

The Gramon Family of Schools is sensitive to the particular needs of our students and their families in preparing for unexpected and health-related events. Please review the below tips and suggestions as you develop a family plan in the event our schools close and home instruction programming is implemented due to the COVID-19 disease (“Corona Virus”).

### **Tip #1 Stay informed**

The most important thing you can do is make your child aware of what is happening in the moment. The goal is not to scare them, but help them feel informed and prepared. Be mindful of information and sudden changes to routine that may contribute to anxiety and stress. Utilize visual supports such as the attached social story and sensory calming techniques when necessary. Periodically check the Gramon Family of Schools social media sources and website ([www.gramonfamily.org](http://www.gramonfamily.org)) for on-going updates and alerts.

### **Tip #2 Practice good hygiene (reference the attached guidelines in picture form)**

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Create visual cues and reminder cards to demonstrate hand washing practices. Consider posting the [CDC](#) hand washing poster by the sink along with practice, modeling, and supervision.
- Cover your mouth and nose with your elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth if your hands aren’t clean.
- Avoid close contact with anyone who is sick.
- Avoid sharing dishes, glasses, bedding and other household items if you’re sick.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces you often touch.
- Stay home from work, school and public areas if you’re sick.

### **Tip #3 Remain calm**

It is important for parents and caregivers to stay calm during an emergency such as a quarantine, travel delays, or other significant changes in routine. It may be difficult to keep emotions at bay during stressful situations such as this, but others may sense your heightened emotional state, which may add confusion and stress to the situation.

### **Tip #4 Be prepared for immediate needs before a possible emergency**

Create a network of relatives, friends or co-workers to assist in an emergency. Don’t be afraid to ask for help in making a plan ahead of time. Also, make sure to wear any

needed medical alert tags or bracelets to identify you or your family member's needs. This may alleviate some of the stress for both you and any staff assisting in the case of an emergency.

**Also consider packing a 'safety & calm' kit, which could include:**

1. Weighted blanket
2. Sensory toys, therapeutic comfort aid or other comforting distractions
3. Personal hygiene items
4. Identification and important documents (insurance, birth and marriage certificates, and special-needs forms)
5. A few changes of clothes
6. iPad or phone with charger to smooth or comfort along with headphones
7. Ear plugs, headphones or eye shades
8. An ID and/or medical alert bracelet and autism information cards to explain behaviors to others.
9. Collect non-perishable foods that meet any dietary needs or restrictions
10. Bring all medications for child or adult with autism to ensure consistent dosing

**In case of a quarantine or medical emergency, keep the following in mind:**

- Keep routines as close as possible to a "typical day".
- Use a visual schedule. If school is closed, replicate the schedule as close as possible with academics or homework practice and other school activities such as snack, story time, lunch, etc. where possible.
- Explain to the child in a factual, positive way why these changes have occurred and that it's important to stay safe and healthy.
- Similarly, it will be important to explain to a child in simple terms why a parent or other family member is quarantined away from home should that happen.

This resource was compiled from the Chair of the New York State Assembly's Committee on Autism Spectrum Disorders, with the help of fellow board members of the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES).