

# The Strength of Family and Connections

## Reaching out to and supporting children and youth with disabilities and their families during COVID-19

### What Service Providers, Foster Families and Alternative Caregivers Can Do

- Involve and listen to children and youth with disabilities and their families when developing ways to help and support them. Build on their strengths, listen, and believe them when they tell you what they need.
- Be intentional in creating cultural safety.<sup>1</sup> Seek to understand people's experiences, cultural background, connection, and identify and take into consideration cultural healing practices as part of the intervention plan.
- Use "person first" language and terminology that empowers and enables children and youth with disabilities.
- Recognize that those you are serving may have experienced trauma related to ableism and its intersections with anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism:
  - Convey understanding and acceptance that racism and racial trauma exist.
  - Be open and curious and create a space for children and youth and their families to speak about race and how it shapes their experience.
  - Validate young people's worldview, their worth, and their strengths.<sup>2</sup>
- If you know a First Nations child or youth with disabilities who needs services and supports, Jordan's Principle may be able to help. Visit <https://fncaringsociety.com/jordans-principle> to learn more about Jordan River Anderson and Jordan's Principle.
- Intentionally and proactively check in and stay connected to families in any way you can. Provide opportunities for children and youth with disabilities and their families to connect virtually and in person, following local COVID-19 safety protocols. Do not wait for them to contact you.

- Pro-actively offer barrier-free financial help, services and emergency supports to strengthen families' ability to meet the needs of children and youth with disabilities.
- Commit to using whatever means at your disposal to report the extraordinary challenges and unmet needs you are seeing and hearing about to your employer and to government. Be a bold and engaged ally to families.
- Protect and promote the integrity of families when making decisions regarding children with disabilities in congregate living settings.
- Redeploy support workers to meet the needs of children and youth with disabilities and their families and ensure workers are trained on safety practices and protocols.
- Provide access to personal protective equipment (PPE) for support workers and to families who may be having other family members substituting as caregivers to support much needed respite.



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<sup>1</sup> Additional resources on cultural safety: <https://www.fnha.ca/wellness/cultural-humility>;  
<https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/visions/indigenous-people-vol11/what-indigenous-cultural-safety-and-why-should-i-care-about-it>

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth V. Hardy, Healing the Hidden Wounds of Racial Trauma.  
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/545cdfcce4b0a64725b9f65a/t/54da3451e4b0ac9bd1d1cd30/1423586385564/Healing.pdf>.