

Talking with Children about School Threats

As educators and parents ourselves, we know that talking with our kids about school threats is not easy. We also know that having these conversations is very important. Engaging in honest and age appropriate conversations is important because it allows us to learn how our kids are feeling, what they are thinking, and ultimately reassure their sense of safety. Included are some helpful tips in thinking through how to have these conversations with our children.

How to Talk to Your Children about the School Closing on 4/17/19

Be honest about the situation, but don't give more details than needed. Children need brief, simple information that should be balanced with reassurances that their school and homes are safe and that adults are there to protect them. Help your kids by asking questions. It is that open dialogue that comforts them. Ask your kids what makes them feel safe. Ask your kids what they know and then fill in the gaps with facts.

A way to explain to younger children might be:

"The police were looking for someone who needed help because they were worried she could have hurt herself or someone else. Until they found her, we kept kids at home to make sure everyone was safe."

Let your children ask questions. Give space to let them talk and listen to their feelings. Don't be surprised if your children don't have a lot of questions or concerns - many times children will quickly return to their typical routines.

Limit exposure to details and media coverage. Adults also should be mindful of the content of conversations that they have with each other in front of children, even teenagers. Continued exposure to media can increase anxiety and fear for adults and children. For younger children, each time they see the continued news story, it can feel like a new event.

Remind your children that there are many people working together to keep schools safe. As we return to school there will be opportunities for students to talk about school safety. All schools have mental health professionals and they will be prepared to support students. Ask your child to share with you who they would talk to at school if they are feeling anxious.

Also include this handout:

[NASP - Talking to Children About Violence](#)

[NASP - Talking to Children About Violence \(Spanish\)](#)