

## **DISCUSSION GUIDE TO MAKING A PLAN WITH YOUR FAMILY**

**There's no one more capable of planning for your situation than you!**

Creating a family plan is an important component in emergency preparedness. Starting the conversation can feel overwhelming. Use this framework to help guide your family's process in creating a plan that meets the unique needs of you and your loved ones.

### **Preparing for the meeting**

#### **1. Set the stage for the Family Plan Discussion**

Set the stage for your family's response plan discussion. Set aside a specific time and day to work through your plan as a group. **Allow up to 45 minutes or an hour for the discussion.** It's best to avoid late-evening conversations when people may be feeling tired or stressed from a long day. Be sure everyone involved in the conversation has plenty of notice of when the conversation will be and the goals of the conversation.

#### **2. Logistics for the meeting**

At the time of the meeting, gather as a group in an area of the home that is comfortable. Turn off all cell phones, TV's and other distractions. Since the conversation may be emotional, plan to have tissues on hand and water to drink. Snacks are helpful but not required.

- ✓ Water for everyone
- ✓ Tissues
- ✓ Snacks (optional but recommended)
- ✓ TV and cell phones off

#### **3. Ground rules for the group**

As you start the discussion, you may want to review some basic ground rules to keep the conversation productive.

- Everyone has a chance to be heard
- Not everything needs to be solved in this meeting, we can always revise our family plan
- Give everyone permission to take a time-out from the discussion and regroup when it seems appropriate

Ask if everyone agrees to these ground rules, and whether anyone has additional ground rules to add. Write them here:

## Having the discussion

### 1. Starting the discussion

*This is a suggested script to help get the conversation started. It's important to acknowledge that your family may feel anxious or afraid, they may be confused about what's happening in the community and how it might impact you. Staying calm, answering questions to the best of your ability, and listening actively will help you and your family make a plan you can all follow.*

Suggested script:

"There may be a time when something happens, and I may need to isolate myself from you."

"Being isolated can seem scary."

"But when we have a plan that we've worked on together, it helps things to be less scary, because we know what we're going to do. Our family plan will also help us to know how we are going to stay connected."

"We are going to work through some questions that can help us put our family plan together. It's ok if you don't have an answer to some of these questions right away. I might not have all the answers to questions either....We can always come back to this plan when you have ideas that you are ready to share."

### 2. Identifying and prioritizing options for isolation and discussing the family impact

"Let's talk about what isolation options work best for our family."

Discuss isolating at home – perhaps in the basement or in a separate room; alternate location such as a shelter facility; etc.. Begin with a brainstorming exercise where no idea is a bad idea....even silly ones the kids may come up with like living in the kid's playhouse out back.

Write these ideas here:

Talk about the benefits of each location and what that might mean for your family's routine and support for you.

**Prioritize your list of options.** Circle the top two or three options and **determine which is your #1, #2, and #3.**

### 3. Staying connected during isolation

**“Being isolated doesn’t mean we can’t stay connected. It just means we’ll have to do some things differently.”**

Walk through each of these questions, making sure each person has a chance to answer – including you. *Write down their comments on the worksheet.*

- **“What things are important to you...to maintain a connection with me?”** (This could be a discussion about frequency of connection – several times per day or at bed time. Also talk about HOW to connect - - phone call, video chat, etc...)
  
- **“Would you want to think about a memento you may want to hold on to, to feel connected to me while I’m away?”** (You may also think about something you’d like for yourself)
  
- **“What are some important things our family needs, to maintain a sense of stability”** (Is there a routine in the family that you could be involved in, even if virtually...such as family dinner, bedtime routine/reading a book, something else that you regularly do with your family member)

## FAQ's

Your family members may have questions. It's important to allow time to talk through their concerns.

"You may have lots of questions. I will try my best to answer them, and if I don't have the answer, I can always reach out to my supervisor to help find the answers." (Allow time here for people to ask questions and talk about their worries.)

Listen carefully to find out what your family members understand about the situation. Answer questions truthfully and in a way they can understand, and correct any misinformation.

Offer calm reassurance to exude sense of security and stability when family members express feelings. *When you share your feelings, it will open the conversation for your family members to share too.*

### **1. Understanding "isolation"**

"Let's talk about some things that could cause me to isolate from you"

You might need to clarify what isolation is, young kids might think it's because somebody did something wrong. Please stress that when people are in isolation it does not mean they did something wrong, but that they are trying to protect themselves or others from getting sick.

Talk about events that could mean that you would want to be isolated to protect your family from being sick.

### **2. Setting expectations on duration of isolation**

"You might wonder how long I might need to be isolated."

Provide as much information as you can about potential duration of isolation practices.

### **3. Speaking with children and family members about their feelings**

Keep lines of communication open and encourage your family members to share feelings, thoughts, or questions as they arise. Give children extra time and attention to build a sense of security and safety. Focus on what the family is doing to stay safe. Help to normalize the feelings people may be experiencing.

\* BE INFORMED \* MAKE A PLAN \* BUILD A KIT \* GET INVOLVED \*

You might say things like,

"It's normal to feel emotions like anger, fear, or sadness."

"We will take this one day at a time and we are here for each other."

"Yes, this can feel scary. We are working hard to keep everyone in our family safe."

"Even though we don't have answers to everything now, when we know more, we will talk about it as a family."

"How are you feeling about all of this?"

#### 4. A few tips to help your family during this time

- ✓ Maintain daily routines and schedules as much as possible. These routines help build predictability and give people a sense of normalcy
- ✓ The Tapping Solution has a free App with free guided tapping scripts for managing anxiety and stress related to COVID-19 for parents to do with their kids. It's a wonderful mind/body approach to creating calming response in the nervous system. The Tapping Solution provided tapping programs in school with children/survivors of the Newtown tragedy. You can find their app here: <https://www.thetappingsolution.com/blog/tapping-solution-app/>

**Your agency has access to additional resources to help you cope with the stress of the COVID-19 response including Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), Peer Support, and CISM.**

***Contact your supervisor to facilitate these no-cost resources for you and your family.***

## **MAKE A FAMILY PLAN WORKSHEET**

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### **Where to go...**

1. Isolate at home in separate area from others
2. Stay at a Department Designated Facility
3. Family may relocate to another family home or safe location
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

### **What to take...**

1. Personal Items, toiletries, medications, sanitizers, tissues,
2. Several sets of uniforms, foul weather gear and comfortable clothing
3. Cell Phone, laptop or other electronics with chargers
4. First Aid Kit, radio, flashlight
5. Snacks
- 6.
- 7.

### **How to keep in contact...**

1. Set up a Zoom, Facetime, or Messenger Meeting or social media chat functions to send messages to each other
2. Use electronics to participate in distance activities, helping with homework, eating a meal together, reading a book together, playing a board or word game, exercise together, listen to music or dance.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.