

COVID-19

FED

SPECIAL EDITION

ISSUE 2

Talk



## Message from our President and CEO

Dear Staff,

The unprecedented public health and economic crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic has all of us anxious and concerned. Our lives have been disrupted in ways that would have been unimaginable only a few weeks ago.

There is great uncertainty around the trajectory of the pandemic; no one knows the course it will take or when it will end.

This special edition of Fed Talk was developed to help you cope during this difficult time. Included are articles to help you manage stress; productively and comfortably work from home, and talk to your children about COVID-19. We report on the psychological impact of disasters like pandemics, and on the amazing efforts of staff across our organization to continue serving those in need.

To be of service is one of the great gifts that we can provide during this crisis. It benefits all of society and gives us a sense of purpose when events are out of our control.

I am so proud of how all of you have met this challenge with courage and commitment. You have taken the lead in finding new and innovative ways to serve; thank you so much.

I care deeply about all of you. Please take care of yourselves and continue to adhere to our guidelines for preventing the spread of the virus.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christine".

**Christine McMahon**

**President and CEO, The Fedcap Group**



## DON'T MISS THIS

During the COVID-19 crisis, we have been holding a number of special Brown Bag Lunches dedicated to providing important and timely information to help staff manage their work, interact with clients safely, and prevent exposure to the virus.

On March 18th the Brown Bag Lunch was on **prevention and containment of the coronavirus**. A week later, we used this forum to discuss **effective ways to engage clients via telehealth**.

Coming up on March 31st at 11:00am ET we will host another Brown Bag Lunch on Working Remotely: Being Effective and Productive.

**[Please click here to register.](#)**



## COMMITMENT DURING CRISIS

Dedicated staff of The Fedcap Group are taking extraordinary steps to continue to assist those we serve as the nation struggles to contain the coronavirus pandemic. In the face of increasing hardship and a dearth of resources and support, our people are stepping up.

**Easterseals New York's** Project Discovery is an integrated educational program for preschoolers that includes special education services as well as an Outreach Program that provides food, clothing, housewares and toys to the neediest residents of Port Jervis. Over 165,000 pounds of food are distributed annually through the Outreach Program.

Each morning bread, produce and other items are displayed on a table in the parking lot for residents to pick up as needed, to supplement the food distributed at monthly outreach events.

This morning, there were only five loaves of bread.

"We usually get over 1,200 pounds of bread a month but today all we got were five loaves. It's getting quite serious here," said Barbara Kuczyna, Outreach Coordinator and School Nurse for Project Discovery.

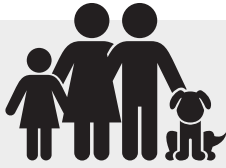
About 550 people rely on the Outreach Program. Many of those served are grandparents raising young children and many of them do not drive.

**The Fedcap School** in Orange, New Jersey closed on March 18th as part of a statewide effort to contain the coronavirus. Social Workers, Counselors and Job Coaches are making wellness check-in daily calls and are available to any student in need. Staff are delivering breakfast and lunches to the entire student population.

Despite the hardship, the mood around the Fedcap School Staff is "unified and strong," said Principal Luanne Macri. "We are teachers. We care about our students, and our population depends on us for far more than educational achievement. This will be hard on kids. This is uncharted territory for everyone, but we are in this together, and we will be there for our students."

Our first responders including health care providers are desperately needed on the front line. But with childcare centers closed throughout the country, these critical individuals are struggling with how to be available as needed. **Easterseals has established childcare centers for first responders in NYC.**

"I am so proud that our Easterseals staff and health care workers are stepping up and ensuring their availability during this time of crisis", said Don Harreld, Executive Director of Easterseals New York.



## FAMILY MATTERS

### How to Talk to My Child About the Coronavirus



The disruptions to our lives caused by the COVID-19 pandemic can be confusing and distressing to children, who look to us for guidance on how to react to stressful events. The Centers for Disease Control, the National Association of School Psychologists, World Health Organization and other organizations have offered guidelines on talking to children about COVID-19. These recommendations are summarized below:

