



# BIRTH TO FIVE PARENT NEWSLETTER

## A Message from Brad Coulter, CEO



I saw this sign in a vacant lot near the Cecil Center during our recent Gleaners food distribution. It really speaks to our current situation and reminds everyone that we will get through this.

Matrix has been in operation since 1906 and our organization has survived many periods of upheaval when the world seemed like it was ending, but it didn't. Matrix has come through World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, the

1967 Detroit rebellion, the 9/11 attacks, the 2009 financial collapse, and now we will get through the Coronavirus pandemic. During all of these times, Matrix has continued to help those most in need and will continue to do so long after this crisis is over.

I am so proud of all our staff members for stepping up during this time. It's scary, it's changing quickly, but yet our team has not lost its focus on making sure we help those most in need. I want to thank all of you for your service to both Matrix and the community we serve.

I look forward to when everyone can be back together again. I think you'll find we have a much stronger team and a more impassioned sense of purpose after we emerge from this crisis. Be safe and take care of yourselves.



## A Note from Cristal Claussen, Birth to 5 Director

### Welcome to our first edition of the MHS Parent Newsletter!

Starting this week and for the rest of the time we are under the isolation order, we will be sending you weekly updates to share news and helpful information. The news, web links, and other resources from this newsletter will also be on the Matrix website for COVID-19 resources:

[www.matrixhumanservices.org/  
covid-community-resources/](http://www.matrixhumanservices.org/covid-community-resources/)

Please check frequently for updates.

In an effort to stay connected to our families, staff began calling parents and guardians last week to provide information, resources, and answers. You should expect to hear from your teacher weekly, your Family Advocate weekly, and even your Center Manager at times. Our Health and Nutrition staff members are calling and talking with parents of infants, as well as parents of children who are medically vulnerable. You may also send a note to [inquiries@matrixhs.org](mailto:inquiries@matrixhs.org) with questions.



# Your Questions Answered

**Q: How does Matrix plan to handle the rest of the school year? Will there be a summer break or, if it's over by then, will the kids have to go longer?**

A: We have heard from the Director of the Office of Head Start, Dr. Deborah Bergeron, who said that programs will not be required to make up lost hours. Our plan is to pick up the program at the same place on the calendar as if we were still in session. If we return in April, we'll be in school. If we return in June, Head Start will be on summer break but Early Head Start will be in school.

**Q: Will Matrix provide some type of learning packets for the children?**

A: It's difficult to make material available because of the shelter in place order, but we are exploring how to mail activity packets to your enrolled child or children. We do have other learning activities underway. Your child's teacher should have been in touch with you by now, to check on your child and to provide ideas and resources. Also, we will continue to send the regular biweekly activity calendar home, now through email, and will post it on the Matrix link at the top of this page. This newsletter will also contain new ideas and links each week.

**Q: Are all of the centers being sanitized?**

A: Not yet. We will be deep cleaning and sanitizing our centers during the weeks prior to starting up to ensure they are as clean as possible when children and staff return. Our Facilities department under Jesse Butler are experts in sanitizing and disinfecting. They are strictly following the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines, and purchased state of the art equipment last year. In the meantime, we are notifying affected families and staff as soon as we are aware of potential exposures to the virus at our now-closed locations.

**Q: What negative impact does this time off have on the grant or program, if any?**

A: The worst impact is keeping us away from each other, especially for your children and their teachers. Building relationships with your children that are loving and nurturing is the cornerstone of our curriculum. Other than that, we have not been told of, nor do we anticipate, other negative impacts.

**Q: This time of year is key for enrollment for the next school year, what is the plan for families that are returning? Will Matrix notify families that this outbreak doesn't affect their enrollment?**

A: First, no one's enrollment is jeopardized by the isolation order. Next, we plan to be in touch with you regularly through this period

and talking about many subjects, including your intent to return to the program next year. Your Center Records Coordinator or Family Advocate will be calling you.

**Q: Will teachers and staff suffer layoffs and/or loss of pay?**

A: It is our intention, supported by Dr. Bergeron's statements, to maintain teachers' employment throughout this isolation period. Funding is officially in place for wages and benefits through April 30, and we are quite optimistic that it will be extended. More information can be found here: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/physical-health/article/coronavirus-prevention-response>

**Q: Will Matrix have food distributions accessible for all of our families?**

A: The agency has partnered with Gleaners to provide mobile food pantries on the east side, at the Matrix Center, and on the southwest side, at our Cecil Center in collaboration with Starfish. There is also a mobile pantry at our Word of Truth center, sponsored by the church there. See our website link above for more food distribution resources, including grab and go breakfast and lunch sites for children.

