



International Network for School Social Work

<http://internationalnetwork-schoolsocialwork.htmlplanet.com>

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School is Closed, but Learning Continues

In February 2020 China closed schools as part of its plan to slow the spread of Coronavirus-19. One million learners (0.1% of all enrolled learners in the world) were affected. By April 2020, 188 countries had closed schools from pre-primary to tertiary education institutions and 91.3% (about one and a half billion) of total enrolled learners were affected. You can see a time-lapse presentation of this at <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>.

A Snapshot of Policy for Coping with Covid-19 Challenges in Education

The UNESCO website gives a snapshot of policy measures that governments are taking to try to help schools cope with the challenge of continuing teaching and learning. Here is a summary.

- **Countries have focused on ensuring continuation of learning:** distance learning, online courses, TV, other media, existing apps, equity for those who do not have computers, loan of computers, printed lessons and work-sheets
- **Adjusting the school and exam calendar is a priority:** online exams, rescheduling examinations, changing the school calendar to make up lost days of learning
- **Access to nutritious meals:** free or discounted school meals, delivery of school meals, bulk pick-up of meals, redeemable credit at commercial food establishments
- **Alleviating the burden on parents and caregivers has emerged as a challenge:** online pedagogical support to parents, online courses for parents, teaching guidelines and materials for parents to use, keeping schools open for parents who cannot care for children at home, home visits to monitor progress and well-being of students and to advise parents
- **Social isolation of children needs to be addressed:** communication apps to provide communication between students and between teachers and students, interactive online classes, psychological assistance such as a hotline for students
- **What's next?:** coping with the social dimensions of the crisis, helping with mental health issues, increased support for families, importance of sharing policy and approaches for ensuring learning, equity and inclusion

A more detailed report is provided from Italy where 12 million learners were at home starting in early March and the Ministry of Education convened a task force to develop strategies. One thing the report points out is that there is much to be learned from other countries. It is important to share what we are learning. The situation is now universal and each country has innovations to offer.

School social work role

We know of approximately 74,000 school social workers around the world in about 50 countries. Their work with children, families and schools can be adapted to focus on the changed situation when schools are largely closed. Children's right to education remains unchanged. School social workers are needed to provide support for disadvantaged children using new skills. Step outside your usual routine and find new ways to deliver your services without spreading infection.

What to do

-  Protect yourself and others from spread of the virus using recommended procedures
-  Identify children in need and find out what they need
-  Share information about child abuse hotline and helpline
-  Identify community sources for supplying basic needs, especially food, safely
-  Work with schools on how to provide food safely
-  Provide for mental health from community agencies during the school closure
-  Provide school social work services online
-  Counsel children and parents by phone, online or other safe means
-  Ensure that disadvantaged children have access to online or distance learning
-  Provide support to parents and link them to resources that are safe to use
-  Provide emotional support to teachers
-  Share information with parents on how to talk to children about Covid-19, <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-talk-your-child-about-coronavirus-covid-19>
-  Ensure that children return to school when schools reopen
-  Prepare for supporting psychosocial health when school reopens
-  Prepare for locating and using community resources during a coming recession
-  Here are resources for now:
[http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mhpractitioner/practitioner\(4-3-20\).pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/mhpractitioner/practitioner(4-3-20).pdf)

We Can Help Each Other

School social workers and schools need new ways of teaching and supporting students during school closures and when school reopens. You can help by sending information about how you are providing services to schools during the Covid-19 pandemic. Send a description of your most successful approach in continuing to serve school children and their families while schools are closed. Your ideas will help others to innovate and to develop better models of school social work practice. A crisis is an opportunity to learn how to do things better. I will share your work to help your school social work colleagues around the world. School social work is a global partnership, as is the work to prevent the spread of the pandemic.

An example of family resiliency during lock-down:

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/coronavirus/video-of-family-singing-les-miserables-during-coronavirus-lockdown-goes-viral/ar-BB11XzEC>