- Let your child's questions be the guide as to how much information to provide.
  - Remain calm and reassuring. Children react to both what you say and how you say it.
  - Make yourself available to listen and to talk. Make sure children know they can come to you with questions.
  - Avoid language that might blame others. Viruses can make anyone sick. Avoid making assumptions about who might have COVID-19 and emphasize that everyone should be treated with respect.
  - Consider reducing the amount of screen time focused on COVID-19. Too much information on one topic can lead to anxiety.
  - Teach and model everyday actions to reduce the spread of germs including washing their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, cough or sneeze into a tissue or their elbow, disposing of used tissues and using hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Provide information that is honest and accurate. Give children information that is truthful and appropriate for the age and developmental level of the child. In general;
    - **Early elementary school children** need brief, simple information that balances facts with reassurances that their schools and homes are safe and that adults are there to help keep them healthy and to take care of them if they do get sick.
    - **Upper elementary and early middle school children** will be more vocal in asking questions about whether they are truly safe and what will happen if COVID-19 comes to their school or community. They may need assistance separating reality from rumor and fantasy. Discuss efforts of school and community leaders to prevent germs from spreading.
    - **Upper middle school and high school students** are able to discuss the issue in a more in-depth (adult-like) fashion and can be referred directly to appropriate sources of COVID-19 facts. Provide honest, accurate, and factual information about the current status of COVID-19. Having such knowledge can help them feel a sense of control.





## How Do I Get Anything Done With My Children At Home?

- **Create a schedule:** Kids are more likely to be cooperative with a schedule if they help to create it. Sit down with some paper and markers and set time for schoolwork, quiet play, outside time, and connecting virtually with family or friends. Use a schedule as a guideline to add structure to the day.
- **Use screen time for education:** Whether or not your child's school is using online learning, [there are some amazing educational resources for independent learning.](#)
- **Take a break and get outside:** Fresh air is therapeutic for both you and your family. While keeping a safe distance from others, make time to go outside for a walk or a bike ride. Making outside play a priority could make a huge difference in your mental and physical wellbeing.
- **Make it Private:** If you are a household with two caregivers, divvying up household responsibilities can cause conflict even in the best of times. Now when there are two parents working from home,

there can be a lot of tension surrounding who has a deadline, or whose job is more important. As much as possible, try to resolve these issues away from your children.

- **Connect virtually:** Your kids probably miss their friends and family. Setting time during the week to let your child chat on FaceTime or Skype with their friends, cousins, or grandparents is a great way to stay connected.
- **Create a boredom bowl:** Over the weekend, spend some time writing down as many as 200 things your kids can do around the house – like building a tower as tall as they can – and fold them into slips of paper and put them in a bowl. It's a good way to remind your kid when they are seemingly "bored" just how much there really is to do at home.
- **Stay positive:** Ending the day by taking a moment to write down what went well can make a big difference in how you feel about this entire experience. This is likely a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, so taking advantage of this extra time with your child will be worth your while.

## Fun Things To Do While Sheltering in Place



- [Here are some fun, educational activities and games to do at home with your kids.](#)
- Washington D.C.'s cherry blossoms signal the arrival of spring and symbolize hope, renewal, and friendship. [With fewer visitors able to travel to the blooming cherry trees this year, the National Mall set up a livestream to watch from the comfort of your own home.](#)
- [Click here to get a virtual tour of famous museums from around the world.](#)
- Have you always wanted to experience The Metropolitan Opera? This is a great opportunity: [Each day at 7:30pm ET, you can watch a free series of encore Live in HD from the past 14 years at The Met.](#)
- [Here you can livestream baby snow leopards](#) from Australia's Melbourne Zoo! And for other adorable animal cams, [click here.](#)

# INHALE, EXHALE



## Good News from Around the World

- Distilleries across the U.S. are making their own hand sanitizers and giving them away for free.
- Communities are coming together to help their neighbors.
- Wales is building a national forest that will span the country.
- Anonymous love letters lift the spirits of anyone signed up on this website.
- In an unbelievable act of kindness, a customer left \$2,500 tip for restaurant staffers before they closed up shop.
- This café offers work and support to youth who have aged out of the Texas foster care system.
- Watch as Italians in quarantine join together to sing from their balconies to lift community spirits.

## I Am So Stressed I Am Not Sleeping... What Should I Do?



By now we're all aware of the ongoing public health and economic toll of COVID-19. What is less transparent is the psychological toll—the stress, anxiety, fear and uncertainty—related to the pandemic.

The message from mental health experts is clear: take care of yourself. There are practical steps people can take to ease anxiety and offer a better sense of feeling in control.

The Centers for Disease Control offers guidelines for employing self-care and coping with stress. Key activities include getting enough sleep, engaging in physical exercise and eating a healthy diet. Finding ways to address stress, such as journaling, going for walks or calling a loved one can help reduce anxiety.

Along with the anxiety created by a crisis such as the pandemic, people might also be experiencing grief and depression. "People are feeling grief over the loss of routines, certainty, and a perception of themselves as being generally healthy and protected," said psychiatrist Joshua Morganstein, chair of the American Psychiatric Association's Committee on Psychiatric Dimensions of Disasters.

