

## **COVID-19 and Effects on Caregivers and Students**

The coronavirus pandemic has impacted everyone's life since the beginning of the outbreak in the United States in early 2020. Many people did not realize that one year later we would still be dealing with issues related to COVID-19. These issues include not only physical and mental health, substance use, and the general lack of resources for mental health but also having adequate financial resources to get basic necessities.

The National Federation of Families conducted a survey in 2021 to see how families and educators are doing since COVID-19 began. In this survey, they also gathered quotes from caregivers who completed the survey. One caregiver from Illinois said, "I have no concerns with the school or his teachers - everyone is trying their best in very uncertain times, but I feel that this year is going to be a wash for both my son and daughter. I dread next school year when everyone is going to be playing catch-up."

There were 1,100 families included in the survey, representing over 2,300 children throughout the United States of America. The survey respondents included 10% from the pre-K age group, 32% from elementary school, 23% from middle school, 27% from high school, and 8% from post high school levels. These students were then separated by virtual learners (55%), in person learners (13%) and hybrid learners (32%). 49% of caregivers responded that they felt their students were doing worse than they expected.

The survey also asked what caregivers found to be the most challenging aspect of learning during the COVID-19 outbreak. The number one challenge identified was balancing school and work—or in other words, time management. Other issues that made up the top four were meeting special education needs, navigating internet platforms, and support from schools and teachers. One parent from New York stated, "I believe most teachers and administrators are doing the best they can with what they have been given. I know they are trying to maintain quality education while dealing with both remote and in-person learning, along with the stress of putting themselves at risk of exposure. My high school-aged child has struggled immensely, to the point where we have had to pull her out of school. We were looking at in-patient programs, but were lucky to get her into a partial hospitalization program. She is still struggling and I am very concerned about her transition back to school. The anxiety and pressure these children are feeling is immense and this generation will most likely have long term mental health struggles for years to come."

Social distancing has also had a profound effect on caregivers and their children's mental health. Caregivers said both they and their children are experiencing an increase in behavioral health symptoms such as anxiety, depression, substance use, and negative thoughts. Caregivers also reported that they are accessing more mental health services and support for themselves than their children. The National Federation of Families suggests that this may be due to the limited number of mental health professionals that serve youth. Additionally, service methods, such as telehealth, may be more difficult to navigate for children.

"Right now, the most helpful thing is the support, help, encouragement, and empathy that we are getting from our teachers. They have been wonderful." a parent from Illinois stated. The

stress of the pandemic has affected everyone. Parents are doing their best. Teachers are doing their best. We all need to do our best to find ways to support our children by watching for warning signs of mental health struggles and seeking help, when needed.

## **Reference**

National Federation of Families-Education and Mental Health During COVID-19  
[https://49bf42da-b858-4965-a674-2901508f2c7d.usrfiles.com/ugd/49bf42\\_a87eda30feb2424cb0e46ee6e160bb0f.pdf](https://49bf42da-b858-4965-a674-2901508f2c7d.usrfiles.com/ugd/49bf42_a87eda30feb2424cb0e46ee6e160bb0f.pdf)

## **Resources**

COVID-19 Resources for Parents, Youth and Families  
<https://www.ffcmh.org/covid-19-resources-for-parents>

COVID-19 Parental Resource Kits  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/parental-resource-kit/adolescence.html>

Supporting Families During COVID-19  
<https://childmind.org/coping-during-covid-19-resources-for-parents/>

World Health Organization  
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/healthy-parenting>

Mental Health America  
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/healthy-parenting>