**Q: Is there a readiness plan for Matrix just in case this type of situation happens again?**

A: We were pleased that our existing infectious disease policies and procedures were effective for responding to the coronavirus, but it became clear early on that we needed more than that to respond to the pandemic. We used guidance from the federal Department of Health & Human Services and the CDC to write an emergency response plan for this and future pandemics.

Let me close by saying we are not shut down, administrative staff are still working on this year's program and preparing for the next. Our job continues to be providing services to you and your family, so you should not hesitate to reach out with questions or to make requests for needed items. Although you may feel alone right now, we are part of a community, and community members support each other. Please be safe, you are in our thoughts every day.



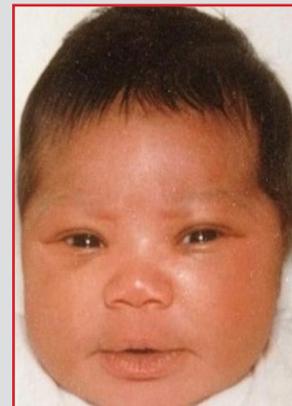
**MATRIX**  
HUMAN SERVICES

*"Touching Hearts, Changing Lives"*  
Established 1906

## A Nutritious Recommendation from Kelli Wall, Assistant Manager and Registered Dietitian/Nutritionist

This article is a great example of why it is important to eat a variety of healthful food. Food is medicine and when we eat nutrient-dense foods such as whole grains, lean meat, and a variety of fruits and vegetables, our body is equipped to protect and fight illnesses. This article focuses on nutrients and also mentions healthy behaviors like getting enough sleep and physical activity. It is our responsibility to take care of our body in order to truly live a healthy life.

<https://www.eatright.org/health/wellness/preventing-illness/how-to-keep-your-immune-system-healthy>



## An Educational Recommendation from Letawnia May, Assistant Director

Greetings! Parents as we continue to provide in home learning to our children during these uncertain times, I would like to recommend you sign up for the PBS-Kids daily newsletter. PBS-Kids daily newsletter comes with daily learning activities in all subjects that can be translated in twelve different languages for children in pre-k to 12th grade. Continual learning is essential for our children. Don't feel compelled to do every subject every day. As long as children are moving, creating, or playing, they're learning. Let curiosity and fun be your guides.

<https://pro-bee-beepro-messages.s3.amazonaws.com/186836/163391/306641/5019677.html?modified=1585067094166>



## A Practical Tip from Charmaine Parks, Parent Engagement Program Manager

Beating cabin fever and boredom is on the top of my priority list as a parent during this time. I recommended the attached article because it gives some creative ideas on how to stay engaged with your family while also beating cabin fever. The article challenges you to explore more creative ways to interact with your loved ones at home. Please join me this week in reading the article and trying some of the activities listed.

<https://www.erieinsurance.com/blog/ways-to-beat-cabin-fever>



## A Coping Tip from Jo-Anne Woodard, Sr. Program Manager

Stories of the Coronavirus are making headlines. All Michiganders are attempting to stay abreast of the prevention and treatment methods and confirmed cases. However, it is imperative to keep the information in perspective to avoid becoming overwhelmed. The article offers five helpful ways to view the coverage of the Coronavirus and tips to manage anxiety.

[www.apa.org/helpcenter/pandemics](http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/pandemics)



Please send us photos or videos of how your family is coping with being cooped up!  
Send to Patrick Beger at [pbeger@matrixhs.org](mailto:pbeger@matrixhs.org).



## For More Information and Resources

**Matrix Human Services:**

<http://www.matrixhumanservices.org/COVID19/>

**Centers for Disease Control:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

**COVID-19 Fact Sheet:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/factsheets.html>

**State of Michigan:**

<https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus>

**City of Detroit:**

<https://detroitmi.gov/departments/detroit-health-department/programs-and-services/communicable-disease/coronavirus-covid-19>

For other questions and requests, email [inquiries@matrixhs.org](mailto:inquiries@matrixhs.org).