"We don't get to plan and daydream. Depression is feeling hopeless about the future, and I think that's how a lot of people feel right now," said Kathy Hogan Bruen, a Washington-based clinical psychologist.

“If you can't fly then run. If you can't run then walk. If you can't walk then crawl. But whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.”

Martin Luther King

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A poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that the key worries related to the COVID-19 pandemic were:

- You or someone in your family will get sick
- Your investments, such as retirement or college savings, will be impacted
- You will lose income due to a workplace closure or reduced hours
- You will not be able to afford testing or treatment if you need it
- You will be at risk of exposure because you can't afford to miss work

The coronavirus can be especially hard on the one in five Americans living with a mental illness. Isolation and anxiety about contracting the virus can

exacerbate and trigger symptoms. People with pre-existing mental health conditions should continue with their treatment plans during an emergency and monitor for any new symptoms. Additional information can be found at the SAMHSA website.

Luckily for those experiencing stress, anxiety, grief, or depression, there is a bright light through this crisis: communities across the globe are finding common purpose in helping each other and working together to stay safe--even if it's from a distance. Focusing on healthy routines and reaching out to others via technology will help reduce the psychological impact of the current crisis and keep us moving forward with hope and a sense of optimism.



## COVID-19 Resource Toolkits

A Company of The Fedcap Group

**You matter.** And for many individuals and families this is a time of significant need. Single Stop, a company of The Fedcap Group, has developed an innovative technological platform that allows individuals to determine their eligibility for an array of government benefits (food support, housing, health care and tax preparation). <http://singlestop.org/covid19/>.

As part of the screener, individuals will receive information about public benefits for which they may be eligible and access to a COVID-19 state-specific fact sheet. Single Stop staff is also available to support individuals support individuals by connecting them to services in the community.

The screener will be available in the following states beginning on Monday, March 30: New Jersey, New York, North Carolina and Pennsylvania; and on April 6: Florida, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Virginia and the District of Columbia. We are working to expand the screener across the country.



## Advice for Working from Home Effectively

Mandates for social distancing require many of us to work from home. For some, this is a new and potentially disorienting experience. It doesn't have to be. Here are some tips for making home-based work as productive and happy as possible.

- Establish a daily routine:** To maintain a sense of normalcy, structure your day as before, or create a new structure. Either way, set a schedule and stick to it around work, eating, breaks, exercise and personal time. If you and your spouse are both working at home, [here are tips](#) for living and working in close proximity without driving each other crazy.
- Schedule your work and personal/family time:** For many of you working from home provides more flexibility but there are risks of working too little, too much, or in ways that interfere with your personal or family time. Set a work schedule and ensure that work and personal/family time is clearly delineated.
- Designate a workspace:** Some of you already have a home office. If not, choose a workspace. Try to avoid proximity to potential distractions such as TV, laundry or your kid's room. Some experts advise avoiding your bed as a workspace. [Here are some tips](#) for making your home workspace ergonomically sound.
- Exercise:** If you have an exercise routine adhere to it. You can walk or run outside while still practicing social distancing. You can design your own workout or use online workout videos or fitness apps. Don't neglect exercise. You can do squats anywhere. Even 15 minutes helps. [Click here](#) for some at-home fitness apps.
- Take breaks:** Schedule your breaks just as you do at the office. Incorporate stretch breaks into your daily routine. Try to go outside every day. *Fresh air, sunshine, and nature are rejuvenating and good for the soul.*
- Stay connected with people:** Proactively stay in touch with others to avoid feeling isolated. Stay connected with people. That could mean emailing colleagues more often or holding video conferences to keep in touch. [Here are tips](#) for getting the social support you need while practicing social distancing.
- Transition from work:** For many of us, commuting home from work provides the transition from the workday to home life. Continue to make that same transition even if it means moving from a desk chair to a couch, or closing work applications and using your computer for something else.
- Clean your technology:** Smartphones, laptops and desktops are in heavy use during this period of social distancing. They are hotbeds of germs. Don't forget to clean them using a 70-percent isopropyl alcohol wipe or other disinfecting wipes.
- Dress for work:** Experts advise sticking to the same morning routine as if you were going to the office. That means dressing for work or at the very least looking presentable in video chats—skip the PJs.
- Have fun:** After work you might want to relax with a *"Quarantini."* You might want to learn a new skill, revisit a long-forgotten project, sign up for an online course or create a new playlist.