol rub/hand sanitizer or chlorine solution and, at a minimum, daily disinfection and cleaning of various surfaces. Where adequate water is not available, immediate steps should be taken to ensure it is made available through necessary action, including enhancing budget allocation for the said purpose.
3. CCIs should provide appropriate water, sanitation and waste management facilities and follow environmental cleaning and decontamination procedures.
4. CCIs should promote social distancing (a term applied to certain actions that are taken to slow down the spread of a highly contagious disease). The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India (MOHFW), has issued Guidelines on Social Distancing<sup>6</sup>, which includes
  - a. Meetings, as far as feasible, shall be done through video conferences. Minimize or reschedule meetings involving a large number of people unless necessary.
  - b. Hygiene and physical distancing has to be maintained. Shaking hands and hugging as a matter of greeting to be avoided.

#### **SECTION A: PREVENTION**

In order to prevent children in CCIs from getting infected by COVID - 19, Persons in Charge of CCIs shall

##### **1 Remain up to date and make known the symptoms of COVID- 19 and how to deal with matters related to it**

The Person in Charge of the CCI shall stay up to date on developments relating to COVID-19 in the surrounding area/community.

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Basic Principles, Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools, March 2020, The World Health Organization, pg 4.

<sup>6</sup> Advisory on Social Distancing Measure in view of spread of COVID-19 disease, Ministry of Health, Government of India, available at <https://www.mohfw.gov.in/SocialDistancingAdvisorybyMOHFW.pdf>

- Symptoms can include fever, cough and shortness of breath. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia or breathing difficulties. More rarely, the disease can be fatal. These symptoms are similar to the flu (influenza) or the common cold, which are a lot more common than COVID-19. This is why testing is required to confirm if someone has COVID-19.<sup>7</sup>
- The Health Ministry has set up new National **Helpline numbers** for queries on COVID-19, which are 1075 and 1800-112-545. Anyone can dial the central helpline number for queries and clarifications related to Coronavirus pandemic. At the State level, calls may be made to 104, -the Helpline number for Karnataka.<sup>8</sup>

## 2 **Know and make known how COVID -19 spreads**

- There is currently **no vaccine to prevent COVID-19**.
- **The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.**
- The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.
  - Between a person who is infected with the virus and other people who are in close contact with that person (within about one metre / 3 feet).
  - Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
- Take necessary steps to protect yourself, children in your care and colleagues working in your CCI.

## 3 **Ensure that hands are cleaned and disinfected often**

- **Ensure arrangements for water and soap are made so that children and staff can wash hands** often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after going to a public place, or after blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing, using the toilet, before eating or preparing food, and before and after providing routine care for children who need assistance.
- If soap and water are not readily available, make arrangements for the same, or **use hand sanitizers that contain at least 60% alcohol**. Ensure that all surfaces of hands are covered and they are rubbed together until they feel dry. The Person in Charge of the CCI should make necessary arrangements to utilize emergency/contingency funds for this purpose, and submit requisition for additional budgetary allocation where required, at the earliest.
- **Ensure children and staff are instructed to avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth** with unwashed hands.

## 4 **Ensure instructions are given to staff and children to maintain social distancing**

- **Instruct children and staff to avoid close contact** with people who are sick.
- **Instruct children and staff to maintain social distance** by putting distance (at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing)<sup>9</sup> between themselves and other people if COVID-19 is spreading in the community. This is

<sup>7</sup> Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools, March 2020, The World Health Organization, pg 3.

<sup>8</sup> See <https://in.news.yahoo.com/coronavirus-helpline-numbers-india-released-103753241.html>

<sup>9</sup> Basic protection measures against the new coronavirus, WHO, available at <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

especially important for people who are at higher risk of getting very sick, such as older adults and people who have serious chronic medical conditions (like heart disease, diabetes and lung disease).

