

TEN TIPS (NOT ONLY) FOR THE PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

School closures and the current exceptional measures mean that parents may once again find themselves in a range of difficult situations associated with bringing up and educating their children, as well as in circumstances involving difficulties of a personal, professional, health or mental health nature.

The situation of parents with children with special educational needs (SEN) is especially specific mainly due to the increased need for support on the part of the family not only during distance learning and the handling of any special educational needs, but often also during a number of other regular activities, which their contemporaries are able to regularly manage without any assistance. However, we are never alone in this and there are a number of places we can turn to for help and assistance.

1. Communicate with the school

Ask for advance or communicate with the school, if the work set by the school is overly burdensome or if distance learning is not working. You can contact your child's teachers, the employees at the school councillor's office or the school management directly. The parents of children with special educational needs can also contact the employees at the educational advisory centre that their child attends. You can also seek out tuition that is offered both in person and online by students from teaching faculties and schools and also by some interest-based educational organisations

2. Request support for educating your child with SEN

Your child's legal entitlement to the provision of any stipulated supportive measures will still apply during distance learning. Do not expect the school to initiate this support itself, but be sure to request it proactively. When discussing with the school, you can refer to the methodological recommendations of [the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport on distance learning](#) which regulate the topic of support for the education of children with SEN. Children are entitled to the support of a teaching assistant, the use of the services of the school councillor's office, both in the form of consultations and the ongoing care of the special teachers and school psychologists, any stipulated teaching assistance, the provision of information and material support during education and the loan of compensatory and special tools and school textbooks and other materials that will assist the children during their studies from home. Arrange a regular form of communication and support with your child's teacher that will suit both you and your child. You are not experts. Do not be ashamed to request advice or help from the professionals. Set your educational goals and the anticipated results with the help of the teacher. Communicate with the school about how these goals are being met and flexibly modify them in line with your child.

3. Set a regular regimen and plan and organise the educational activities

A regular regimen will assist you and your child to better orient yourselves, to complete the set plan and to achieve the educational goals and outputs under the given circumstances. Your child will know that they have time for work like at school and that this will then be followed by time for rest, fun and play. Establish a teaching plan, for example for each week, and then gradually fulfil it throughout the week. Complete the set teaching plan with your child, but do not overburden them. Make sure that your expectations

correspond to your child's individual educational potential. Make sure your child have sufficient free time, social contact with friends and free weekends.

4. Respond to your child's needs and establish a safe environment

The current situation is demanding for your child. **Help them to manage their stress.** Speak with them about the current situation, listen to them, devote time and attention to them and support them to the maximum possible extent. Be sure to maintain a good relationship and climate. Home-schooling will enable you to flexibly respond to your child's general and current needs. Start with the interests of the child and their ability to concentrate. Intersperse the lessons with rest breaks, relaxation and movement. You can also make use of **relaxation and tactile aids**. Your child will not be able to learn, if they are under pressure or stress. Use games and practical home activities to help them learn.

5. Make use of technology and the available online resources

Technology and the available online resources will also help you. There are a number of link sites and other websites on the Internet (for example, **Na dálku**) where it is possible to watch teaching videos (for example, **ČT edu**), to use applications and to download educational materials and worksheets. Some publishers offer free downloads of applications, textbooks and worksheets. Czech Television broadcasts the **UčiTelka** educational program on Channel 2 from 9:00 am every weekday.

6. Maintain good quality social relations

Social relations can also be maintained remotely via electronic communication. Communicate with your family and friends. Most of you are already tired of the emergency measures and your mood will often be improved and you will be inspired by shared experiences, conversations and tips from your loved ones. Also provide your child with the most varied possible social contact as your child needs this just as much as you do, while there is a very wide range of remote communication options available for children.

7. Consult other parents

Most parents currently find themselves in a similar situation to you. Contact them and ask them for advice. Make use of your personal contacts or get in touch with specialised associations and parent or patient organisations that bring together children and families with special needs or specialised social services. A number of thematically focused discussion forums also work well on social networks.

8. Consult the experts

Your school councillor's office, the educational advisory centre or similar organisations focus on supporting children with SEN and their families and they will be able to advise you with regard to your child's special needs. There are a number of well-functioning facilities or organisations that support children with a variety of handicaps and a number of social services for children from disadvantaged circumstances. The **META** Association specialises in the education of pupils with a need for language support, while **Quido** or **Mensa** support exceptionally intellectually gifted pupils. You can also contact the advisory centre at the **Czech Expert Community for Inclusive Education** by email at **info@cosiv.cz**.

9. Don't be afraid to ask for psychological help and social services

The National Teachers' Institute of the Czech Republic also offers free psychological assistance to all parents dealing with difficult situations as a consequence of the coronavirus on its **Zapojme všechny** portal in support of joint education. Describe your problem using the online form and one of their therapists with many years of experience will contact you within 24 hours. You can also use tried-and-tested confidential help lines, such as the **MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID (116 123)**, **FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS (116 000)** or **WHITE CIRCLE OF SAFETY (116 006)** lines to consult someone about your problems.

If the required non-stop care of your child is proving to be overly demanding for you, you can make use of the available social services (personal assistance, respite care, low-threshold facilities for children and young people, social activation services for families and children and so on) or any of the aforementioned psychological consultancy centres. The contact information for the services in your area is available, for example, in the online catalogue published by the **právo na dětství** project of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. You can also request assistance from voluntary organisations (the Scouts, students and so on).

10. Arrange the receipt of the parental care allowance

The parents of children up to 10 years of age and the parents of children with physical disabilities who receive a carers' allowance that is not subject to an age limit are entitled to the parental care allowance **at the amount of 70% of the assessment base** throughout the entire period of any school closures, if they are unable to go to work, because they have to take care of a child. This right also applies to employees and individuals employed on the basis of various types of work contracts. You will also be entitled to the parental care allowance, if you are self-employed. At the beginning of November, a **call** will be published, on the basis of which it will also be possible to apply for this allowance retroactively.