



## **ARC and ARC Grow considerations for implementation:**

### **Telehealth and COVID-19**

The practice of mental health and other social service delivery has shifted markedly and rapidly over the past month as a result of the changes brought on by the novel coronavirus. Like many providers, we are working to shift our own understanding of how to continue to deliver empathic, respectful, related, and effective support to children, families, and systems of care in this new time. Although we acknowledge that – like many of you – we are learning as we go, this document is our best effort to offer some guidance in the implementation of ARC.

In this document, we reference a number of concepts and specific activities that may be found in our book, *Treating Traumatic Stress in Children and Adolescents* (2018, Guilford Publications).

#### **General considerations:**

- Providers using telehealth should refer to guidelines from organizations such as licensing boards, state mental health organizations, and specific agency policies. For instance, review policies regarding use of video and audio, privacy considerations, HIPPA compliance, etc.
- Providers may use the "share screen" option if available to share handouts, visuals, etc. (see some of our suggested handouts below)
- Providers will likely need to support families with where and how to access information about COVID-19 and strategies for talking with their child or youth about this virus. (See NCTSN resource below). It is important that providers do not take on the role of directly teaching families about the virus, but rather direct families to core sources of information (e.g., the CDC website and local

- public health officials) and support those who need it in identifying and understanding information that is key for themselves / their families.
- Providers may describe “clues” that may tell caregivers that their child/youth is experiencing increased stress related to the current challenges. (See clues on NCTSN resource included below)
  - When planning for modulation and home connection activities that may require supplies, it is important to take into account what materials are available, so that the family is able to utilize supplies that are already in the home.
  - Providers will need to ensure that there is a safety or support plan in place for each child and family served. (See sample support plan on page 481-482 in our book ). This is particularly important for highly stressed families and those vulnerable to emotional or physical violence. If needed, it may be important to engage in more frequent, brief check-ins with high-risk families to provide support.
  - Providers can consider providing the caregiver with a session summary (snapshot) of any psychoeducation that was provided so that they are able to review in between sessions

### **ARC Based Recommendations**

- **Providers:** This is a challenging time for all. You are likely experiencing changes in your home and work routines and experiencing stress and uncertainty. Please remember to prioritize your own self-care in terms of preparation, “in the moment” skills, recovery skills and ongoing self-care. (See self-care handout titled “45 self-care things you can do in under a minute”)
- Intervention during this time will likely initially require prioritization of Caregiver Affect Management support and reinforcement of ARC Foundations (Engagement; Education and Routines and Rhythms).

#### **Engagement:**

Remember that engagement is a journey not a destination. As you enter into this new treatment context it may be helpful to “set the stage” with caregivers and children/teens. Here are some things to consider:

- **Begin with a frame of transparency, education and collaboration.** The current worldwide event represents a shared experience for all that likely involves some level of anxiety, fear, helplessness, etc. It may be helpful

to normalize these experiences and when effective, to share your own experience.

- Discuss this new service process. This will include differences in service provision (technology, etc) as well as similarities to previous approaches. Collaborate with the client to determine what this new treatment approach will look like for weeks to come. In addition, discuss strategies for evaluating how this new approach is “working” for everyone.
- Identify Comfort Zones. It is important that the treatment space within their home be a space that feels comfortable, safe and effective for clients. The concept of a comfort zone will be helpful to explore. Consider space and privacy needs. When privacy is compromised, it may be helpful to discuss topics that should be included/avoided during this new phase of treatment. This may be particularly important in work with caregivers and teens.
- Predict barriers. Providers and clients alike will encounter many barriers. For instance, technology, privacy, time, scheduling, etc. Discuss and normalize these at the outset of telehealth interventions. If possible, problem solve different strategies for managing barriers as they emerge.
- Redefine Goals: It will likely be useful to identify (new clients) or to review and redefine goals based on the current wants and needs of the client. Caregivers, teens and children should be encouraged to describe goals in their own words.
- Co-create the therapeutic routine. Discuss ways in which the routine will be different and ways in which the routine or rhythm of the work will remain the same (for current clients). For instance, if you are implementing ARC Grow the structure may be the same but how you implement aspects of the structure such as an “About Me” question or modulation activity may be very different from in previous sessions.
- Pay attention to your own engagement: Engagement can be a challenge for providers as well as clients, and telehealth may present additional challenges for providers. You may feel less connected; may feel concerned about the loss of your own privacy; may be actively juggling personal and professional responsibilities; and may be working to find your own new rhythm. Try to stay curious and aware of your own emotions, physiological state, and needs.

