Reach Out and Connect: Workshop #25
Going Back to School During a Pandemic

- We are talking about what it looks like to go back to school during a pandemic. We understand families have questions and concerns about new protocols, mask protocols, and safety in general.
- We are thrilled to have our special guest, Pamela Schwartz, with us today. Pamela is the Director at the Penn Family Early Childhood Center in New York City.

Q: Is it safe to send my child to preschool or childcare this school year?

A: Child care centers and nursery schools are doing everything they can to ensure the safety of both the children and families they serve. The Center for Disease Control has guidelines for intensifying these programs. This includes implementing social distancing strategies, intensify cleaning and disinfection efforts, modifying drop off and pick up procedures, implementing screening procedures at arrival, maintaining an adequate ratio of staff to children to ensure safety, often static in nature, and wearing masks.

However, not enough information is confirmed about COVID-19 to say for absolute certain that these precautionary measures are fool proof. If you have another option for child care (family member, work from home) then you should make the best decision for your family.

Q: Is my child required to wear a mask inside and outside? What strategies can I use to help my child feel comfortable wearing a mask?

A: Yes, when feasible, staff members and older children should wear masks within the facility. Masks should NOT be put on babies and children under age two because of the danger of suffocation.

Here are some tips on how to encourage your young kids to wear their mask.

- **Tip 1:** Find a mask that has a fun print and is comfortable to wear. It's empowering for your child to choose a mask, it's reinforcing.
- **Tip 2:** Practice wearing a mask and model good mask wearing behavior. Use Social Stories to talk about the importance of wearing masks.
    - Autism Resource Center Resources
    - Social Story Video
    - University of Rochester Medical School Tips

- **Tip 3:** Read a few books together about wearing a mask. Check out our [booklist](#).

Q: My child is not feeling well. Should I send them to childcare and when should I keep them at home?
A: This may depend on the different center's protocols. If your child has a fever of 100.40 (38.00C) or above, they will not be admitted into the center. This is the CDC guideline.

COVID symptoms include fever, shortness of breath or cough, flushed cheeks, rapid breathing or difficulty breathing (without recent physical activity), and fatigue. You should not send them if they have any of these symptoms according to the doctors at the CDC.

However, a sore throat or stuffy nose can also be signs of COVID-19. If your child has a sore throat or stuffy nose, check with your child care center for guidance on whether to send them or not.

Q: What happens if a child in my child's class tests positive for COVID-19?
A: This may depend on the individual policies and procedures of your child care center. Families will be immediately notified if someone your child has come in contact with has tested positive for COVID and the center will alert local health officials. The CDC's guidelines say that the child care center will be closed for 2-5 days. This initial short-term dismissal allows time for the local health officials to gain a better understanding of the COVID-19 situation impacting the school and for custodial staff to clean and disinfect the affected facilities. If there are more confirmed cases from that site, the center may be closed longer.

Q: Are parents allowed to enter the childcare building? What are the drop off procedures?
Q: Will my child be interacting with children in the other classrooms?
Q: How often will the classrooms be cleaned and sanitized?
A: A lot of these answers really depend on the individual child care regulations. Check with your provider to learn more about their protocols.

For any questions about the content or our virtual programming, please email Kristen Rocha Aldrich at krochaaldrich@reachoutandreadnyc.org.