

## Colorado Association for the Education of Young Children

Contact Enola Garland, Executive Director

**COAEYC Reaches Out To Support Caregivers With Our Deepest Sentiments and Mental Health Resources**

Denver, CO

On behalf of our 700 members, the Colorado Association for the Education of Young Children (COAEYC) would like to join the world in conveying our profound grief and frustration that, yet again, we are standing witness to another disturbing school shooting. COAEYC would like to give our utmost and sincere condolences and faith to be with all those who have lost loved ones and the entire Uvalde community. During times like these, simple expressions of support may not seem helpful in such great events of unimaginable loss, however, COAEYC would like to extend any offer of support that we can give to our members and community.

Events specifically around the act of gun violence in our schools and communities that are racially motivated and others that seem to have no purpose, unfortunately have become increasingly common in the United States. The trauma of the losses that family have experienced and the infinite impact of this tragedy and the other events is being felt in all communities across the nation and the world—and coming from traumas of the pandemic as well as the anxiety and insecurities that came from the two years of isolation, families and people are already experiencing great amounts of grief and loss.

In the next few days and weeks, COAEYC will be available to support the safety of our community, including people who may not have been directly impacted. It is our highest priority to ensure the safety of our children in our early childhood education programs as families leave their most precious treasure with them. COAEYC recognizes that the majority of children are strong and resilient and will cope well with the support and care of their families, teachers, friends, and other caring adults, however, adult reactions to any tragedy experienced by the family can provide an impact on how children perceive their safety as they leave their homes. COAEYC will provide specific guidance for talking with children about [violence](#)<sup>1</sup>. All of the resources that will be provided through the link are available in multiple languages. It is also important to note that the reassurance of children and their safety outside of their homes is still present, even in their schools. COAEYC recognizes that this may be very difficult for parents to complete at this time, but schools are, in fact, one of these safest places to be.

COAEYC would like to encourage constant communication and collaboration during times of stress and trauma, specifically among parents and teachers. Each and every community plays an essential role in ensuring that our children view schools as safe environments. Please also be aware that adults need to be watching for signs of distress in their children and in other people in the community as well. The reactions displayed among children can vary in intensity depending on the nature of a child's or individual's history and relationship to tragedies similar to Uvalde. Moving forward through the year, after this tragedy, COAEYC encourages professionals to be mindful of these potential reactions one may witness. Although many children will display small or no change at all in their emotions or behaviors, some can re-experience their own feelings of sadness, anxiety, and fear. COAEYC will provide a handout

<sup>1</sup>Talking to Children About Violence: Tips for Parents and Teachers. (2016). *Nasponline.org*. Retrieved May 26, 2022, from <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/school-violence-resources/talking-to-children-about-violence-tips-for-parents-and-teachers>.

of specific resources for mental health support available in the community during these difficult times.

Related behaviors could include:

- Behaviors that may be disruptive
- Less concentration or poor sense of attention
- More aware of their surroundings; heightened sense of awareness
- Shyness or withdrawal

In the majority of the cases, these symptoms will subside with adult support and guidance. Importantly, all of the adults that work in schools and with children are always under continuous stress as well. COAEYC recognizes [self-care](#) as a priority for all providers in order to continue the positive roles they play in children's lives. Please offer support to children in the following ways:

- Provide a developmentally appropriate and straightforward explanation of the event.
- Let children know it's okay to have these feelings
- Listening and observing your children
- Allow for healthy ways for children to express their emotions
- Increase the amount of social and emotional learning for children during these times

For additional information on school safety and crisis response, and the role of COAEYC in supporting our children, please visit [coloradoaeyc.org](http://coloradoaeyc.org), [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org) or contact COAEYC Executive Director, Enola Garland at [coaeyc@coloradoaeyc.org](mailto:coaeyc@coloradoaeyc.org).

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## About the Colorado Association for the Education of Young Children

The Colorado Association for the Education of Young Children (COAEYC) is a professional membership organization for early childhood educators and the Colorado state affiliate for the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). COAEYC's mission is to help early childhood professionals learn, develop, and grow through accessible and affordable professional development opportunities and the creation and cultivation of a community of educators and adult learners. COAEYC envisions a Colorado where educators are highly valued and well compensated, and where all children have equitable and affordable access to high-quality learning environments. You can connect with COAEYC on Facebook, Twitter ([@coloradoaeyc](#)), or at [coloradoaeyc.org](http://coloradoaeyc.org).