



# Illinois State Board of Education

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**Darren Reisberg**  
*Chair of the Board*

**Dr. Carmen I. Ayala**  
*State Superintendent of Education*

April 14, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

If there's an Oscar for Best Portrayal of a Virus Wearing Pipe Cleaners, we have the winner right here in Illinois. School nurses from Big Hollow School District 38 in Ingleside created a wonderfully educational [video about the coronavirus](#). Nurses Jessica Lardizabal and Kelly Murphy found a great way to explain to children what the virus is and the best ways to protect ourselves from getting sick.

It's now been four full weeks that students have been learning from home. And we know the COVID-19 pandemic can wear on every resource — from food and shelter to our emotional bandwidth and mental health. Fortunately, the Illinois Department of Human Services has launched a support line called Call4Calm that is reachable via text. Individuals who want to speak with a mental health professional can text the word “TALK” or “HABLAR” (for Spanish speakers) to 552-020. Within 24 hours, that individual will receive a call from a mental health professional employed by a local community health center.

People can also text other terms, like “unemployment” or “food” or “shelter” to the same number to receive information on how to navigate and access supports and services. Call4Calm is free, and individuals who use it can remain anonymous. We encourage you to share this resource with your students, families, and staff.

Although many events are canceled or postponed in response to COVID-19, the 2020 Census is in full swing. I am so proud that Illinois has [one of the best](#) self-response rates in the nation! Completing the census safely online, by phone, or by mail means census takers do not have to come in person to your residence. However, 48 percent of Illinoisans still need to respond. So if you have not filled out your 2020 Census and encouraged your school community to participate as well, please do. The online survey takes only a few minutes. If you have any questions about the census, check out the [podcast](#) we produced, which can also help your students learn this important lesson in civics. Illinois' number of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, Electoral College votes, and certain federal funding streams all depend on everyone getting counted.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carmen I. Ayala".

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala  
State Superintendent of Education  
Illinois State Board of Education