



VIRGINIA PARENT RESOURCE CENTERS (PRCS) AND COVID-19

Parent Resource Centers (PRCs) exist in nearly forty school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia. PRCs work to foster collaborative connections between families of students with disabilities and their schools. PRCs assist families by providing resources, training, and support. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) supports PRCs through the provision of funding for personnel and activities/products that support families of students with disabilities in Virginia. The VDOE also provides training and technical assistance to all PRCs throughout the state.

The ways in which PRCs have provided these services to families has changed, somewhat, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The VDOE recently surveyed PRCs throughout the Commonwealth to find out (1) how their work differs as a result of the pandemic, (2) what specific challenges they have encountered while doing their work, and (3) what positives they have discovered as a result of these changes. Twenty-two PRCs responded to this survey and below is a summary of those responses.

RESPONDING LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES (LEAS):

- Alexandria • Arlington • Caroline • Chesapeake • Colonial Heights • Culpeper • Fairfax
- Fauquier • Floyd • Hanover • Henrico • Loudoun • Montgomery • Norfolk • Piedmont
- Regional Powhatan • Prince George • Prince William • Roanoke • Spotsylvania • Stafford • Virginia Beach

HOW THE WORK OF OUR PRC DIFFERS DURING THE PANDEMIC:

- More collaborating with case managers, related service providers, counselors, Title 1, and family/community engagement staff to provide any assistance needed.
- More collaborating with regional PRCs – joint events, sharing expertise, etc.
- Offering curbside pick-up for resources.
- Utilizing social media.
- Providing different resources during the pandemic, such as Wi-Fi hotspots and food.
- Meeting with families outdoors.
- Providing a library of timely social story topics, such as:
 - » Wearing face coverings at school.
 - » Wearing face coverings out in the community.
 - » Social distancing.
 - » New routines at home, including virtual school and parents working from home.
- Providing extra resources through our website.
- Purchase of more eBooks for our lending library

CHALLENGES:

- Learning the necessary technology to do this work virtually has been difficult.
- Inability to meet in-person.
- All of us (professionals and parents) have “frayed nerves” right now, which can make this work difficult.
- This work takes longer than it used to; balancing our jobs with our own families is difficult.

POSITIVE ASPECTS:

- Have become more tech savvy.
- Webinars can serve many more people at once than in-person events.
- Webinars are easier to put together than in-person events.
- We have become more creative; the work is new and fun.
- School divisions are doing more to promote our services.

Virginia’s PRCs are committed to doing the work of connecting schools with families of students with disabilities for as long as the COVID-19 pandemic lasts. They are adapting and continuing to serve our youngest Virginians with disabilities through assisting their families and the schools that serve them.