- Strictly **monitor the entry of all individuals into the CCI**, and ensure that only staff/NGO representatives who have been permitted to work in the CCI are allowed to enter.
- Ensure **all staff/visitors/ volunteers strictly follow the rules related to prevention** such as washing of hands and social distancing. Ensure strict measures to prevent staff and any other visitor, including family members do not carry the virus inside the CCI. This includes
  - Ensuring screening by the nurse/doctor attached to the CCI and declared as not demonstrating any symptoms of COVID-19.
  - Ensuring footwear is left outside
  - Ensuring there is a facility for washing hands thoroughly with soap, before entering the CCI.
  - Consider setting up a safe private space near the entrance (such as a *shamiana*) for visitors to change clothes and/wear protective gear, if they are entering the CCI.

## 5 Cleaning and disinfection<sup>10</sup>

*Cleaning* refers to the removal of dirt and impurities, including germs, from surfaces. Cleaning alone does not kill germs. But by removing the germs, it decreases their number and therefore any risk of spreading infection. *Disinfecting* works by using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs. But killing germs remaining on a surface after cleaning further reduces any risk of spreading infection.

- **Promote and demonstrate positive hygiene behaviors** and monitor their uptake.
- **Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily**. This includes gates/doors, door bells, tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, phones, toilets, water taps, wash basins, etc.
- **If surfaces are dirty, clean them:** Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- **Do not shake dirty laundry;** this can minimize the possibility of dispersing virus through the air.
- **Wash items using the hot water and dry items completely.** Dirty laundry that has been in contact with an ill person can however be washed with other people's items if washed in hot water and with adequate amounts of soap/detergent<sup>11</sup>.
- Ensure **adequate, clean toilets**
  - Ensure soap and safe water is available at age-appropriate hand washing stations
  - Encourage frequent and thorough washing (at least 20 seconds)
  - Place hand sanitizers in toilets, classrooms, halls, and near exits where possible
  - Ensure adequate, clean and separate toilets or latrines for girls, boys and children of other genders.
- **Clean and disinfect the CCI building, especially water and sanitation facilities at least once a day, and particularly surfaces that are touched by many people** (railings, door and window handles, toys, teaching and learning aids etc.) Use sodium hypochlorite at 0.5% (equivalent 5000ppm) for disinfecting surfaces and 70% ethyl alcohol for disinfection of small items, and ensure appropriate equipment for cleaning staff.

<sup>10</sup> Content for this section has been drawn from the Centre for Disease Control website, and from Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools, March 2020, The World Health Organization, pg 6.

<sup>11</sup> Instructions for handling laundry needs to be issued by the Department of Health and Family Welfare at the earliest.

- **Increase airflow and ventilation.**
- **Post IEC material that is culturally appropriate and child friendly** (age appropriate, and suitable for children with disability) **encouraging good hand and respiratory hygiene practices.**
- **Ensure trash is removed daily and disposed of safely**<sup>12</sup>.

## **SECTION B: Responding to situations when there is a suspected case of COVID-19 or when a child, staff member/NGO representative working in the CCI becomes unwell.**<sup>13</sup>

The CCI should immediately follow procedures established by the Ministry/Department of Health and Family Welfare, if children or staff or other service providers working in the CCI become unwell. These include but are not limited to the following:

### **Measures that are to be taken when a staff or child residing in a CCI is suspected to be infected by COVID - 19**

1. Ensuring that all health staff attached to CCIs are accessible and on call, and that they are trained on and are performing their duties related to the management of COVID- 19<sup>14</sup> diligently.
2. Inform the nurse/doctor attached to the CCI at the earliest, when there is a suspicion of COVID-19 infection in any staff/child.
3. Segregate sick children and staff in designated areas separate from those who are well, until they can be either hospitalized or isolated.

### **Self-quarantine**

- Should the Person in Charge or any of the CCI staff/NGO service providers or visitors have any symptoms that may be indicative of a possible COVID - 19 infection, ensure that steps are taken immediately to self-quarantine<sup>15</sup> in order to prevent potential risk to others, including children in the CCI. Guidelines for self-quarantine within the CCI shall be sought from the Health Department.

### **Testing for COVID- 19**

- The Ministry of Health, Government of India has issued an Advisory on ‘When to get tested for COVID - 19’<sup>16</sup>, which is basically when there are symptoms of cough, fever or difficulty in breathing.

<sup>12</sup> Instructions for how to dispose of medical waste and material likely to be infected by COVID-19 in CCIs needs to be issued by the Department of Health and Family Welfare at the earliest.

<sup>13</sup> Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools, March 2020, The World Health Organization, pg 5.

<sup>14</sup> Instructions in terms of roles, responsibilities and duties of staff with regard to the management of COVID-19 needs to be issued by the DWCD in coordination with the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Karnataka, at the earliest.

<sup>15</sup> Instructions related to procedures for self-quarantine need to be issued by the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Karnataka, at the earliest.

<sup>16</sup> When to get tested for COVID -19, Ministry of Health, Government of India, available at [https://www.mohfw.gov.in/FINAL\\_14\\_03\\_2020\\_ENg.pdf](https://www.mohfw.gov.in/FINAL_14_03_2020_ENg.pdf)

- Testing should be done at a Government approved Laboratory only. A list of Government approved Laboratories has been provided by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).<sup>17</sup>

### **Planning in advance for emergency situations**

The Person in Charge of the CCI shall, in coordination with the health staff attached to the CCI, - plan ahead with the local health authorities to plan for any emergency that may arise due to the COVID-19. This shall include

- updating the emergency contact lists
- separating sick children and staff from those who are well, without creating stigma;
- for informing parents/caregivers, and consulting with health care providers/health authorities wherever possible; and
- whether or not children/staff need to be referred directly to a health facility, depending on the situation/context, or sent home, after obtaining the necessary orders from the concerned Child Welfare Committee or Juvenile Justice Board, or Children’s Court.

Information about such procedures shall be shared with staff, parents and children ahead of time.

### **Section C: Measures to ensure the general physical and emotional wellbeing of children residing in CCIs**

- Try to continue with the **regular routine** maintained in the home, with minimal disruptions, so as to maintain a sense of security and wellbeing, while taking all measures to ensure the safety of the children and the staff.
- **Call for an online or telephonic meeting with all NGOs/individuals who are permitted to work inside the CCI, to plan for how to take care of the children’s emotional and other needs, so that they can continue with their normal schedule.**
- **Ensure that no staff or child is subject to any form of stigmatizing words or behaviour** arising due to coughing, sneezing, etc., as this violates the principles of ‘equality and non-discrimination<sup>18</sup>,’ ‘dignity and worth<sup>19</sup>’ and ‘non-stigmatizing semantics’.
- **Ensuring emotional wellbeing:** The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about the disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Steps to help and support staff of CCIs and children to better cope with stress should be taken on priority.<sup>20</sup> For further guidance on how to ensure the emotional well-being of children in CCIs, please refer to **Annexure 1**.

### **SECTION D: Special Measures that may be considered and taken by Child Welfare Committees to ensure safety of children in need of care and protection**

<sup>17</sup> The list of Government approved Laboratories is available at [https://icmr.nic.in/sites/default/files/upload\\_documents/COVID\\_19\\_Testing\\_Laboratories.pdf](https://icmr.nic.in/sites/default/files/upload_documents/COVID_19_Testing_Laboratories.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Section 3(x), JJ Act, 2015

<sup>19</sup> Section 3(ii), JJ Act, 2015

<sup>20</sup> Centres for Disease Control, - see [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2F coping.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2F coping.html)



CWCs are encouraged to proactively consider steps that are to be taken in the light of COVID - 19, while conducting their inquiries/inspections and also whether a child or children should be kept in the CCI considering the best interest, health and safety concern. Special sittings may be called to consider measures that may be taken to prevent children residing in the Children's Homes, SAAs, and Open Shelters from risk of harm arising out of COVID- 19.