### **Real World Therapy:**

- At the end of each ARC core skill chapter in our book, “Treating Traumatic Stress in Children and Adolescents”, we have a section titled, “Real-World Therapy”, which captures the realities – versus the ideal – of our work. This section is important to consider during this time as it discusses realistic pitfalls and considerations when working with real kids and families. We would now add, in a very real context. Here are some common themes to remember:
  - One of the most central “real world therapy” concepts is the idea of “hanging in there” with clients. During this new and very different time period for most of us, “hanging in there” is going to be one of the most critical aspects of any intervention and therapeutic relationship. Your presence – even remote – is meaningful.
  - Have realistic expectations of yourself and of your clients
  - Practice makes . . . well, not perfect. All of the new skills that providers and clients are learning will take time. Pace yourself.
  - Tap into empathy for yourself and your clients
  - Be aware of your own reactions, needs and self-careRemember that clients will have their own agenda as that may be the one thing that he/she/they feel can be controlled within a chaotic context.
  - Speaking of agendas - it’s fine (and generally important) to co-create an agenda or routine for your meetings with clients (see routine section, below) but be open to letting it go. Especially in the beginning, some children may just want to play with the new technology or be excited about sharing; other children may feel hesitant to connect or anxious about the lack of privacy; caregivers may need more (or less) time than is typical. Don’t pressure yourself to accomplish numerous clinical tasks; it’s all right to prioritize relationship.
  - Do not underestimate the power of connection. It may look, feel and be different than anyone is used to but connection is connection. If you are able to model and maintain connection, demonstrate and support regulation and competence for and with your clients then they will likely learn that even times like these can be managed and survived.

### **Routines and Rhythms:**

- Daily routines will likely be important for caregiver(s) to increase his/her/their own sense of predictability in everyday life. Remind caregivers of the relationship between routines and rhythms and caregiver affect management. Before discussing child specific routines and rhythms remember to discuss caregiver routines. For instance, which daily routines can be maintained (cup of coffee in the morning) and which routines have changed (work, quiet time after kids typically go off to school, the addition of the teaching role, etc. ). Reinforce the importance of routines that are stress reducers for the caregiver.
- Support caregivers in identifying routines that they would like to let go of (for instance – do they need to allow more child screen time than before to get work done? Does everyone in the family need more time apart from each other? Are there morning chores that are less important with everyone staying home?), which routines they would like to maintain, and which new routines they might need or want to add. It's reasonable to expect that daily life will look different than it previously did.
- Help caregivers to view routines as “experiments” that are open to change; what works one week may work less well another week (or day). Flexibility can reduce anxiety.
- Broad, flexible schedules may be more realistic than rigid schedules, and every family is different. It is okay for families to find routines that work for them.
- Consider helping families identify some core goals for each day (e.g. time for a caregiver to get work done or take care of household tasks; remote schoolwork for a child; connected family time; time for free play; time to connect remotely with people outside of the family) and ways to realistically accomplish these goals. Support caregivers in prioritizing their own and their children's emotional well-being over task accomplishment. If part of the routine or one of the goals is increasing rather than decreasing stress, work with the caregiver on identifying how and what they can let go of.
- For providers, it may be important to create transition routines that support regulation and provide containment for clients. When providing treatment in an office there are natural opportunities to regulate and to “leave the work behind” (leaving the office, walking to the car, driving

home). With young children, it may be helpful to use imaginative approaches to leaving sessions such as pretending to walk from the office to the car, drive home, etc. In addition, consider ways to help the child or caregiver create a container to keep at home for the work that is happening in therapy. For instance, creating a shoe box or an actual container for children to put their therapy drawings in.

**Supporting Attachment:**

- Work with caregivers to develop a “toolbox” of strategies to use throughout their day as well as in moments that are stressful or overwhelming. (Use the “ARC Self Care worksheet” below as a guide: modify based on the current needs of the caregiver(s) and the current context in which we are supporting families. Keep in mind that it can be helpful to remind caregivers that ALL of the tools may be applicable at times. For instance, if a caregiver is getting ready to support “school time” then he/she/they will need to consider the following: 1) how to prepare for that time block; 2) identify an “in the moment or in the pocket” strategies for challenges that may emerge; 3) strategies to recover from those moments when “school time” just goes south or doesn’t work; and ongoing self-care strategies like remembering to mindfully breathe throughout the day.
- Tune into, acknowledge, and provide support for the caregiver’s own changing emotions. It is reasonable and expected that caregivers may be experiencing a wide mix of hard emotions right now – for instance, stress and anxiety, frustration, grief and sadness – and also some positive emotions – for instance, feelings of connection to children, relief about letting go of some expectations. It will be important to normalize all of these for caregivers, and to acknowledge with them the range of emotions their children may be having as well.
- Reinforce the idea that engagement and positive affect enhancement matters. Above all- children manage stress through play (in fact- adults can also benefit from play) and – for older children in particular – through social connection. Fun experiences are likely to increase family connection, regulation and motivation toward “school, work or learning times”. Ultimately, caring for the emotional health and prioritizing

positive experiences for all family members will likely be the single most important protective factor during this time.

