

To the UW Medicine Community:

Our back-to-school routines will look a little different this year – with fewer backpacks, packed lunches and school bus rides, a lot more screen time for most kids, and for the younger set, creative approaches to ‘recess’ in our own backyards. As families in our community continue to face the on-going challenges posed by an ever-changing landscape of childcare and schooling options, groups representing the UW School of Medicine, UW Medicine, and the broader University have been meeting to implement immediate programs and supports, and to make recommendations to the Provost and President for longer term solutions.

We know that policy changes and recommendations will take time to implement, but we will work towards maximum flexibility for our colleagues while maintaining excellence in our work. As we head into a new school year filled with uncertainty, we will do well as a community to extend the same ethos of flexibility, grace, and generosity to the parents and caregivers in our community, our friends, family, colleagues and neighbors trying to navigate solutions to work and life demands.

Resources for families:

- UW Human Resources is regularly updating the [COVID-19 child care resources website](#).
- Join the parenting@uw listserv to receive information about child care resources.
- We know that many folks will connect organically to form partnerships in sharing childcare. [Koma](#) is one option to support those seeking cooperative care opportunities across our UW community. We have included more information on this **app-based platform for finding community-based care** below our signature lines in this message.
- The idea of sharing childcare with other families may feel a bit nerve wracking during a pandemic. Thankfully, a team of parents working in public health, including UW experts, have created this [guide to forming pandemic pods for families](#) to help you consider care sharing as an option.

What else are we working on?

- **Pairing tool for in-home childcare.** We are currently developing a tool to help connect UW students with families in need of in-home care, especially during the high-need early morning and evening timeframes. We'll announce the rollout of this tool on the parenting listserv as soon as it goes live.
- **Learning supports for school-aged children.** We continue to partner with campus units and work with the University taskforce to recommend ways to connect UW students with families needing learning support. Several community-based tutoring options are currently available, including [University Tutors for Seattle Schools](#) and the [Together Program](#), with support, including free tutoring services, geared toward lower income families.
- **Priority COVID-19 testing for families.** Lastly, with tremendous support and innovative thinking from teams across UW Medicine, we are moving towards

shifting family members of our healthcare team workers into the top tier for priority testing. We have heard your concerns that your child's symptoms can keep them home from care until they have a negative test. By streamlining family access to testing, we hope to help your child get back into care as soon as they are healthy to do so.

While we are making progress in tackling many issues caregivers are facing, there are two areas we are still finding challenging. First, close to 20% of employees who completed the needs assessment survey mentioned having **challenges with elder care**. We will continue to think through how to best support multi-generational families with disrupted elder care support. Secondly, we have heard concerns over needing additional **supports for children with Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) or special needs**. We will continue to connect with school districts and community partners to address those specific needs.

We recognize that the new programs, resources and services we are developing to support our community will have flaws and imperfections. Our aim will be to continue to cast the net of support wide so that you can choose what best fits your family's needs at this time. **Please help inform this work with your feedback [here](#)**. We will continue to iterate on the resources and address gaps in support as we move into this new school year.

With gratitude,

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More information on Komae:

In support of UW's working and studying parents, UWHR Work-Life is pleased to introduce **Komae, a cooperative child care app** that enables parents to **identify and vet families with similar parenting styles and COVID-19 hygiene practices to build their pod for shared child care and education**.

On Komae, families within a trusted network come together to share caregiving. Parents swap 'Komae Points' by the hour as a way to manage and coordinate care for their

children. As part of this program, you will receive an initial balance of points to receive care from others in our community, and you will receive additional points by caring back for another family. [Learn more about how Komae works and sign-up to attend a live Q&A session in September.](#)

These services are cost-free to you and to the University of Washington. The Komae app is publicly available, and through it UW families can build a community to share caregiving. Use of Komae and its services are subject to Komae's [Terms of Use](#).