### **SECTION E: Special measures that may be taken by Juvenile Justice Boards and Children's Courts**

Juvenile Justice Boards and Children's Courts are encouraged to proactively consider steps that are to be taken in the light of COVID - 19, while conducting their inquiries/inspections. The Juvenile Justice Boards/Children's Courts may consider calling for special sittings to consider measures that may be taken to prevent children residing in Observation Homes, Special Homes and Places of Safety from risk of harm arising out of COVID- 19. In this regard, JJBs and Children's Courts are encouraged to proactively consider whether a child or children should be kept in the CCI considering the best interest, health and safety concern. These may include

- As regards children alleged to be in conflict with law, residing in Observation Homes, Juvenile Justice Boards shall consider taking steps to release all children on bail, unless there are clear and valid reasons for the application of the proviso to Section 12, JJ Act, 2015.<sup>21</sup>
- Similarly, Juvenile Justice Boards may consider releasing children who are placed in Special Homes, into the care of their family or fit persons.

### **SECTION F: Recommendations for immediate action to be taken by the Department of Women and Child development, government of Karnataka in the light of COVID-19**

The DWCD, Government of Karnataka, needs to recognize that COVID-19 has been declared a pandemic, by the WHO, which warrants urgent attention and action to pre-empt emergency and disaster situation from arising with regard to children in State care. Some recommendations for urgent steps that may be taken include:

#### **A: Human Resources**

The Department of Women and Child Development shall

- 1. Develop and notify Policies required to be put in place for CCIs in connection with COVID- 19:** The DWCD, Government of Karnataka should immediately adapt policies, procedures and regulations applicable to CCIs, where appropriate. This would include
  - policies related to attendance (flexible attendance and sick leave policies that encourage staff to stay home when sick or when caring for sick family members);
  - identifying critical job functions and positions, and
  - planning for alternative coverage by cross training staff.
- 2. Coordinate with and work with the Department of Health and Family Welfare to arrive at appropriate protocols and guidelines in line with internationally accepted standards to manage the COVID -19 pandemic. The DWCD shall seek**

<sup>21</sup> The proviso to Section 12(1), JJ Act, 2015, states as follows - 'Provided that such person shall not be so released if there appears reasonable grounds for believing that the release is likely to bring that person into association with any known criminal or expose the said person to moral, physical or psychological danger or the person's release would defeat the ends of justice...'

- updated/additional guidance for cleaning and disinfection**, are followed, including for identification of new potential cases of COVID-19.
3. Issue immediate **guidelines for quarantine** of staff or children residing in the CCI, either within the said CCI or in government hospitals, with suitable arrangements for guardians, etc.
  4. Request the Department of Health and Family Welfare to provide **Fact Sheets in local language and in child friendly versions. This could include the following child friendly comic - ‘Kids, Vaayu and Corona’ on COVID -19.**<sup>22</sup>
  5. **Circulate information to all CCIs about how to deal with COVID - 19** immediately, with instructions that awareness about COVID-19 is spread in a timely and effective manner. This shall include information to bust myths about the disease.<sup>23</sup>
  6. Arrange for **training by the Department of Health and Family Welfare to educate CCI staff, volunteers, NGO workers, sanitation workers**, etc., about how to deal with the COVID- 19. Such training shall be delivered using only online or video-conference modes, especially given the MOHWF Advisory prohibiting group gatherings and training programs. At the minimum, this training should include detailed instructions for
    - a. performing cleaning, laundry, and trash pick-up activities
    - b. recognizing the symptoms of COVID-19
    - c. instructions on what to do if they develop symptoms within 14 days after their last possible exposure to the virus.
    - d. instructions that they should immediately notify their supervisor and the local health department if they develop symptoms of COVID-19.
  7. **Begin preparing for a disaster/emergency situation** that may arise.<sup>24</sup> Work with Persons in Charge of CCIs and District Child Protection Units to **stagger staffing** or schedules to reduce in-person interaction by CCI staff, where feasible. Begin **developing a system for how to rope in trained volunteers** who could step in to care for children, when the need arises.
  8. Ensure that all government functionaries **perform their duties diligently, and that strict action would be taken should there be any dereliction of duty.** As per Rule 66 (1), Juvenile Justice Model Rules, 2016, any dereliction of duty, violation of rules and orders, *including this Circular* shall be viewed seriously and strict disciplinary action shall be taken or recommended by the Person-in-charge against the erring officials.<sup>25</sup>

## **B: Budgetary allocation and availability of other resources**

The DWD, Government of Karnataka shall ensure that all other necessary resources are made available in order to manage the COVID-19 pandemic. These include