- Predict with caregivers that moments of “disconnect” in their relationships (with their children, with their partners, with providers) will occur. Disconnections are inevitable, even in less stressful times; in times of stress, they are just about guaranteed. The goal is not to avoid every single hard moment – no relationship is perfect. Support caregivers in recognizing, working through, and repairing hard moments. Work with caregivers to identify manageable routines within the day. Caregivers with very young or preschool age children may need more support identifying activities to practice during the day. Consider breaking the day down by “learning time” and “play time” and supporting families by creating visual routines.

#### **Supporting youth regulation:**

- During sessions:
  - Continue to use check-ins that support youth in sharing their experience. Consider being curious about affect related to current experience (e.g., “What has been the best part about being home from school this week? What has been the hardest part?”) as well as affect that is not related. Use age-appropriate tools to support conversation (for instance, a puppet, doll, or stuffed animal can “chat” through a screen with a young child).
  - Use attunement skills to observe, name, and be curious about youth emotions, actions, and physical / body clues of experience.
  - Use screens to share videos related to energy and emotions – for instance, Sesame Street videos for younger children, clips from films for older children. Adolescents can be asked if there is a song they are listening to right now that really resonates with them; if so, listen to it together
  - Engage in naturally modulating activities together. For instance, stretch together, have a quick dance party, throw an imaginary ball, or play a game. With older youth, consider engaging the use of preferred technology. For instance, have youth demonstrate the latest social media dance for you.

- Let the child / adolescent pick something they're doing at home that they enjoy or that is helping them to stay calm or to feel good, and invite them to share it / show it to you.
- Use screens to share videos that support modulation, and help families to curate ones that are particularly helpful for them. See some suggestions below.
- Acknowledge mixed and hard emotions. It is tempting to help youth “feel better”, but it is important to give them space to identify, express, and acknowledge the more challenging affects they are experiencing.
- Between sessions / in the home:
  - Invite youth to capture their experience between meetings using a medium that is comfortable for them. For instance, a younger child might draw a picture about their day; an older child might keep a simple journal. Depending on which technology platform you are using, there may be opportunities to create an online interactive journal.
  - Consider identification strategies that the child might have been using successfully in their routine at school, and consider ways to support families in adopting some of these at home. For instance – did the child engage in a “morning meeting”? Did the child respond well to color cues about behavior or energy? Did an adolescent benefit from a daily lunch bunch? Think about special subjects that are naturally modulating throughout a school week and try to create opportunities for art, music and physical activity (see below). Consider ways that elements of these might be re-created simply in the home setting.
  - Support families in setting a goal for children to get at least 30-60 minutes of physical activity a day; it's fine if this is broken up during the day. For children who are able to go outside, outdoor play, taking walks, riding a bike, etc. are all naturally modulating. For children who are unable to leave their homes but who have internet access, search for free online yoga classes, dance classes, ninja classes, etc. (many are streaming live now and can be found with an internet search; some examples are listed below).



- Family co-regulation activities may be particularly important as a way to support rhythm and connection. Consider and explore ways that families are engaging in both “typical” daily activities (for instance, mealtime or evening routines) and where there might be opportunity to add new activities (for instance – family dance party, morning exercise, 10-minute mid-day all family “recess”). Help families brainstorm one simple thing they can try to do each day to retain positive connection and rhythm.

### **Supporting youth competency**

- In sessions:
  - Telehealth offers an opportunity for children and families to share with you aspects of identity they might not previously have been able to share. With caregiver permission, children (or caregivers) can show you through the screen many things that are relevant to individual and family identity: family pets, what their room looks like, family “treasures”, favorite place at home to sit, etc. Be aware, though, of privacy needs. Some children may not want you to see anything – affirm their right to privacy.
  - Explore with children and adolescents ways that aspects of their identity might be helpful to them now. For instance – how might being *independent*, *creative*, *helpful*, or *organized* be supportive while children and families are more isolated at home? Are there aspects of identity that other members of the family have that are helpful? What parts of self might children or teens want to work on during this time, and how might they do that?
  - Celebrate successes. It will be important identify and track positive experiences that occur each day and/or throughout the week. Children and youth have opportunities in school settings to receive positive reflection from a range of relationships within various learning contexts. Provide those opportunities during session with the child/youth as well as his/her/their caregiver(s). Consider creating a pride wall or a power book with clients or finding ways to capture successes.
  - Future focus. While it is difficult to know or predict when the current circumstance created by COVID-19 will change, it is clear

that change will come. It may be helpful to hold this future lens of hope and possibility as your work progresses. For instance, part of a check out routine can include a future focused question such as, “what is the first restaurant you would choose to eat at when things re-open?”, “who is the first person you are going to go visit or hang out with when it is ok to do that?”, etc.

