



KEEPING CONNECTED

Six Steps to Help Your Child's Transition Back to School When Emotional or Mental Health Issues Arise

We understand your family has experienced painful challenges. We hope that services give you and your child the resources and tools to restore hope for the future.

Whether you're at the beginning, end, or in transition to another mental health provider, the health and well-being of your family are critical, and returning a child to school after a crisis can be difficult. With input from parents who have experienced similar challenges, mental health providers and schools have worked together to make a few suggestions to improve your child's transition.

Keeping Connected Checklist

- ☐ Choose a safe contact(s) at the school to receive information and provide support
- ☐ Contact school regarding absence and arrangements for assignments
- ☐ Sign release forms
- ☐ Share information about medications and potential side-effects
- ☐ Develop and share safety plans
- ☐ Pursue extra resources and assistance

1. Choose a safe contact(s) at school to receive information and provide support.

Your family's privacy and confidentiality are important to everyone involved. Your child's mental health care information will only be shared with your permission. Although it may seem uncomfortable, providing your consent for sharing of information is one of the most important things you can do to help facilitate a smooth transition for your child. You determine who at the school is informed. Your child's school social worker, counselor, psychologist, principal, and/or school nurse* are trained individuals who want to work with you, and who will try to help your child feel more comfortable in returning to school.

We encourage you to reach out and get to know one or more of these individuals, and to involve your child in choosing a planned contact – an adult helper – at the school. It can be assuring for your child to know who to seek out when in need of support, or for problem-solving issues that may arise due to his/her absence (missing homework, talking to peers about the absence, etc.). Also, your school contact can let you know if your child is having any difficulties adjusting.

Key staff at our school are:

**School staff positions vary depending upon the building.*

2. Contact school regarding absence and arrangements for assignments.

As soon as possible, contact the school social worker, school nurse, principal or counselor* when your child is absent due to mental health treatment. By notifying the school of your child's absence, school staff may be able to help coordinate your child's schoolwork or homework so he/she does not fall behind. The school can also help determine if other arrangements or modifications can be made to accommodate for work missed.

3. Sign release forms.

The paperwork may appear overwhelming at such a time, but signing consent forms will allow specific individuals to receive and share important information, and benefit your family. In addition to the school's release of information form, you may also need to sign a release or consent form at the hospital (or other facility), the psychiatrist's office, and any additional therapist's office. This promotes on-going communication and care as your child re-acclimates to the school setting.

4. Share information about medications and potential side effects.

It is very beneficial for you, your child, and the school to have information about what medication(s) your child is taking, including any medication changes that may have occurred, and the possible side-effects your child may experience. The school would then be better able to tell you about unusual behaviors your child may be exhibiting so you can share this information with your mental health treatment provider.

5. Develop and share safety plans.

The mental health provider may be able to help you and your child develop some strategies that will help your child become more successful at school. You may share these strategies with the school and/or give the mental health provider permission to share them with the person of your choice at the school. Sometimes these are called safety plans, crisis plans, triggers/warning signs, and strategies or calming mechanisms.

6. Pursue extra resources and assistance.

As your child's parent/guardian and advocate, ask for accommodations which could help your child. Based on your child's needs, extra resources may be suggested to assist in supporting your child in the school community. Contact your school social worker, nurse, psychologist, or counselor* for information on your school's process for determining if your child qualifies for more resources. He/she may also be able to assist you in finding resources for lower-cost medications.



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