<sup>22</sup> Kids, Vaayu and Corona, Dr. Ravindra Khaiwal, and Dr. Suman Mor, Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh, Punjab University, National Centre for Disease Control - New Delhi, the World Health Organization, and Government of India, available at [https://www.mohfw.gov.in/Corona\\_comic\\_PGI.pdf](https://www.mohfw.gov.in/Corona_comic_PGI.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> For useful information to bust myths about COVID-19, Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public: Myth busters, WHO, available at <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>

<sup>24</sup> Please refer to the following resource for some guidance - <https://info.childcareaware.org/lets-get-ready-planning-together-for-emergencies>

<sup>25</sup> Rule 66(1), JJ Model Rules, 2016.



1. Ensure adequate budgetary allocation is made to meet the costs that are likely to arise for the effective management of the pandemic, and that all bottlenecks and procedural delays are effectively curbed.
2. Ensure adequate availability of good quality face masks, soap, disinfectants such as bleach, or alcohol based disinfectants, etc.
3. Ensure availability of adequate food, drinking water, and other basic necessities such as clean clothes, menstrual hygiene products, etc.

### **C: Infrastructure**

The DWD, Government of Karnataka shall ensure that necessary infrastructure is in place in order to manage the COVID-19 pandemic. These include

1. Ensure availability of adequate running water, especially given that some CCIs do not have this basic facility, vital to help address this pandemic.
2. Ensure availability of separate rooms that may be required for segregation and isolation of children infected with COVID-19, who are unable to return to their families or placed in fit facilities or with fit persons.

**Conclusion:** The DWCD, Government of Karnataka has demonstrated that it has been proactive in the area of child protection, and is recognized as being progressive and responsive to the needs of children in the child protection system. Timely and professional action to protect vulnerable children residing in CCIs would be one more positive step in this direction.

#### **Annexure 1: Ensuring the emotional well-being of children residing in Child Care Institutions<sup>26</sup>**

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. How a person responds to the outbreak can depend on their background, the things that make the person different from other people, and the community they live in. Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems

#### **Steps that can be taken to reduce stress among children residing in CCIs**

- Limit exposure to news coverage of the event. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Encourage and support children to take care of their bodies - taking deep breaths, stretching, doing yoga/meditation, eating healthy, well-balanced meals, exercising regularly, getting plenty of sleep, etc.
- Spend time with children and help them to unwind, preferably doing activities they enjoy.

<sup>26</sup> Content for this section includes information drawn from the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, available at [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2Fcoping.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2Fcoping.html) and Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools, March 2020, The World Health Organization, pg 6.

- Encourage children to connect with each other and to talk with people they trust, about their concerns and how they are feeling.
- Provide information in an honest, age-appropriate manner. Take time to talk with the children and to share the facts about COVID-19, - enabling them to understand the actual risk can make an outbreak less stressful.
- Reassure the children that they are safe. Let them know it is okay if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Encourage children to discuss their questions and concerns. Explain it is normal that they may experience different reactions and encourage them to talk to CCI staff and/or NGOs working in the CCI if they have any questions or concerns.
- Guide students on how to support their peers and prevent exclusion and bullying.
- Work with the health staff/social workers/counselors to identify and support children and staff who exhibit signs of distress in the CCI.
- Work with social service systems to ensure continuity of critical services that may take place in CCIs, such as health screenings, or therapies for children with special needs. Consider the specific needs of children with disabilities, and how marginalized populations may be more acutely impacted by the illness or its secondary effects.

### **Steps that may be taken by staff and others caring for children**

- If you are a staff/ care giver in a CCI, be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.

### **References**

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5. Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools, March 2020, The World Health Organization, available at [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/key-messages-and-actions-for-covid-19-prevention-and-control-in-schools-march-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=baf81d52\\_4](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/key-messages-and-actions-for-covid-19-prevention-and-control-in-schools-march-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=baf81d52_4)
6. Webinar conducted by Child Care Aware, on Getting Prepared for Emergencies available at <https://info.childcareaware.org/lets-get-ready-planning-together-for-emergencies>