

UNESCO Covid-19 Educational Response

Education Sector Issue Notes

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Health & nutrition during home learning

Introduction

Evidence tells us that a range of health and protection risks arise from a global pandemic, school closures and attempted distancing measures, from virus cross settings, reflecting the nature of the pandemic, other crisis situations present, measuring extent of exposure isolation measures, and family or household structure.

Families and teachers can be expected to take a range of evidence-informed actions, within their ability, to promote good health and wellbeing, as well as create a strong emotional bond to school when they return. The ability of parents/caregivers to provide time and resources to facilitate formal learning at home will be largely critical and must be a key consideration when designing interventions.

While this is a crisis situation, it can also be seen as a window for providing critical health education, and promoting the health and wellbeing of families and teachers now and in the future.

Defining the topic and related key issues

Spread of COVID-19: One of the primary health concerns is preventing the spread of COVID-19. Families, particularly in low resource settings, may lack clear information about prevention measures or face a challenge providing an environment in which family members can maintain good hygiene and apply distancing measures when necessary (e.g. hand washing facilities, cleaning supplies, multiple rooms within a dwelling etc.). If family members feel justified for COVID-19 without displaying any symptoms, or display symptoms related to COVID-19 implementing measures to prevent further spread of infection may also be challenging. Access to health care for and family members may also be limited in some settings, meaning family members including children become primary care providers. The suspension of or underfunding of health services are likely to impact access to broader healthcare needs (child vaccinations, maternal and infant care, treatment of pre-existing health conditions etc.). These challenges impact efforts to create an environment conducive to home learning.

Health information gaps/needs: A challenge for families is to readily help children and young people understand emerging health risks so that they appreciate the importance of providing good hygiene and distancing measures, without causing stress and anxiety. The current epidemic is characterised with an over load of health information and advice (sometimes conflicting or misleading) which may cause families to be taking unnecessary measures or to be feeling overwhelmed and confused.