- One of our central goals with Executive Functions is to support felt agency and empowerment. This is particularly challenging right now; during a time when all of us must shift our way of living, it is natural to focus on those parts of our life that we have no control over. Support all members of the family system with whom you are working to identify the active choices that they are making, and why these are meaningful to them. Look for opportunities for all members of the family to actively contribute to family functioning, and to make choices about their daily lives and activities.
- Explore how relational connections have changed or shifted within this context of social distancing. It may be helpful to utilize the Circles technique ( found on page 446 in our book) to look concretely at relational resources (teachers, peers, family members) , current levels of contact and experiences related to changes in relationships such as feelings of separation, loss and/or abandonment; feelings of connection and support, etc. In addition, it may be helpful to explore changes in the level of connection experiences within the family environment and the ways in which that may be positive as well as challenging.
- Between sessions / in the home:
  - Building and sustaining connections (within the family, outside of the family) may be critically important for youth and families who are feeling isolated. Support all family members in identifying who their most important sources of social support and connection are in “typical” times, and brainstorming ways to build and sustain connection during this period of distancing.
  - Families with children who have special needs or who receive services that are typically provided outside of the home may be struggling to identify and prioritize goals and tasks. Support

caregivers in identifying where they *can* have impact. For instance, life skills are a critical developmental capacity that caregivers can focus on. At home time is a time to work on things like tooth brushing, dressing, cooking and many other things that cannot be learned as naturally in a school setting.

## **Resources**

*This list is far from comprehensive, but offers a brief list of resources that providers and/or families may find useful. We encourage all providers to research and identify potential resources that may be a good match for the work that they are doing, and to support families in doing the same.*

### **Education about Covid-19**

Center for Disease Control, Central COVID-19 information index:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

National Child Traumatic Stress Network – fact sheet for families:

[https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/outbreak\\_factsheet\\_1.pdf](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/outbreak_factsheet_1.pdf)

Reader-friendly article about the intersection between complex trauma in childhood and COVID-19: <https://www.complextrauma.org/coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-coping-strategies-for-youth-with-a-history-of-complex-trauma/>

### **Attachment/Regulation Resources:**

NCTSN – Activities for Children: <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/simple-activities-children-and-adolescents>

Go Noodle – active videos for elementary-school age children:

<https://family.gonoodle.com/>

Cosmic Kids Yoga: Yoga and mindfulness for young children:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga>

PBS Kids: <https://pbskids.org/games/>

Kids Bop Dance Along [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sHd2s\\_saYsQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sHd2s_saYsQ)

Focus Activities:

<https://www.thesprucecrafts.com/hidden-pictures-for-kids-1357609>

<https://www.highlightskids.com/games>

<https://thewordsearch.com/cat/kids-puzzles/>

<https://sharpbrains.com/brainteasers/> (kids and teens)

**Educational resources (Competency):**

ABC mouse (2-13 years): <https://www.techradar.com/news/keep-your-kids-learning-at-home-with-free-access-to-abcmouse-and-more>

Free apps for young children: <https://www.familyeducation.com/fun/21-free-educational-apps-kids>

World Family Education (all ages): <https://worldfamilyeducation.com/free-educational-resources-online/>

Audible books for children – free while school is out: <https://www.audible.com/ep/kids-audiobooks>

Coloring Sheets

<https://lol.disney.com/games/coloring-pages>

<http://www.supercoloring.com/coloring-pages/arts-culture/inca-art>

Academic sites offering free resources for children and families during school closures:

Brain Pop: <https://www.brainpop.com/>

Cool Math Games: <https://www.coolmathgames.com/>

Hour of Code: <https://hourofcode.com/us>

Khan Academy: <https://www.khanacademy.org/>

Mystery Science: <https://mysteryscience.com/>

Prodigy Math Game: <https://www.prodigygame.com/>

ST Math: <https://www.stmath.com/coronavirus>

Scholastic Learn at Home:

<https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome.html?caching>

### **Caregiver Handouts:**

ARC Reflections – Caregiver Handouts: This packet of handouts is designed for use with a curriculum for resource caregivers, but many of the handouts may be useful in working with the range of caregivers. These handouts are available on the Annie E. Casey Foundation website, at this link: <https://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-facilitatororientationandhandouts-2017.pdf>

In addition to this handout, we will be posting on our website a small number of handouts that may be useful for providers or caregivers.