



BACK to SCHOOL

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

Your child or teen's return to school after a crisis can be difficult. Use this guide to work with school staff and mental health providers to ensure a smooth transition back to class. It may also be used to help you talk with your older child or teen to engage them in back to school planning.

More than 70 percent of youth discharged from an inpatient or partial hospitals experienced difficulties re-entering schools, according to a recent research.

Some of these difficulties include:

- Size of classes
- Missed school work
- Stigma of a psychiatric hospitalization
- Returning to a less structured environment
- Communication issues between school and family
- Access to ongoing treatment

These difficulties can lead to hospital readmissions or setback the child/teen's progress at home and school.

Your school and mental health providers want to support you and your child!

This resource has been provided by the Alamo Area Teen Suicide Prevention Coalition. You can find this guide and related resources and more information about the Coalition, its history, activities, resources, events, partners & funders at:

stopteensuicide.info

Back to School Checklist

- Contact the school counselor about returning to school.
- Identify other safe school contact(s) to receive information and provide support (other support staff are: social worker, psychologist, principal, nurse, sometimes a teacher or other staff)
- 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. Contact your school counselor and choose other safe school support contact(s) to receive information and provide support.

Your child's mental health care information can only be shared with your permission.

Although it may be uncomfortable, providing your consent for sharing of information is one of the most important things you can do to ensure a smooth transition for your child. You decide who at the school is informed.

However, your child's school counselor, social worker, psychologist, principal, and/or 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.

Whenever possible and appropriate include your child/teen in discussions with school support staff. Help your child/teen decide what they will say to their peers about their absence.

It may also help for you and your child to get to know other school support staff, such as those listed above. It can be reassuring for your child to know who to seek out when issues 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.

2. Contact school regarding absence and arrangements for assignments.

As soon as possible, contact the school counselor or other school support staff when your child is absent due to mental health treatment. This will allow school staff to coordinate your child's schoolwork or homework so he/she does not fall behind and determine if other arrangements or modifications can be made to accommodate for work missed.

3. Sign release/consent forms.

Signing release/consent forms allows identified individuals to receive and share important information that will promote on-going communication and support as your child gets back to regular classroom activities. You may need to sign release/consent forms for: school staff, hospital (or other facility), physicians, psychiatrists or therapists.

*Tip: Many parents find it helpful to keep a binder of all documents and forms related to your child's treatment and school communications and resources. Take the binder with you to all school and mental health provider meetings.

4. Share information about medications and potential side effects.

Your treatment provider will give you a medication list at discharge. It is very beneficial for 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 will 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.

Safety plans or crisis plans, which can include identifying triggers/warning signs, coping strategies or calming techniques, may be developed by your mental health provider to help your child be successful at school. It is important to share these strategies with the school and/or give the mental health provider permission to share them with school support staff.

6. Pursue extra resources and assistance.

As your child's parent/guardian and advocate, contact your school counselor to ask about other resources which could help your child; based on your child's needs and educational rights.

My School Contacts are:

Notes: