

THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

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families.

Simple solutions are often the best ones. A phone call, for example, is typically the easiest and most direct way to offer resources and assess student needs. When families do not respond to phone calls, texting may be an appropriate alternative. Districts may also consider providing regularly scheduled “virtual office hours” (via telephone and/or internet-based platforms) for students to connect with their teachers and school counselors. Of course, to be effective, all of these interactions must take place in a language that students and their families can fully understand. To communicate with individuals who have difficulty with English, you may wish to seek the assistance of trained translators and interpreters; the [Department’s Regional Bilingual Resource Networks \(RBERNs\)](#) can direct you to appropriate translation and interpretation resources. Additionally, the non-profit organization [Talking Points](#) is temporarily offering free access to translation resources during the COVID-19 crisis.

You should also continue to utilize your district’s health and mental health professionals to engage with students and families. School counselors, social workers, nurses, and psychologists have the skills, knowledge, and training to assist in these outreach efforts.

When you are unable to reach families through traditional methods, you should attempt to connect with them through the emergency contacts listed in your school records. Additionally, local community centers, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations serving immigrant communities, and homeless shelters may be able to assist you in connecting with and supporting the well-being of families who depend on their services.

For a variety of reasons, some students are experiencing increased isolation now, and may require additional support.

The following resources can help to support the engagement of students and families who are disconnected from their learning communities:

[New York State Parent Portal](#)

- x The Department has worked with the New York State Council on Children and Families, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), and other State agencies to develop resources specifically for families. The Parent Portal includes tips for staying safe and healthy as well as ways to have fun during self-isolation. Other resources include parenting in a pandemic, activities to do inside and outside, such as participating