

Fraser Frontline Work Testimony

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My coworkers and I work in a preschool setting with children on the Autism Spectrum. We not only help them master various skills that carry into their everyday lives, but also help them prepare for when they start attending school.

The needs for these children can range immensely. Some children may need more one-on-one support to help with tasks such as holding a spoon during snack time, or how to navigate overwhelming feelings.

Some children need more support in socializing with peers and the differences of appropriate versus inappropriate interactions with others. Lastly, and a big one, is helping support children with communication in general. There are some children who have no verbal communication, therefore we help support other forms of communication such as sign language or using a speech device.

Once COVID started to spread we knew things were possibly going to change. We were all furloughed for roughly a month, than work slowly started to come back. We were stepping into unknown territory, and that was scary. How will the children feel when coming back? How will they react to us wearing masks and other protective gear? How long will all this take until we actually will be back to normal? So many questions, and not many answers. Each day we would learn to adapt and find the best ways to support the children. During this time we had to connect with the children in a more creative way. Not seeing our face was difficult, but we learned to use our body language and voice as a tool in order to show various expressions.

I'm confident enough to say working during the pandemic was not easy for anyone. There were times when us staff would stress out about getting sick, because that meant we could be out of work for 14 days which led into stress about finances. There were times when families would contemplate pulling their kids out due to increases in COVID cases within the community. We tried as much as possible to give the families a sense of relief that we are doing everything we can to help keep their children safe from illness. We would always have to push our fears and stress aside to help best support the children, even though we knew what was happening within the community, our state, our country, and the world.